

**The Mad Child in the Attic:
John Harding's *Florence & Giles*
as a Neo-Victorian Reworking of *The Turn of the Screw***

Sandra Dinter

(Leibniz University of Hanover, Germany)

Abstract:

This article examines John Harding's novel *Florence & Giles* (2010) as a neo-Victorian reworking of Henry James's classic *The Turn of the Screw* (1898). Focussing on the representation of childhood, this article aims to demonstrate that *Florence & Giles* is the first reworking of *The Turn of the Screw* that centres entirely on one of the child characters, who is simultaneously its protagonist and narrator. In the larger context of neo-Victorian fiction, which has tended to marginalise child characters, the work is equally progressive. Drawing on Foucault's notion of technologies of the self, the article argues that Harding radicalises the subversion of Victorian childhood innocence which is already implicit in James's text as it foregrounds various modes of transgression, particularly through its effective employment of voice, space, and agency. Finally, the article intends to show how *Florence & Giles* intertwines the deconstruction of Victorian ideals of childhood with contemporary discourses on the issue of childhood.

Keywords: agency, childhood, *Florence & Giles*, John Harding, innocence, Henry James, neo-Victorian reworking, space, *The Turn of the Screw*, voice.

Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Henry James's highly ambiguous late-Victorian ghost story *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), which captures the mysterious events at Bly involving two of literature's most infamous child characters, Flora and Miles, has been the subject of heated academic debates. It has also served as a pre-text for numerous adaptations and reworkings in various media.¹ Notable adaptations include Benjamin Britten's opera *The Turn of the Screw* (first performed in 1954), Jack Clayton's acclaimed film version *The Innocents* (1961), Michael Winner's filmic prequel *The Nightcomers* (1972), and William Tuckett's eponymous ballet from 1999. There are also several television adaptations, most recently a new BBC version written by Sandy Welch in 2010, which

transfers the action from its original mid-nineteenth-century setting to the 1920s. Consequently, many adaptations of *The Turn of the Screw* have found their way into scholarship on Henry James and on neo-Victorian culture. In her monograph *Henry James's Legacy: The Afterlife of His Figure and Fiction* (1998), Adeline R. Tintner elaborates on various literary reworkings of *The Turn of the Screw*, including Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911), Elizabeth Taylor's short story 'Poor Girl' (1951), Rumer Godden's *The Peacock Spring* (1975), Peter Straub's novel *Ghost Story* (1975), Joyce Carol Oates's short story 'The Accursed Inhabitants of the House of Bly' (1994), and Hilary Bailey's sequel novel *Miles and Flora* (1997) (Tintner 1998: 371-382). Ann Heilmann extends this list with more recent texts, such as Sarah Waters's neo-Victorian novel *Affinity* (1995), A. N. Wilson's research novel *A Jealous Ghost* (2005),² and Alejandro Amenábar's film *The Others* (2001), and examines how "[e]ach text adds another 'turn' to James's exploration of the imagination's ability to shape reality" (Heilmann 2010: 111).

Many of these texts do indeed add yet another turn to James's novella, either by deliberately filling thematic gaps that *The Turn of the Screw* itself leaves open to interpretation, such as the complicity of the children in the ghosts' actions, or by addressing the central question of whether the ghosts actually exist. The adaptations and reworkings also add details to or alter strands of the original plot. Various scholars have commented on the defamiliarising effects of reworkings. In his theoretical essay on contemporary rewritings of nineteenth-century texts, Peter Widdowson has observed that

by way of this active intertextualising, re-visionary fictions not only produce a different, autonomous new work by rewriting the original [...], but also denaturalise that original by exposing the discourses in it which we no longer see because we have perhaps learnt to read it in restricted and conventional ways. That is, they recast the pre-text as itself a 'new' text to be read newly. (Widdowson 2006: 503)

In this sense, the rewritings above can be understood as commentary on their common pre-text, *The Turn of the Screw*. The characters of Miles and

Flora are thus continuously renegotiated, as are various other formal or thematic aspects of James's work.

A strategy that several of these reworkings employ, and that will serve as one focus of this article, is a change in perspective. Oates, for instance, employs the ghosts and Miles as focalisers and thereby relativises the highly subjective account of the governess in James's novella. Similarly, Bailey adopts the perspectives of a grown-up Flora and an aged Miss Grose. Therein also lies the revisionist neo-Victorian agenda in these texts. According to Samantha J. Carroll,

the neo-Victorian novel frequently reassigns prominence from the voices at the centre of Victorian history to the figures at the margins: servants, criminals, women, homosexuals, the colonised races; those political minorities who were vilified or eclipsed by the historical record become its subjects. (Carroll 2010: 195)

In this context, Anne Humpherys adds that these reversions predominately comply with the established academic categories of "gender, race, sexuality, and sometimes class" as well as "critical perspectives from feminism to structuralism and post-structuralism, to postcolonialism, to queer studies" (Humpherys 2002: 446).

Whilst these reversals certainly attest to the wide spectrum of political and critical engagement within neo-Victorian literature, they are simultaneously indicative of thematic limitations. Here I specifically refer to the category of age, as this phenomenon, including the specific phase of childhood, still remains marginal and largely unexplored, particularly in historical fiction. Yet the representation of children is a fascinating subject for scrutiny precisely because of the political implications that the complex power relations between children and adults carry. Children rarely produce fiction and thus lack an ability to represent themselves in culture (see Morgado 1998: 206). Children have therefore not experienced as much progress in terms of literary representations as, for instance, women and ethnic minorities have in feminist or postcolonial fiction.

Although childhood has received more critical and theoretical attention in academia in recent years, concepts of age and development still remain significantly underrepresented in the context of neo-Victorian fiction

in general and, for my purposes, the reworkings of *The Turn of the Screw* in particular. This observation may come as a surprise because childhood was increasingly recognised as “a distinct and separate state of being” (Natov 2006: 7, see also Cunningham 2006: 140) by the end of the eighteenth century, when the formerly inferior state of childhood gained more positive connotations in the emerging middle classes. As Claudia Nelson suggests, the new emotional value of childhood led to a “Victorian obsession with childhood” that was by no means devoid of contradictions (Nelson 1999: 80). Childhood and its heterogeneous facets were integral parts of Victorian culture and literary discourses, as the emblematic works of Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and the Brontë sisters illustrate. If one purpose of neo-Victorian fiction is to represent and renegotiate issues of otherness within Victorian culture, the exploration of the child as other has been underrepresented.

This discrepancy has not gone unnoticed by other scholars. In her essay ‘Neo-Victorian Childhoods: Re-Imagining the Worst of Times’, Marie-Luise Kohlke concludes that the Victorian

period’s emerging anthropological, medical, educational, literary and, increasingly, popular discourses on childhood have not been re-worked in current writing to any extent commensurate with other Victorian discourses, such as those on gender, hysteria, spiritualism, evolution or sexuality. There are still comparatively few neo-Victorian fictions that genuinely explore childhood as a distinct psychological state or developmental stage in its own right. (Kohlke 2011: 120)

As this special issue of *Neo-Victorian Studies* on the topic of childhood and the volume *Neo-Victorian Families: Gender, Sexual and Cultural Politics*, edited by Kohlke and Christian Gutleben, demonstrate, there is growing interest within neo-Victorian studies in engaging with this topic. Kohlke describes the apparent underrepresentation of childhood in neo-Victorian fiction primarily as a result of a predominantly external mode of representation of children as literary characters that “never quite manages to capture the distinct individualised voices of children *as children* and agents in their own right” (Kohlke 2011: 144, original emphasis). In other words,

neo-Victorian fiction is still largely defined by a “scarcity of first-person narrations by children themselves” (Kohlke 2011: 128).

The tendency to marginalise the child’s voice is also detectable in the context of the reworkings of *The Turn of the Screw*. Almost all literary reworkings that approach the perspectives of Miles and Flora do so in the form of third-person narratives that employ the child characters as focalisers but never provide them with their own voices as narrators. An exception to this rule that has not yet received any scholarly attention is the most recent literary reworking of *The Turn of the Screw*, John Harding’s novel *Florence & Giles*. Published in 2010, this novel marks a decisive departure from the previous marginality of the child characters and Flora in particular.

This article examines how Harding reworks *The Turn of the Screw* formally, linguistically, thematically, and – through its focus on the figure of the child – ideologically. As I intend to demonstrate, Harding radicalises the subversion of conventional Victorian conceptions of childhood that is already implicit in James’s text. Harding’s novel follows Miles’s provocative verbal prompting to “[t]hink me – for a change – *bad*” (James 2008: 179, original emphasis), as it reveals the violent potential of its child protagonist and, in contrast to James’s unresolvable ambiguity, does not leave any doubt of what harm (fictional) children are able to commit. As a neo-Victorian novel, *Florence & Giles* invokes critical reflections on Victorian discourses on childhood and contemporary perspectives on children. Harding’s novel is the first reworking of *The Turn of the Screw* that employs the child as an unmediated first-person narrator. Returning to Heilmann’s notion of an adaptation’s ability to add another turn to the pre-text, I suggest that this shift is precisely what enables Harding to add an innovative turn to James’s original. In contrast to Miles and Flora, Harding allows his child protagonist to exert agency and cross boundaries more forcefully through her voice, her skilful appropriation of space, and her violent actions, three central aspects of *Florence & Giles* that will be analysed in this essay.

Harding, or rather his protagonist and narrator Florence, does not simply retell James’s *The Turn of the Screw* from another perspective, but defamiliarises it, entirely omits several integral parts of the original, or adds new material while simultaneously employing a great number of overt intertextual references. Rather than an outright rewriting, comparable to, say, *The Others*, which alludes to its pre-text but develops its own

independent plot, *Florence & Giles* constitutes a creative reworking that in focus and feeling remains much closer to *The Turn of the Screw*, in spite of the shift in geographical as well as temporal setting. In *Florence & Giles*, the mid-nineteenth century English setting of Bly is transferred to Blithe House in New England, the area that was also James's home in the United States.³ Like Bly, Blithe is located near a lake and has two large towers that figure in the tale in important ways. The story is now set in the year 1891.⁴ Flora and Miles appear as Florence and Giles, and Mrs. Grose becomes Mrs. Grouse. Like their literary predecessors, Florence and Giles are orphans, but – and here they reflect the instability of the middle-class family construct – they are half-siblings with different mothers. While Giles attends boarding school, Florence is left in the mansion of her “absent uncle” (Harding 2010: 5), whose portrait in oils, which hangs on the staircase, alludes to the similar physical absence of patriarchal authority at Bly. Denied a governess and neglected by the servants, Florence is bored and lonely, having nothing to do but to read books in secret and to receive occasional visits from Theo Van Hoosier, the child next door. More explicitly than *The Turn of the Screw*, *Florence & Giles* attests to, even radicalises, the notion that while “Victorian writers on domesticity stressed the wonders of the parent-child bond within the privileged classes, in practice children belonging to those classes often had minimal contact with their parents [or guardians]” (Nelson 1999: 70).

Florence's deserted state changes for the better when Giles, like Miles, is dismissed from boarding school. With Giles's return home, a governess, Miss Whitaker, is hired to educate him. Florence's description of Miss Whitaker, as “a silly young woman”, apparently besotted with her uncle and his portrait, “twitter[ing]” on about his handsomeness and how “he had seemed quite taken with her” during the interview (Harding 2010: 71), recalls the naïveté of the nameless governess in *The Turn of the Screw* who immediately succumbs to “the seduction exercised by the splendid young man” who interviews her (James 2008: 122). Shortly after her arrival, Miss Whitaker drowns in the lake while boating with Florence. Questioned about the incident by the police, Florence affirms, “I have nothing to feel guilty about, sir” (Harding 2010: 141). Miss Taylor, who somewhat resembles Miss Jessel from *The Turn of the Screw*, being also “dressed all in black” (Harding 2010: 76), takes over the position of governess a few weeks later. Obsessed with the idea that Miss Taylor has supernatural powers and

is planning to abduct Giles, Florence secretly investigates her past and her private room, which initiates an entirely new plot line. In the room, she finds objects, such as a suitcase containing Giles's clothes and two steamship tickets, that support her theory. Florence also encounters various pieces of information that hint at the possibility that Miss Taylor is actually Giles's mother, who, contrary to whatever story the children have obviously been told, is still alive and now wants to rescue her son. However, Florence never puts these pieces together, which results in a discrepancy of awareness between the reader and the narrator. In the course of the novel, Florence becomes convinced that Miss Taylor follows her every step by looking into mirrors positioned almost everywhere in the house. Florence sees her walking on water, but like the governess in *The Turn of the Screw* who is constantly obsessed with the question of "whether the children really saw or not" (James 2008: 186), she is unable to find anyone who can confirm these visions. Florence admits, "I thought I dreamed or hallucinated, except that it was all so real", and Giles tells her not to be "silly" (Harding 2010: 118, 119). As a sleepwalker, Florence can never be sure whether what she believes she has seen has really happened. She also pretends to be sleepwalking in order to manipulate the servants. Like *The Turn of the Screw*, *Florence & Giles* constantly relativises what Florence claims to see and questions constructs of absolute truth and fiction.

When the novel finally reaches its climax, the servants leave Blithe for a day, and only Miss Taylor and the two children remain. In rapid succession Florence anaesthetises Giles, pushes Miss Taylor into a well where she dies, and (because he has witnessed her actions) causes Theo's death by withholding his medication. Dressed up as Miss Taylor, Florence goes into town and buys a train ticket to give the impression that Miss Taylor has left Blithe for good. When the servants return, all evidence has been destroyed and Florence is able to enjoy her life with Giles until the next governess arrives. Harding's fierce and straightforward end differs considerably from that of *The Turn of the Screw*. James preserves the novella's ambiguity until the very end and even enforces it through the lack of the second part of the frame narrative. After the final encounter with Quint, the governess describes how she holds Miles whose "little heart, dispossessed, had stopped" (James 2008: 236), implying that she does not feel responsible for his death, although she could of course also be Miles's murderess.

1. Florence and the Voice of Resistance of the Neo-Victorian Child

One of the central transitions from *The Turn of the Screw* to *Florence & Giles* is the shift from external focalisation to internal focalisation as Florence replaces the governess as a narrator. For James's novella "is not concerned particularly with the two children themselves," as Sally Shuttleworth notes, "but rather with the fascination that childhood indecipherability exerted over the adult mind, and the ways in which children are made the vehicles of adult projection" (Shuttleworth 2010: 213). Due to the largely diegetic mode of representation in the governess's retrospective account, the children themselves, as Diana Gittins observes in *The Child in Question*,

are silent [...]. Miles and Flora say remarkably little; all the verbal and imaginative action occurs through the narrator's reading of the governess's account, within which is scarce dialogue with the children. It is a narrative of a young adult wrestling with what *she* thinks and feels about the children, and what it is possible for children to be and do. (Gittins 1998: 170-171, original emphasis)

The filtering and silencing of the child characters through the lens of the governess's perspective and the extradiegetic narrator in the (ultimately incomplete) frame narrative is a necessary formal device for the purposes of the novella insofar as it establishes unresolvable ambiguity. The governess is convinced that Miles and Flora "*know* – it's too monstrous: they know, they know" (James 2008: 156, original emphasis), but repeatedly fails to make out what exactly it is that they know because the children often refuse to speak.⁵ When the governess asks Flora whether she has also seen the woman dressed in black by the lake, Flora does not say "a word – that's the horror. She kept it to herself! The child of eight, *that* child!" (James 2008: 156, original emphasis). The governess's insistence on the children's knowledge acknowledges that as children Miles and Flora possess their own complex subjectivity (see Burkholder-Mosco 2005: 204-205, Pifer 2000: 43). How exactly this subjectivity is composed and what the children know or think remain open questions, however. Thus, James's novella captures and acknowledges the unrepresentability of the child's mind.

In this sense, James's text is closer to our own day than to its contemporary Victorian texts about childhood; it forestalls Jacqueline Rose's influential poststructuralist notion that representations of children in fiction, be they targeted at children or adults, always constitute an "adult desire for the child" (Rose 1994: 3). James explores this desire through the governess's obsession with the children and her struggle to gain control over them. Miles and Flora are identified neither as angels nor as perpetrators, but they nonetheless depart from the Dickensian image of the young orphan as a victim of a cruel society. *The Turn of the Screw* depicts the potential agency and power over adults that children have when they remain silent or only talk to each other. Their awareness of this point enables them to challenge the conventional relationship between pupils and governess. Miles and Flora continuously test their prescribed boundaries. After his nightly excursion Miles confidently announces, "When I'm bad I *am* bad!" (James 2008: 179, original emphasis). Richard Locke construes the purpose of Miles's nightly excursion as an attempt "to show that he could be other than she [the governess] imagines him – to exceed her definition of him" (Locke 2011: 95). Miles and Flora seem to be aware of the adult's desire to define the child and manage to escape it. *The Turn of the Screw* thus negates any conventional categorisation of its child characters.

In turn, *Florence & Giles* unequivocally presents a child protagonist and narrator who definitely *knows*, decidedly plans her actions, but presents herself as unknowing to adults in order to achieve her goals. Harding does not include *The Turn of the Screw*'s frame narrative, but he retains the form of the first-person account by employing an equally unreliable and now highly self-aware narrator. As a neo-Victorian novel, *Florence & Giles* participates in a trend in contemporary British non-historical fiction, which since the 1980s has produced an astonishing number of novels told from the child's point of view. Margarida Morgado describes this trend as

a significant departure from the idea of the child as a symbol, dream or the product of the wishful thinking and erotic desires of adults, towards representational attempts to capture the intrinsic qualities of a child, its point of view, its voice, its language, its rhythms. (Morgado 1998: 207)

As Rose would point out, these representations of childhood are, like their literary predecessors, cultural constructs for and by adults. Nevertheless, they attempt to move the child outsider, who is often doubly marginalised as disabled, deprived, or multiethnic, to the centre. Recent critically acclaimed Irish and British novels that employ child characters as first-person narrators include Roddy Doyle's *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* (1993), Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003), M. J. Hyland's *Carry Me Down* (2006), Emma Donoghue's *Room* (2010), and Stephen Kelman's *Pigeon English* (2011). In addition to taking the often naïve perspective of the child, these novels implement the 'authentic' voice of the child by linguistic means, disregarding grammatical rules or including other effective linguistic markers. An example is the absence of definite and indefinite articles in the account of five-year-old Jack, the narrator of *Room*, who has – as a postmodern Caspar Hauser – not seen anything beyond the eponymous room that he was born in. Another example is the presence of various interlingual markers in *Pigeon English*, the story of the eleven-year-old London detective Harri, that hint at his Ghanaian origin. A similar aesthetic of the voice of the child can also be found in *Florence & Giles* and becomes a major instrument through which Florence, in deliberate contrast to the naïve perspectives in the novels above, is able to implement resistance and agency, two characteristics that *The Turn of the Screw* merely insinuates.

In Harding's work, it is now the neo-Victorian child who criticises Victorian child-rearing practices, opposing them directly by means of what Foucault has described in his late works as technologies of the self.⁶ According to Foucault, technologies of the self can be understood as techniques that enable

individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (Foucault 1988: 18).

The reader sees how Florence's voice is employed as a Foucauldian technology of the self as early as the first pages of the novel, when the

aspiring author Florence admires her role model Shakespeare for “his free and easy way with words” and his facility for making up new words, when the ones he wanted did not yet exist: “He barded the language” (Harding 2010: 10). In contrast to James’s governess who reads Henry Fielding’s 1752 sentimental novel *Amelia* (see James 2008: 169), Florence reads more ‘serious’ works by Shakespeare, Walter Scott, and the historian Edward Gibbon, as well as Gothic novels by Edgar Allan Poe and Ann Radcliffe.⁷ Florence emulates Shakespeare’s linguistic creativity throughout her story. Harding provides his child protagonist with a creative and idiosyncratic style. Florence frequently uses adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and the names of authors and literary figures as verbs, as in the following phrases: “I had to be one-Shakespear-ing-two-Shakespear-ing”; “Mrs Van Hoosier had in-betweened me”; “She good morninged Giles”; “all I could do was Lady of Shalott my way through the days” (Harding 2010: 30, 54, 83, 195). Florence’s idiosyncratic, clever, and almost avant-garde style reflects her playfulness and her extraordinarily high level of self-education. Her style is indicative of both her childishness and the process that she is following to become an intellectual adult.

By means of language, Florence is able to establish an independent private sphere that only she is in charge of and that nobody except the reader knows of, since she consciously drops her peculiar narrative voice in favour of a normalised voice in conversation with the other characters. Thereby, Florence establishes an intimate connection with her reader, which *The Turn of the Screw* partly prevents through its employment of a frame narrative. Even more crucially, she uses language to express her resistance to her uncle’s patriarchal oppression and his opposition to female education, and she employs technologies of the self when she continues to flout grammatical rules. Unlike most child protagonists in contemporary fiction, Florence uses ‘incorrect’ language because she can, not because she has not yet internalised the rules. Moreover, her creative style can also be interpreted as a response to the governess’s rather conventional style in *The Turn of the Screw*, which is at least partly indicative of the disadvantaged position in society that requires her to submit to a strict code of conduct.

Florence’s resistance is not only a matter of style, but also of opinion. In her introductory paragraph, Florence confidently declares that

for a girl my age I am very well worded. Exceeding well worded, to speak plain. But because of the strict views of my uncle regarding the education of females, I have hidden my eloquence, under-a-bushelled it, and kept any but the simplest forms of expression bridewelled within my brain. Such concealment has become my habit and began on account of my fear, my very great fear, that were I to speak as I think, it would be obvious I had been at the books and the library would be banned. (Harding 2010: 5)

From the very beginning of the novel, Florence uses a pragmatic feminist voice, again opposing the submissiveness of James's governess towards male authority. Florence's account is not complemented and relativised by a frame narrative and a male narrator as is the case in *The Turn of the Screw*; rather, she speaks for herself throughout the novel. Her function in the reworking of James's ur-text is twofold, since she replaces both Flora as the child character and the governess as the narrator.

As this doubling of function might suggest, Florence claims more rights for girls and females. She soberly identifies herself as "a twelve-year-old girl, orphaned, all alone in the world save for a few fond but stupid servants [...]" (Harding 2010: 125). Florence's position almost exaggeratedly attests to the literary topos of the neglected Victorian child. On a metafictional level, she is able to look at herself as a literary character within a literary tradition. Florence's position is even more inferior than that of Flora in *The Turn of the Screw*, who is initially trained by her own governess and finally educated in one classroom with her brother. Although her uncle is strictly against the education of females and she cannot count on the support of the domestic staff, Florence is not daunted by her liminal position because she notices that "if you keep quiet, grown-ups will always go on to something else" (Harding 2010: 7). Accordingly, she accepts a doll that she is supposed to play with as "it was better to appear bought off, but [Miss Grouse's] refusal to help me, far from discouraging me, oppositied, and merely stubborned my resolve. Slowly, and with some difficulty I taught myself to read" (Harding 2010: 8). Florence secretly transgresses the boundaries of her assigned domestic sphere and becomes an excellent autodidact. Florence explains, "I libraried the mornings away on solid books, philosophy, history and the like; I also began to teach myself

languages [...]” (Harding 2010: 28-29). Florence also emancipates herself from her inferior status as an orphan without a recallable past or origin when she steals Miss Grouse’s key to look at family photographs and secretly keeps a picture of her mother. *Florence & Giles* presents a child character who, in contrast to the majority of neo-Victorian characters as discussed by Kohlke, refuses to be marginalised and makes use of loopholes in adult supervision.

Florence opposes the image of the angelic child that the governess in *The Turn of the Screw* frequently evokes by describing how she sees herself. When the readers of James’s novella encounter Flora and Miles for the first time, they must depend on the governess’s initially idealising description of Flora as “the most beautiful child I had ever seen” (James 2008: 124), as well as on the description of Miles’s “great glow of freshness, the same positive fragrance of purity, in which I had from the first moment seen in his little sister” (James 2008: 132). Florence retroactively deconstructs this angelic appearance as an adult projection when she describes how she sees herself in the mirror:

I saw a tall, gangling crane of a girl, all long limbs and extended neck, with a complexion so pale as to not look well. My eyes were marooned in great saucers of black, my white frock and apron hung from my bones as if I were getting smaller, not growing [...]. (Harding 2010: 145)⁸

In contrast to the children in *The Turn of the Screw*, whose angelic external appearance clashes with their uncanny personalities, the Gothic qualities of Florence’s interior and exterior largely correspond. Although Florence is initially disappointed to face her plain reflection in the mirror, she later refuses to be admired by her neighbour Theo and rejects his projections on her:

I knew he wanted to see me as this pretty young girl he could be in love with, and yet in his mind that impression was fighting with one much darker, of a strange girl who made things up or had gothic fantasies induced in her by too much reading. (Harding 2010: 212)

Florence is the object neither of the adult nor the male gaze and consequently rejects her present social role as innocent girl as well as her future role as sexual object and submissive wife. Employing the child as a feminist voice in a neo-Victorian novel is particularly effective because it hints at the fact that the legal and practical status of the child was often barely different from that of grown up females. As Jennifer Sattaur remarks, this point is also highly relevant to the status of “the governess[, who] occupied a position in the late Victorian household which was as liminal as that of the child; a position in which there was very little that was fixed, defined, or immutable” (Sattaur 2011: 112). From a contemporary perspective, Florence’s opposition to her uncle’s regime is thus entirely justified. Florence presents it as a necessary form of agency and empowerment. The reader, who does not initially know that Florence has already killed at the time when she tells her story, is consequently encouraged to view her duplicity as a positive and courageous attribute.⁹

Florence’s voice is radically feminist in the sense that her position as a narrator marginalises her brother. In *Florence & Giles* Harding inverts the relationship between the siblings found in *The Turn of the Screw*. This reversal is reflected partly in the age difference between the characters, but even more in their disparate personalities. Whereas Flora is younger than Miles, twelve-year-old Florence is four years Giles’s senior.¹⁰ In contrast to her self-aware and sceptical self, Florence presents her brother Giles as utterly naïve and passive. Whereas *The Turn of the Screw* never reveals why Miles has been expelled, since Miles avoids speaking of school (see James 2008: 141) and the governess notes of the school’s letter, “They go into no particulars. They simply express their regret that it should be impossible to keep him. They can have but one meaning. [...] That he is an injury to the others” (James 2008: 128-129), James’s governess is immediately suspicious and automatically assigns Miles a dubious and active role. In Harding’s novel, Florence identifies the precise reasons for Giles’s return to Blithe by quoting from the school letter:

‘a too timid and fragile disposition for the hurly-burly of a lively boys’ school’, ‘not sufficiently mature or academically advanced’, ‘one or two incidents which, although trivial in themselves, give cause for concern, given his somewhat

vulnerable nature' [...] It obviated that Giles's simple nature had led him to be bullied. (Harding 2010: 70)

Giles, "who is as fast of limb as he is not of wit" and "has not many talents" (Harding 2010: 5, 9), represents an obsolete and exaggerated version of the iconic innocent Romantic child with whom many Victorians were obsessed. This model is less functional than the 'new' pragmatic and empowered model of childhood that the reader may initially consider Florence to embody. Giles is supposedly incapable of defending himself or fulfilling the role of the male heir. Displaying "a talent for melodrama" and crying when Miss Taylor criticises his table manners (Harding 2010: 136, see also 84), Giles frequently behaves in a feminised way,¹¹ although he does not appear to share Miles's potential (homo)sexual complicity with the adults, which various scholars, particularly in the field of queer studies, have detected in James's narrator's comment that "Quint and the boy had been perpetually together" (James 2008: 163).¹²

Giles's weak position enables Florence to justify her own behaviour. Whereas she rejects the conventional Victorian category of naïve child for herself, she paradoxically assigns it to her brother. Giles's inferiority leads to Florence's assertion to "never again let him into the world where he would be evilled and tortured [...]" (Harding 2010: 71). Florence's protective stance toward Giles is clearly reminiscent of the governess in James's novella, who feels responsible for being

there to protect and defend the little creatures in the world the most bereaved and the most lovable, the appeal of whose helplessness had suddenly become only too explicit [...]. They had nothing but me, and I – well, I had *them*. (James 2008: 153, original emphasis)

As with Florence, the governess's protective instinct slowly reveals a threat, since it is likely that she kills Miles in the end. The initially maternal quality of Florence's defensive stance finally becomes her blinding obsession, evolving out of her appropriation of voice and space, both narrative and physical.

2. Claiming Space for the Neo-Victorian Child

The Turn of the Screw and *Florence & Giles* both express the children's resistance and agency in terms of space. On the first day at Bly, Flora's curious "confidence and courage, with the way, in empty chambers and dull corridors, on crooked staircases" (James 2008: 127), immediately strikes the governess. James's novella captures the children's appropriation of space as a key element by which they are able to subvert conventional notions of Victorian childhood, an idea that Harding's text takes up and foregrounds. Miles and Flora repeatedly leave their assigned domestic sphere in which they are almost constantly supervised by the governess. After Miles secretly goes out to the garden at midnight, his sister sneaks out of the house and rows a boat across the lake. When the governess and Mrs. Grose finally find Flora, she "stood before us on the grass and smiled as if her performance had now become complete. [...] She smiled and smiled" (James 2008: 210-211). As Richard Locke remarks, Flora's behaviour mirrors her brother's rebellion:

Her brother violated spatial and temporal rules by leaving his bed at night; she violates spatial rules by going farther away from the house during daylight. Her use of the boat is an indication of the strength of her urge to imitate his rebellion likewise to declare her independence and attract adult care. (Locke 2011: 95)

Despite numerous attempts, however, Miles and Flora are never able to find a sphere of their own. Although their secret excursions are powerful as strategies to frighten the governess, they are always just temporal retreats. In contrast, Florence's spatial resistance is not an open act of rebellion, but rather discreet. She does not visibly violate spatial structures, but again utilises loopholes in the manner of Foucauldian technologies of the self, which ultimately prove to be more effective because they last.

Like the children in *The Turn of the Screw*, Florence grows up in a cold and empty Gothic mansion, certainly not the ideal, warm, and protected environment the Victorians imagined for well-to-do children. With Giles still attending boarding school and the domestic staff working all day, Florence is left to take care of herself. When she secretly begins to read, she is paranoid about being caught and prevented from reading altogether. She

longs for a separate sphere for her secret activities where she might read without being supervised by any adults (see Harding 2010: 28). After staying in the library becomes too risky because of Theo's unpredictable visits,¹³ Florence sets off to explore places in the mansion that suit her purposes. She finally ends up climbing a rotten staircase that leads to the

top of the tower[, which] consisted of a single room, windowed on all sides. I stood there now, mistress of all I surveyed, fairtaled in my tower, Rapunzelled above all my known world. I looked around my new kingdom. [...] So here I was, princessed in my tower, blanketed at my desk, shivering some when the wind blew, but alone and able to read. (Harding 2010: 26-28)

In addition to the exciting and romantic fairytale atmosphere that Florence is able to enjoy here, the tower also enables her to exert agency and to be in control of her surroundings and her autodidacticism. Unlike Flora, Florence does not need a male role model. Florence implements the autonomous sphere that the governess cannot or does not want to grant Miles and Flora. The tower provides Florence with the Woolfian ideal of 'a room of her own'.

Florence's tower operates in the manner of a Foucauldian heterotopia, "a kind of effectively enacted utopia, in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault 1986: 24). The tower becomes a counter-site that temporarily inverts the asymmetrical and misogynistic power structures of Victorian child-rearing practices as depicted at the beginning of the novel. In her heterotopia, Florence exerts her technologies of the self as she educates herself. As Foucault notes, "Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like public space" (Foucault 1986: 26). Accordingly, Florence makes sure that nobody except her confidant Giles enters her space. Indeed, since she only takes Giles there to hide him when he is sedated with chloroform and he does not remember a thing afterwards, the tower remains Florence's undiscovered sphere. The tower is also the only place where Florence can escape her paranoid fear of being constantly under

Miss Taylor's surveillance.¹⁴ What is more, Florence is in charge of time; she develops a complex system in which the reading of a precise length of text becomes the interval in which she checks the driveway in case Theo appears, allowing her still enough time to run down to the door. Here she masters another essential characteristic of the heterotopia: "The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time" (Foucault 1986: 26). Florence reintroduces the order of time, which she is in danger of losing in the heterotopia, because the immersion she is able to experience whilst reading can make her forget time. Again, Florence is not entirely free of constraints, but rather makes use of adult self-control to reach her goals.

Comparison with James's pre-text further enhances the subversive quality of the tower. In *The Turn of the Screw* the tower symbolises the masculine sphere. The tower is the place where the unnamed governess, strolling through the garden of the estate, encounters the first apparition of Quint:

He did stand there! – but high up, beyond the lawn and at the very top of the tower [...]. This tower was one of a pair – square incongruous crenellated structures [...]. They flanked opposite ends of the house and were probably architectural absurdities, redeemed in a measure indeed by not being wholly disengaged nor of a height too pretentious, dating, in their gingerbread antiquity, from a romantic revival that was already a respectable past. I admired them, had fancies about them [...]. (James 2008: 135)¹⁵

The tower is also the part of Bly that Miles adores when he secretly sneaks into the garden at night. From her window below the top of the tower the governess sees Miles "motionless and as if fascinated, looking up to where I had appeared", only to realise that the boy is gazing "not so much straight at [her] as at something that was apparently above [her]. There was clearly another person above [her] – there was a person on the tower" (James 2008: 176). In both cases, the tower functions as a classic phallic symbol that represents Quint's power over the inhabitants of Bly, particularly females and the child with whom he probably had a paedophilic relationship. Florence's bird's-eye view from the tower simultaneously inverts the

governess's and Miles's low-angle perspectives and appropriates Quint's superior position. On the backdrop of Victorian gender relations, *Florence & Giles* radicalises the spatial resistance that James initiated in *The Turn of the Screw*.

At the same time, Florence's development presents what Andrea Kirchknopf has referred to as a "refashioning of the Victorian madness topos" (Kirchknopf 2008: 71). Florence's location in the tower is equally reminiscent of the nineteenth-century topos of 'the madwoman in the attic', most famously epitomised by Bertha Mason in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, which Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar outline in their seminal eponymous study. Although Bertha and Jane function as doubles, with the madwoman "acting out Jane's secret fantasies", the two women retain a degree of distinctness since "Bertha does (to say the least) provide the governess with an example of how not to act" (Gilbert and Gubar 2000: 361). In contrast, within the child Florence, reminiscent of the rebellious 'maddened' young Jane at the start of Brontë's novel, these identities of madwoman and child collapse into one. The madwoman, the governess in James's pre-text, becomes the mad child in *Florence & Giles*. In contrast to Bertha, Florence is not forced to stay in her version of the attic, but chooses to be there. Like Bertha, who eventually burns Thornfield down, Florence becomes dangerous as she begins to plan the murder of Miss Taylor and thereby enters the realm of contemporary anxieties about childhood, an aspect that I explore below.

3. The Murderous Neo-Victorian Child in Action

Various scholars, among them Mark Llewellyn, have identified the hybridity of neo-Victorian fiction, the merging of the past and present, as an essential paradigm that also informs neo-Victorian scholarship because it needs to recognise "the simultaneous existence of both narratives on the same page" (Llewellyn 2008: 170). According to Llewellyn, neo-Victorian texts

bring to the forefront of the debate a set of very *presentist* discourses that are part of that older, inherited tradition. The way we argue now is rooted in the nineteenth century, but one of the reasons for this is that we are still negotiating the

subjects of that earlier debate. (Llewellyn 2008: 172, original emphasis)

In the final section of this article, I aim to apply this principle to *Florence & Giles*. I claim that Harding's neo-Victorian novel not only deconstructs the Victorian notion of childhood innocence – and thereby reinvigorates James's agenda in *The Turn of the Screw* – but equally mirrors literary and cultural discourses on the state of childhood in contemporary Western society by delineating Florence as a perpetrator who steals, manipulates other characters, causes death by her denial of assistance to Theo, and eventually murders Miss Taylor. Florence's initially positive resistance changes for the worse in the final chapters of the novel. This shift indicates once more that Florence's second predecessor is the governess, whose hysteria and potentially murderous act Florence finally transcends.

Contemporary discourses on childhood express, as Jean Baudrillard's essay 'The Dark Continent of Childhood' aptly illustrates, the public fear that "childhood and adolescence are today becoming spaces doomed by abandonment to marginality and delinquency" (Baudrillard 2002: 102). Neil Postman went so far as to suggest in the 1980s that childhood is slowly disappearing altogether (see Postman 1994). Although such criticism might be justified in some cases, it often expresses adults' anxieties about childhood rather than an actual crisis.

However, transgression is a fundamental feature of childhood. Chris Jenks remarks that almost inevitably

children are both destined and required to transgress in a way that tests both society and social theory. They are placed in the powerless and strangely disadvantageous situation of always being required to submit to the violence of the existing socio-historical order, but they have not been pre-warned. Children 'learn the hard way' which is another way of saying that they consistently, either willingly or unwillingly, flout the norms, rules and conventions of their adults' society. Adults call it learning, maturation or socialization but whatever, its outcome is largely predictable. Children explore and exceed limits on a constant basis. (Jenks 2005: 122)

Nevertheless, childhood's inherent urge to transgress is paradoxically highly restricted by societal values and norms, especially in the context of delinquency and murder. The problematic aspect here is not so much that murder itself is necessarily always condemned, but rather that the possibility of a child being able to commit murder is eliminated in Western society on the basis of the still-dominant Romantic image of childhood. As Kathryn Bond Stockton demonstrates, the constructs of innocent childhood and malice have been symbolically and conceptually incompatible, since

for better or for worse, in the figure of the child, in the context of murder, we tend to take motives back to unspoiled, childlike feelings, and thus we undo murderous motives altogether, even as we seek the origins in childhood. For as we know, children are those peculiar legal creatures [...] who are generally deemed by the law not to have a motive to harm, or, most especially, any rational intent to kill. (Stockton 2009: 158)

Unsurprisingly, children have repeatedly committed murders, most infamously in 1993 when the toddler Jamie Bulger was abducted by two ten-year-old boys, who violently abused and finally killed him. In a thorough analysis of this case, Allison James and Chris Jenks conclude that

the murder was not just disturbing, but was, quite literally, unthinkable. Unthinkable, that is, because it occurred within the conceptual space of childhood which, prior to this breach, was conceived of – for the most part and for most children – as innocence enshrined. (James and Jenks 1996: 315)

A common strategy of the media to preserve the damaged concept of childhood innocence was to deprive the two boys of their status as children and to label them as little adults or children with adult minds (see James and Jenks 1996: 322).

In its depiction of Florence, *Florence & Giles* mirrors events such as the Bulger case, as well as the contemporary public anxiety of the dark potentials of childhood surrounding this case. Thereby, Harding's neo-Victorian novel displays an ideological break with the sentimentalisation of

Victorian and contemporary childhood. *Florence & Giles* objects to a major function of Victorian childhood, which Nelson has described as serving as “a kind of spiritual palate cleanser – a dose of innocence and purity protecting adult men, in particular, from the dubiousness of the public sphere” (Nelson 1999: 79). Florence clearly acts in her own interest, not necessarily in the interest of her adult reader, particularly when she decides to kill an adult character, Miss Taylor, and one of the innocent child characters, Theo Van Hoosier. *Florence & Giles* is less concerned with the mourning of the absence of parents than is *The Turn of the Screw*. Instead, it is a story about a child who frees herself from dependence by killing an unwanted surrogate parent.

The shocking aspect of *Florence & Giles* lies in the fact that Florence confesses her actions to the reader without ever being made legally responsible or accountable. Florence deliberately plots the murder of Miss Taylor and is openly joyful when she accomplishes her task, admitting, “I could not resist a little smile. That was it! [...] Nothing at all left to give me away” (Harding 2010: 256). Yet at the end of the novel Florence sits in her tower and looks at a panorama of white snow (see Harding 2010: 261), a recurring leitmotif throughout the novel, which symbolises the final misconception of her as an innocent child. In contrast, *The Turn of the Screw* offers a (possibly ironic or dysfunctional) mode of poetic justice; Flora is afflicted by illness and Miles dies at the end of the story, although their complicity remains, like the rest of the novella, largely indeterminable.

As a child character Florence is not only remarkable because she plans her actions, but also because she exhibits extraordinary self-awareness. Florence’s murderous acts might be, like the governess’s visions in *The Turn of the Screw*, a result of her madness, but Florence is fully aware of the fact that her doctor “pronounced me fit and well and told them it [her sleepwalking] was likely the manifestation of some anxiety disorder, which was only natural considering my orphan status and the upheavals of my early life” (Harding 2010: 46). Alluding once more to Victorian discourses of hysteria and femininity, Florence also quotes Theo, who repeatedly asks whether she is “imagining a bit strong here” (Harding 2010: 109). Florence imagines how Theo sees her as “a half-crazed girl in a state of unseemly disarray” and recognises the “fear [...] in his eyes. He had gone along with what he considered my madness” (Harding 2010: 194, 238). When Florence contacts Captain Hadleigh about Miss Taylor’s past, she

“sured he would think I am mad” (Harding 2010: 140). When Florence finds out that Miss Taylor has faked her credentials, however, she triumphs, “At last I had it, the proof, the ocular proof that I was not some crazy child” (Harding 2010: 202). Harding presents a child character who has an extraordinary ability to look at herself from other perspectives and also has a clear motive for her actions. As a child, Florence does not play, but acts.

When Florence finally kills Miss Taylor, she erases the symbolic boundary between the liability of adults and the innocence of children. Florence gives a detailed and satisfied account of the murder:

I swear I hit it [a branch] so hard you could hear her metacarpals snap, but she hung on for dear life, her knuckles white as bone. I swung again and caught her another one even harder than the first [...] I dropped the wood and flung my full weight at her and with both hands gave her such a shove that over she went, into the well. She was gone with a single scream. I had Hansel and Gretel her with one magnificent blow. (Harding 2010: 234)

This act exceeds the realm of technologies of the self. It constitutes an open transgression of moral, legal, and physical boundaries that Florence accepts as a necessary step to fulfil her mission. The killing puts a new complexion on James’s pre-text. As a successor of James’s governess, Florence’s violence resolves the ambiguity of the final scene in *The Turn of the Screw* and implies that the governess is also a murderess. Conversely, since Florence is a successor to Flora, Florence’s murder, which she commits in order to protect Giles, could be interpreted as a retroactive act of revenge on the governess in *The Turn of the Screw*, who might have killed Miles. But in addition to killing Miss Taylor, the representative of Victorian education, Florence also denies assistance to Theo, who dies because he has left his asthma spray behind (see Harding 2010: 239). Florence, the neo-Victorian child, kills Theo, the dependent Victorian child, both physically and ideologically. Again, Florence knows exactly what is going on. Theo’s death is not an accident, and Florence does not even try to present it as one to the reader. Rather, she justifies her deed with the words, “I recognised it had necessaried all along” (Harding 2010: 240).

Florence's concluding remark, "I somehow thought that this time I'd trapped her soul for good" (Harding 2010: 261), hints that Florence has also killed her first governess, Miss Whitaker, but was, despite strong suspicions on the part of the police, able to conceal her bad deed. Moreover, Florence is probably willing to kill the next governess in order to preserve her close relationship with Giles. Adding 'another turn' to the idea of maturing as a child, Florence is maturing not only as a girl, but also as a serial killer, learning more each time she kills someone. After her second murder, no suspicions arise at all.

Despite its potential to shock the reader, Harding's delineation of a child murderess is no new phenomenon, but rather emulates the tradition of the child characters in Anglo-American horror films and literature. By the 1970s, as Julian Petley has pointed out, "the monstrous child had come of cinematic age" (Petley 1999: 98). In countless films, among them *The Bad Seed* (1956), *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), and *The Exorcist* and *The Omen* (both from 1976), child characters have not only murdered adults, but also their playmates. *The Nightcomers*, the filmic prequel to *The Turn of the Screw*, broke this taboo before Harding's novel:

The Nightcomers has the children themselves arrange and accomplish the deaths of the two lovers [Jessel and Quint]. They manage to sink the boat the governess is in so that she drowns, and they orchestrate the circumstances of the death of the drunken Quint so as not to be held responsible. (Tintner 1998: 378-379)

What is more, novels such as Iain Bank's *The Wasp Factory* (1984), Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* (1992), and Pat Barker's *Border Crossing* (2001) have examined the psychological frameworks of child murderers in the manner of first-person and third-person narratives. *Florence & Giles* thus makes use of a variety of contemporary discourses on childhood and transfers these to a Victorian setting. What many contemporary works have in common is that they reverse the separation of children and adults that the Victorians were so eager to maintain where the middle class was concerned. Like many contemporary novels, *Florence & Giles* mirrors a view expressed in Marina Warner's apt response to the state of childhood in the aftermath of the Bulger case:

Many of these [contemporary] problems [with childhood] result from the concept that childhood and adult life are separate when they are in effect inextricably intertwined. Children aren't separate from adults, and unlike Mowgli or Peter Pan, can't be kept separate; they can't live innocent lives on behalf of adults [...]. Children are our copy in little. (Warner 1994: 48)

Florence & Giles does not deny childhood as such, but rather demands new ways to think about childhood today. It also urges its adult readers to rethink Victorian representations of childhood in both Victorian and neo-Victorian literature and scholarship. Harding can finally only free his child protagonist from adults' fantasies because Florence eventually does what only adults are traditionally considered to be capable of. Harding's radical moves in terms of voice, space, and agency are, in turn, only possible at the expense of losing James's brilliant ambiguity, the feature that has made *The Turn of the Screw* one of the most exciting and passionately debated literary texts in the Anglo-American tradition.

Besides explicating the textual reworkings of childhood in Harding, one of the contributions I seek to make in my analysis is methodological. I suggest that it is the interplay and comparison between James's original and Harding's reworking that allows one of the most profitable ways to study the aporias of Victorian conceptions of childhood. Both texts enhance each other reciprocally. This potential has not gone unnoticed by Harding's publishers, who have recently released an e-book version of *Florence & Giles* that also contains James's novella. As this article has argued, current ideas of childhood are inseparable from those of the nineteenth century. This circumstance makes the genre of neo-Victorian reworkings an immensely valuable source for new insights on the topic of childhood – a source that will repay more scholarly attention in the years to come.

Notes

1. I borrow the term "pre-text" from Widdowson 2006.

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2. I adopt the term “research novel” from Robin Gilmour, who conceives of this form as “a work which, recognizing the prominence which the study of Victorian literature and culture plays in contemporary academic life, builds that into the structure of the novel, making it the subject or focus of the book” (Gilmour 2000: 190). I prefer the term ‘research novel’ to ‘campus novel’ in this case because *A Jealous Ghost* depicts the protagonist’s departure from university rather than her life on campus.
 3. T. J. Lustig’s notes in the Oxford World’s Classics edition of *The Turn of the Screw* suggest that “‘Bly’ is a doubly directed word and suggests both ‘blithe’ and ‘blight’” (Lustig in James 2008: 251). In turn, this portmanteau effect corresponds to Florence’s observation that “Blithe is two-hearted, one warm, one cold [...]” (Harding 2010: 6).
 4. Perhaps not coincidentally, 1891 was the year in which Henry James published his short story ‘The Pupil’, which contains yet another of his ambivalent child characters.
 5. Among various other scholars, Ellis Hanson has suggested that the children’s knowledge is of a sexual kind: “Miles is a literary milestone, as is his sister, Flora, in that they mark a most distinguished beginning to the tradition of the sexual child as gothic conundrum in the English novel” (Hanson 2003: 367). In *Florence & Giles* the aspect of sexuality is almost absent as a topic in Florence’s account, which enables Harding to free his child character from yet another form of the Victorian obsession with childhood.
 6. For an excellent article that applies Foucault’s theory to childhood, see Wallace 1995.
 7. The intertextual reference to Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* appears in both works. Florence reads the novel (Harding 2010: 15), and the governess compares the events at Bly to “a mystery of Udolpho” (James 2008: 138).
 8. Harding adapts the motif of the mirror from *The Turn of the Screw*, where the governess, Florence’s predecessor, notices “the long glasses in which, for the first time, I could see myself from head to foot” (James 2008: 124).
 9. Here, Florence’s manipulation of the reader certainly relates back to James’s text, which similarly plays with the reader’s simultaneous sympathy for the governess and growing sense of consternation over her increasingly violent interventions and emotional instability.
 10. Comparing the film *The Others* to its literary pre-text *The Turn of the Screw*, Heilmann identifies a similar reversion of the gender roles of the child characters: “[T]he children are given a much more active role in *The Others*;

this is particularly the case for Anne. The position of the siblings is here reversed; it is Anne who is the elder, feistier, more self-confident, and rebellious character who consistently challenges Grace's authority, whereas Nicholas is timid, obedient, and all-too easily terrified" (Heilmann 2010: 128).

11. Theo Van Hoosier, although older and more active than Giles, is another weak male child character. Florence describes him as "a huge epileptic heron" (Harding 2010: 34), who writes kitschy poetry and often has to stay indoors because of his asthma. His underestimation of Florence's destructive power ultimately leads to his death.
12. For analyses of childhood and *The Turn of the Screw* from the perspective of queer studies, see Hanson 2003 and Ohi 2005.
13. In *The Turn of the Screw*, the library is only mentioned once. Before the governess encounters Quint for the third time, she sits in a "roomful of old books at Bly" (James 2008: 169).
14. In Florence's paranoia, Harding exaggerates the surveillance that the governess in *The Turn of the Screw* imposes upon the children. Florence complains, "[W]herever I went in the house, she would be watching me, for she had sentinelled the whole place [...]" (Harding 2010: 153).
15. The description of the Blithe towers in *Florence & Giles* is strikingly similar to James's passage: "Blithe House had two towers, one at the end of either wing. They were mock gothic, all crenellations, like ancient fortresses, and neither was used at all any more" (Harding 2010: 24).

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