
Sexual Repression As A Key Theme In The Turn Of The Screw

The Victorian Age was the time in literature that was linked to the leadership of Queen Victoria. This was the time that all attention was directed towards nature and morality. It was regarded that romance and love for the opposite sex were not moral. Henry James, therefore, took advantage of this time to communicate with people about the things that existed in the lives of many. Even if romance was considered immoral, biology could still force some to stay thinking about the opposite sex. Repression is the act of hiding one's feelings of sexual desires; this idea was evident in *Governess*, whom the writer chose to carry the theme to the end of the story. The writer organized the story in a way that the Governess was to take the role of being mentally ill for her to tell us about some of the inner things that we cannot easily get to understand from people especially in the Victorian time that different sexes were considered not trustable and they would promote immorality. The best way to keep natural then had to involve a mental disorder in making her speak about some two people disturbing her.

The Governess is seen to be a powerful person in the story; she is devoted to serving the people, and she manages to use her authority to fulfill her demands. She, however, fails to fulfill the demand of finding a lover. She feels like she loves some men who are involved in the whole context, but she does not agree with the situation. She manages to think of a man appearing in front of her. This was evident in the context where she said: 'someone would appear there at the turn of a path and would stand before me and smile and approve' (15). This statement turned out to be describing Peter Quint. She behaved like she never cared about the man but in some way, she even called him handsome. On some occasions, she managed to consider him looking good even if she could regard him as someone who does not have power. His humble nature was however important in her life, but it did not manage to make her show her feelings.

The Governess was brought out in the context as someone who, despite being a leader, managed to be frightened by ghosts that she claimed to see in her life. At some point, she even thought that she might go the wrong way and lose her role when she did flirt with men. Her attitudes are evident in the way she treated Quint; she does not trust the male gender and hates Quint when he appears to her. Even if he appears as a ghost, she still managed to see him as someone looking nicely. His looks are evident in the Governesses words, which she said: 'in somebody's clothes. They're smart, but they're not his own' (23). The ghosts that come into her life as metaphors; they were meant to make him understand the other side of her that she did not want to admit to. The Two ghosts even went with the children whom they managed to change to become different. The sexual feelings that her two children had been evident in the children because they loved the company of Miss Jessel and Peter Quint. Even if she does not agree that the children are gone, she fought to the end where she managed to become a loser that she was meant to. This story of the children was symbolic in a way because James made it look to her like the children wanted to indulge in friendship with the opposite sex, but the mother did not want; hence, it indicated the fight she had with the inner soul and her status as the Governess.

The hidden feelings in the Governess are also evident in this context: 'this prospective patron proved a gentleman, a bachelor in the prime of life, such a figure as had never risen, save in a

dream or an old novel, before a fluttered anxious girl out of Hampshire vicarage' (4). The statement came from her mouth and she indicated that she loved the master. She seems to think that men are bad, but it turns out to be ironical in the way she calls the master handsome. The master was also used in the story as a metaphor in representing men and how women viewed them in the Victorian Age. The decision by the writer to introduce the master in the story was a symbolic way of making the Governess look like a lovesick individual who is obsessed with what she wants to be but forgetting her inner spirit and biological composition. She seems to consider men as enemies, but she manages to interact with the master in the context and with this, she again experiences moments where she thought about him and wished to have him. The occurrence of different events in this context makes the whole context sound like a reflection of most of the things that controlled the actions of different people in society during the Victorian time. This was the best time for the writer to compose this story because it was the time that literature could be developed out of what people did. It is indisputable to say that the context never had the theme of repression in it. The whole context and all things that the Governess did contribute to this theme. The ghosts came in the plot to enable the Governess to express the theme right from her actions and words.

In general, we cannot deny that most of the things that the Governess did in her life were aimed at covering what the heart spoke to her. Just like most of the women of the Victorian time, she managed to fall in love with many men but still managed to hate them and keep off their company as a way to promote the repression theme. The theme is evident in many other actions and words that the Governess was involved in. She managed to ensure she never disappointed James in expressing the theme as he wanted.

Work cited

1. James, Henry. *The Turn of The Screw*. Dover Thrift ed., Dover Publications, 1991.