An Exploration of the Symbolic Meaning of Miss Giddens' Imagination with Freudian Theory

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Abstract: Henry James succeeds in establishing "the tone of tragic yet exquisite mystification" in The Turn of the Screw (1898), making the story and his own remarks seem ambiguous. When the novel was adapted into the film The Innocents in 1961, director Jack Clayton managed to maintain the complex ambiguity built into the novel. This essay will use Freud and Crick's The Interpretation of Dreams (1999) as the main psychoanalytic theory to explore the meaning of the symbols that appeared in Miss Giddens' hallucinations and the inner motivation of her behaviours. Based on Freud's psychoanalytic theory, this essay defines the phenomenon encountered by Miss Giddens in The Innocents as a hallucination resulting from long-term sexual repression. Miss Giddens' long-suppressed religious and moral sexual urges are aroused by Mr Redgrave without being given a vent, which results in a gradual hallucination. Miss Giddens' hallucinations are filled with sexual symbolism and innuendo. Religious and moral repression causes her to feel fear and anxiety while failing to control her sexual imagination, which triggers the final behaviour of expulsion in the name of redeeming the children.

Keywords: Symbolic meaning; Freudian Theory; hallucination; sexual imagination

1. Introduction

The Innocents is a film adaptation of Henry James' novel The Turn of the Screw, from a screenplay co-written by William Archibald and Truman Capote, and directed by British director Jack Clayton, with a noticeable Victorian polish to the dialogue modified by John Mortimer. The Innocents is a masterpiece in terms of cinematography, musical score, and text composition. Since the film was adapted first from a novel and then from a stage drama, there were comparisons of scripts, cinematography, lighting and dialogue, as well as audience feedback, until the film's release in 1961. François Roland Truffaut describes it as the best British film since Sir Alfred Hitchcock left Britain, and Martin Charles Scorsese ranks it in his top ten of horror films, even as Pauline Kael praises it as the best horror film she has ever seen. In addition, for the sake of creating a more palpable horror atmosphere ^{[1][2]}, Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation abandoned the use of the iconic logo to introduce the film with the heroine's prayer. However, both past and present audiences still more or less overlook this psychological suspense piece with a distinctly gothic style. Crowther reviews that The Innocents might be boring to the viewer who has a taste for horror films and is familiar with horror films' formulae, plots, and techniques^[3]. In other words, if audiences are simply looking for the audio-visual stimulation of a horror film, especially for contemporary audiences, The Innocents would not fulfil the entertainment nature of the film as an experience. This might explain why The Innocents suffered a disastrous failure at the box office during its UK release, even with the celebrity of its famous actress Deborah Kerr, yet it attracted considerable praise from the critics and scholars while being nominated for Cannes that same year session. In addition, Palmer describes The Innocents as an intelligently-made film, in which the anxiety displayed by Miss Giddens and the ambiguity of the novel towards Mr Qunit and Miss Jessel are preserved ^[4]. All of these require a considerable level of emotional and intellectual capacity for the audience to explore and appreciate thoroughly.

Although the film is not a popular subject with audiences, it is still being discussed by scholars in a range of fields, including but not limited to an in-depth interpretation of the genre, the name of the film, and even the set lighting and the nursery rhymes used in the soundtrack. Due to director Clayton and the screenwriter Capote's insistence on an ambiguous narrative, the partial leaving -blank of the main plots and the ambiguity of the ending allow the film's main characters to be analysed thoroughly from several perspectives. Therefore, the majority of the controversy is still focused on Miss Giddens. Regarding the question of whether Miss Giddens' experience is a supernatural phenomenon or a hallucination triggered by psychological anxiety, literary theorist Edmund Wilson insists that the paranormal phenomena

portrayed in the film are the result of Miss Giddens' sexual repression and paranoia^[5]. It leads to a discussion about what exactly Miss Giddens' motivations are for the rescue of Miles and Flora. Therefore, this article will use Freud and Crick's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1999) as the main psychoanalytic theory to explore the meaning of the symbols that appeared in Miss Giddens' hallucinations and the inner motivation of her behaviours.

2. Plot and Genre

Beautiful and young governess Miss Giddens has been offered a job by handsome and wealthy bachelor Redgrave to look after his orphaned nephew Miles and niece Flora on the country manor Bly after her father's death because the previous governess, Miss Jessel, passed away bizarrely a year ago. Redgrave requests that Miss Giddens take full and complete responsibility for the care of the children and that he is not disturbed because he enjoys his freedom and admits in no uncertain terms that he has no room for his niece and nephew, neither mentally nor emotionally. When Miss Giddens arrives in isolated Bly, she is attracted to the sophisticated Miles and the stunning Flora, as well as quickly develops a friendship with Mrs Grose, the grandmotherly housekeeper. Flora has predicted the issue is expelled from school even before he returns to Bly House. To this, Miss Giddens is not concerned at first, but soon she notices the children's occasional secretive behaviours and that she is constantly witnessing a male and female figure in the House and hearing peculiar noises. After repeated questioning of the housekeeper, Mrs Grose, Miss Giddens deduces that the figures only she meets are the ghosts of the dead maid, Mr Quint, and the former governess, Miss Jessel, who have possessed the children. Then Miss Giddens set out to rescue the children in her way for the love of them. As a result, Flora is taken away from Bly by the housekeepers and Miles dies in the arms of Miss Giddens.

In terms of the discussion of The Innocents genre, some professional researchers in film studies consider this film not a supernatural horror film, but a psychological horror film. In the beginning, director Clayton considered that the definition of the ghosts encountered by Miss Giddens in Archibald's screenplay as legitimate entities ^[6] undermined his intention to pursue the ambiguity of James's writing style in the original novel. He chose Capote's screenplay because Capote's adaptation incorporates a psychological component that allows Miss Giddens' inner evil and anxiety to be interpreted from a completely different perspective, even to the extent of representing it as Freudian hallucinations ^[7]. In other words, the so-called phantoms that Miss Giddens witnesses and the strange voices that she hears originate from her own hallucinations. The Innocents visualises the disturbances and evils experienced by the governess's psyche, while the figures of Mr Quint and Miss Jessel are the physical embodiment of Miss Giddens' psychotic anxiety. As a result, what the audience is presented with through Miss Giddens' eyes at the Bly Manor is supposed to be an interweaving of reality and phantasm, which leads to a strange and disturbing feeling or even a hazy sense of vagueness in relation to the virtual time and space created by the film. Ultimately, the portrayal of the characters' relationships in the film could be interpreted from a number of perspectives depending on different psychoanalysis theories. It would be more reasonable and meaningful to analyse the behaviours and motivations of Miss Giddens on a psychological level rather than explaining them by paranormal phenomena.

3. The interview Scene

3.1 Character Design

The interview scene at the beginning of the film, which is the beginning of the film's overall story, contains a number of significant and decisive contents. First of all, through the dialogue between Miss Giddens and Mr Redgrave during the interview, the audience is initially introduced to a general setting of the two characters. Secondly, the communication between the two during the interview scene and the occasional body contact at the end are the origins and triggers of Miss Giddens' subsequent bizarre experiences in Bly House.

Mr Redgrave's frank self-examination at the beginning demonstrates that he is a charming and wealthy bachelor who enjoys travelling and appreciates social flexibility Mr Redgrave's honest confession that he does not care for his nephew and niece is embellished with his inherent selfishness in the name of honesty and sincerity as a unique attraction. Through Miss Giddens' reaction to Mr Redgrave's statements and the details of their conversation, Miss Giddens' innocent and uninitiated appearance is implicitly established. Furthermore, her deceased priest father imposes a religious taboo on Miss Giddens' psychological allusion to innocence. When Mr Redgrave repeatedly queries Miss

Giddens about whether she loves children and acts as a kind person, her emphatic response also illustrates her intense femininity. These are the most basic portrayals of Miss Giddens' character, which set the context for Miss Giddens' subsequent sexual arousals and repression.

3.2 First Sexual Arousal of Miss Giddens

The final sequence in the interview scene might be interpreted as Miss Giddens' first sexual arousal. From the interview conversation, it is clear that Miss Giddens' father was a priest, which makes it possible to explain the profound obsession with innocence and the taboo on sexuality as a religiously influenced nineteenth-century young woman. Foucault in 1990 contends that the intensity of sexual repression in the 19th century was traced back to a new division in sexuality by the differences between social classes ^[8], which derived its danger from the fact that sexuality was still subject to a permanent silence. Moreover, he points out that in the 19th century, the Christian pastoral regulated sexuality only in the context of marriage ^[8]. According to Miss Giddens' contemporary and family background, it is possible to deduce that she lives in an atmosphere where sexual desires have been suppressed for an extended period. The death of her priest father launches her out of the previously constructed world of absolute innocence and into a world of allure, which results in Miss Giddens' long-term repressed sexuality becoming out of control. Raw concludes that fast-changing sexual and gender attitudes contribute to Miss Giddens' dilemma of not being able to get a balance between what she expects and reality ^[9].

Sigmund Freud views the theory of the instincts as a "mythical entity" of human beings with "magnificent in their indefiniteness"^[10] in 1965. Miss Giddens' irreducible human sexual instinct, from the perspective of Sigmund Freud's interpretation of the relationship between human beings and God ^[11], is a primordial and eternal force that human beings have to confront at all times and in all places, with a paradoxical duality. In the interview scene, Miss Giddens initially does not simply embrace the sexual desires provoked by Mr Regrave. The moral and religious restraints of external indoctrination bring her conflict with her sexual instincts. However, under the three steps of Mr Redgrave's strategy, the primitive sexual urges of Miss Giddens have been secretly aroused without her being aware of it.

In the beginning, Mr Redgrave is presented to Miss Giddens as a well-spoken, attractive and wealthy bachelor. As the daughter of a country priest, Miss Giddens has had no previous experience of dealing with a mature and unattainable male with such an aura of power. Nevertheless, because of her long-term religious, familial and moral repression, she maintains her wariness and constancy of innocence while being attracted to a unique type of person she has never met before. Then, the tone of dominance gradually flows from Mr Redgrave's words. The composition of the interview scene noticeably shows that Mr Redgrave is consistently looking over Miss Giddens from a position of superiority. It is noticeable that the expression of Mr Redgrave's forceful requirements is also a form of empowerment for Miss Giddens. With an aggressive tone, Mr Redgrave endows Miss Giddens with his status as the symbol of the ultimate authority of Bly House so that Miss Giddens, as a young country girl, submits to Mr Redgrave's masculinity with her adoration of empowerment. Sigmund Freud believed that sex is not just about genitality, but also about the capacity for symbolisation in human beings ^[11], which means the sexual instinct is polymorphic and substitutable. In other words, the sexual urges that Mr Redgrave arouses in Miss Giddens might be sublimated into the satisfaction of being empowered by the ultimate leader and thus being granted a symbol of power. This transition of power is also the starting point for the subsequent natural power struggle between Miss Giddens and Miles, the only biologically male in Bly House.

In the final scene of the interview, Mr Redgrave occupies in large part the left side of the picture, with his body slightly bent, which is a slight expression of tenderness towards Miss Giddens However, the difference in height between the two figures, one standing and one sitting, still maintains Mr Redgrave's dominant demeanour. Furthermore, he takes closer to look down on Miss Giddens, which exerts further pressure on her. Mr Redgrave then, with a subtle tone of supplication, invites her to take over Bly House and take over full and complete responsibility for Miles and Flora, including love. Mr Redgrave draws on the innate maternal nature of Miss Giddens' strong femininity to undermine Miss Giddens' adherence to innocence. The first sexual urge reaches a peak in the next moment when Mr Redgrave holds Miss Giddens' hand of his own accord. As Mr Redgrave's hands cover the entirety of Miss Giddens' hand, Miss Giddens raises her eyes to look into the eyes of her employer, Mr Redgrave, with a shift from initial hesitation and apprehension to a moment of astonishment, which turns into a sense of adoration and satisfaction. There is a change in Miss Giddens' reaction after Mr Redgrave takes his hand away is the most revealing evidence of her first sexual arousal. When Mr Redgrave's hands leave, Miss Giddens' hand still stays in its initial position, reveiling in the satisfaction of the first physical

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touch. She then withdraws her hand to her chest and her eyes look affectionately at Mr Redgrave with the reassurance of taking the job. At this stage, Miss Giddens is so absorbed in the pleasure and satisfaction of her first sexual arousal that she is not aware of the psychological distortions caused by the long-standing sexual repression in her interior, but rather the subconscious resistance caused by the long-standing constraints of religion and morality during the process of her sexual instincts being aroused. This sequence confirms Sigmund Freud's statement that even Eros is not in complete harmony with civilisation, so there is an irreconcilable contradiction between the urge for sexual satisfaction and the symbol of human sublimation ^[12]. To be more specific, the repression caused by civilisation is irreconcilably balanced with the satisfaction of following one's instincts and the sublimation of human love.

4. Symbolic Item Reflects Inner

The Innocents' main scenes and the interior sequences were shot on sound stages at Shepperton, which provided much help from the art department. The on-location exterior sequences were shot in the Gothic mansion of Sheffield Park in East Sussex. Given all of these privileges, director Clayton's excellent aesthetic mastery provides the film with a great deal of elaborate set and lighting. Moreover, director Clayton's and screenwriter Capote's alignment of the purpose of maintaining the ambiguity of the novel results in the sense of beauty and ambiguity in the dialogue as well as in the imagery of the film^[2], which combines the black abyss of religion and the corruption of innocence to create a masterful work of art. Arnheim suggests that in works of art, based on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, each element has a symbolic meaning that represents the transcendence of a particular self ^[13]. In the ornate and creepy Gothic manor of Bly House, gardens, sculptures, tall towers, mirrors and a tiny dark loft at the end of a winding staircase - classic elements of the horror film - combine with Miss Giddens' tour guide-style exploration of the manor and the interplay of reality and illusion so that every element in the film's frame is imbued with subtle symbolic meaning.

4.1 Symbolic Item: White Rose

The first symbolic element in the film is the white rose adorning on Mr Redgrave's right shoulder. According to the above analysis, during the interview, Mr Redgrave's behaviour evokes a long-repressed sexual desire in Miss Giddens's mind. In subsequent plots, Mr Redgrave himself does not return to Miss Giddens' actual life. Miss Giddens is also fully aware that Mr Redgrave will not show up again because, from the beginning, Mr Redgrave has made it quite clear that he enjoys travelling the world and emphasises social freedom. So Miss Giddens arrives at Bly House with a passion for sexuality but finds herself ruthlessly ignored by Mr Redgrave in this isolated manor. The figure of Mr Redgrave then appears repeatedly around Miss Giddens in the form of the white rose that he wore on his right shoulder at the beginning. When Miss Giddens first arrives at the House, a conversation with the housekeeper, Mrs Grose, reveals that she is proactively steering the conversation toward a discussion with Mr Redgrave. After hearing Mrs Grose's comments about her charming employer, Mr Redgrave, Miss Giddens asks Mrs Grose as if talking to herself, "He doesn't come down here very often? "[14] with a subtle sense of frustration and self-consolation in her tone. Once she receives the definitive answer from Mrs Grose, Miss Giddens walks to the mirror, which is decorated with a gorgeous bouquet of white roses and gazes at her reflection in the mirror before setting her eyes on the white roses in front of the mirror in a thoughtful mood. In film analysis, the mirror is a vital psychoanalytical element because it not only expands the physical space of the image, but also extends the inner world of the character. Miss Giddens gazes at herself reflected in the mirror with a sense of examining her actual inner self. Due to a long period of repression and sudden arousal, there are two figures in Miss Giddens's world: the figure of Miss Giddens standing in front of the mirror and the figure of Miss Giddens reflected in the mirror. From a psychoanalytical point of view, although Miss Giddens is split by the mirror into two personalities, Miss Giddens herself already is unable to distinguish whether what is in the mirror is a hidden reality or an imaginary illusion. The origin of Miss Giddens' blending of illusion and reality is the white rose next to the mirror. It could also be described as a symbol of Mr Redgrave, which is the source of Miss Giddens' sexual urge.

According to Freud et al.'s classification of Id, Ego and Super-ego^[15], Miss Giddens has a violent conflict between her Id and her Super-ego in front of the mirror. Schacter further explains Sigmund Freud's concept of the Id as an inherent instinct that follows only the pleasure principle without concern for social regulations^[16]. His analysis of Freud's Id, Ego, and Super-ego is complemented by Cherry's recent study that Sigmund Freud believes that all mental energy was generated by sexual desire, which

Ego requires a great deal of energy when preventing the socially unacceptable demands of the Id, resulting in repression ^[17]. In other words, Miss Giddens' Id reflects her primary sexual desire for Mr Redgrave, while her Super-ego is regulated by the religious as well as moral principles of her priest father, which develops an antagonistic conflict reconciled by her Ego. This reconciliation process takes a tremendous amount of energy. However, Miss Giddens' sexual desires have already been aroused by Mr Redgrave and she spends her days living in Mr Redgrave's property, Bly House, where she is completely uncontrollable in her sexual desires for Mr Redgrave, thereby the repression is further deepened to anxiety. This is also the painful origin of Miss Giddens' subsequent hallucinations. Furthermore, when Miss Giddens decides to repel the corruption of Miles and Flora by Mr Quint and Miss Jessel in the name of salvation, she prays beside the fire, dressed in white and holding a Bible. Freud claims that "God "is "the oldest, strongest, and most fervent wishes of humanity" [18]. Freud's analysis of "God" is further interpreted by Downing's study that human beings find themselves associated with the authoritative powers of sex, death and society in the process of being embodied ^[11], which affect them both outside and inside. In a nutshell, Sigmund Freud considers "God" to be the "instinct" of human beings. In combination with Miss Giddens' description of her priest father, it is apparent that Miss Giddens was profoundly influenced by her family and religion. The Superego of Miss Giddens constantly implies that she must adhere to innocence to a large extent from her priest father figure. According to Snowden's interpretation of the Freudian psychoanalytic theory, he suggests that the Superego is a symbolic assimilation of father figures and cultural norms and due to the conflict over the object, the Superego is inclined to be on the opposite side of the Id's primordial desire [19]. Then, as Miss Giddens places the Bible on the table, a white rose petal falls on its surface, which symbolises the intense conflict in Miss Giddens' mind between adherence to religious innocence and the pursuit of sexual impulses following the Id. Miss Giddens, dressed in white, sits beside a fireplace decorated with phallus-shaped adornments, which looks like a depraved angel falling to the edge of hellfire.

4.2 Symbolic Item: Phallus

Another representative symbol in cinema is the various phallic-shaped decorations or buildings, as well as long and thin corridors and staircases. Freud and Crick's The Interpretation of Dreams summarises symbols with sexual significance, suggesting that long, thin or sharp objects could be represented as phallic, objects with the function of a container could be represented as a womb, narrow corridors could be represented as a vagina, stairs and ladders are a symbolic representation of the sexual activity ^[20]. From the moment Miss Giddens arrives at Bly House, every time she is plunged into the confusion of reality and imagination, there is a tour-guide style exploration of the manor. The camera follows Miss Giddens' path and gradually reveals the Gothic style of Bly House within the contrasting light and shadows. The use of bold minimal lighting and deep focus by cinematographer Freddie Francis makes the contrasting light and shade noticeable in the whole film so that it is no surprise that the contours of the sculptures, stair railings, candles, towers, pavilions, obelisks and other decorative objects or buildings in the manor have a similar overall shape to that of a penis. At the beginning of the film, these phallic-shaped decorations are not quite distinct and are only a vague shape in the background of the scene. However, when Miss Giddens takes Miles back to Bly House, these phallic-shaped decorations become increasingly apparent. At this moment, the presence of Miles for Miss Giddens is more of a projection or a substitution for the sexual urge toward Mr Redgrave. However, Miss Giddens is a religious governess whose Ego constantly suppresses the Id's instinctive pursuit of sexuality due to her super-ego's fear of punishment for breaking the rules. She then justifies her inner urge for the pursuit of her sexual instincts as innocent and selfless love for the kids. Through this explanation, Miss Giddens alleviates the guilt of projecting her sexual instincts toward Mr Redgrave onto his nephew, Miles. Freud and Crick suggest that sexual repression can transfer feelings that are supposed to be reflected in the genitals to other places ^[20]. In other words, the subsequent and constant phantasies of Miss Giddens witnessing the figure of a male standing on the tower are, in fact, a painful transference of her repressed sexual instincts. Boag explains that Sigmund Freud considers 'screen memories' to be repressed not as painful memories per se, but as desires, urges and phantasies associated with painful memories ^[21]. For Miss Giddens, the origin of the pain is Mr Regrave's sexual attraction, while her increasingly intense hallucinations in Bly House repress the desire to satisfy sexual instincts and the illusion of abandonment that extends from Mr Regrave.

Symbols with sexual connotations not only fill Miss Giddens' hallucinations, but also manifest in her dreams. Initially, Miss Giddens tells Mrs Grose that she decides to get help from the local priest after seeing several appearances of phantoms, but the same night she dreams of all the previous phantasies reappearing together. The priest mentioned, for Miss Giddens, could be interpreted as the last religious external support for the insistence of the super-ego on innocence, since under Miles' constant stimulation,

Miss Giddens is overwhelmed by her instinctive sexual urges, which cause the hallucinations to become increasingly severe and gradually appear as anxiety in her dreams. Freud and Crick analyse that anxiety in dreams may derive from psychosexual stimulation, in which case it corresponds to a repressed sexual urge ^[20]. This explains why Miss Giddens decides to go to the priest the next day and she continues to have dreams that overlap with the hallucinations with the overall mood at a tense rhythm at night. Miss Giddens' dream entrance is a floor-to-ceiling window with bars. Halttunen et al. contend that the windows symbolise the boundaries that humans fear and desire to cross ^[22]. In Miss Giddens' case, the boundary is adherence to innocence and the indulgence of instinctive sexual impulses. The partitioned bars on the windows symbolise religious and moral disciplines and suppression, yet the floor-to-ceiling window, which symbolised the entrance to Miss Giddens' dream, was fully open. According to Heilmann and Llewellyn's and Pulham's analysis of windows in neo-Victorian Gothic horror, the role of the window could be interpreted as a filter, which symbolises the authentic inner being as close as possible ^{[23][24]}. In other words, Miss Giddens has inwardly approached the pursuit of instinctive sexual impulses.

Then in Miss Giddens' dream, there is a tall tower shaped like a phallus, on which stands a gradually discernible Mr Quint, with the fluttering sound of pigeons flying in the background, followed by the next frame of many pigeons flying away Freud and Crick contend that most dreams of adults are about sexual material and are interpreted as expressions of erotic whishes ^[20]. For instance, a flying object could be analogous to the male genitalia because the form of flying symbolises erotic erection. This could account for why Mr Quint's appearances are always accompanied by the cooing of pigeons or the sound of pigeons flying, as the pigeons at that moment symbolise Miss Giddens' instinctive greed for sexuality.

There are several symbolic items of Miss Giddens' hallucinations and dreams in the film, including a narrow dimension formed by a winding staircase, which ends in a tower of phallus where both Miles and Mr Quint have appeared. According to Freud and Crick's summary ^[20], Miss Giddens' climbing of the stairs represents the sexual activity in the hallucination, the narrow dimension created by the winding staircase corresponds to her vagina, and at the end of the staircase is the tall tower with its explicit phallic suggestion. It could be considered that Miss Giddens' consistent repression of the sexual desire without release results in her subsequent hallucinations being filled with the phallic and sexual suggestions.

5. Conclusion

There is still no consensus in film studies as to whether the ghosts encountered by Miss Giddens in The Innocents are paranormal or a figment of Miss Giddens' imagination, which is one of the aims of the director and screenwriter in constructing the story as an ambiguous narrative with a double helix structure. Dorothea Krook comments on the film's story structure as producing two self-consistent and completed meanings. Based on Freud's psychoanalytic theory, this paper defines the phenomenon encountered by Miss Giddens in *The Innocents* as a hallucination resulting from long-term sexual repression. With Freud and Crick's The Interpretation of Dreams (1999) as the primary theoretical reference, this article discusses the interpretation of Miss Giddens' hallucinations and the motivations for her behaviour. This article proposes that the sexual urges of Miss Giddens, which have been long suppressed by religion and morality, are first aroused by Mr Redgrave during the interview, but that the subsequent pain of finding herself abandoned by Mr Redgrave at Bly Housed and the lack of an outlet to her sexual desire results in a progressive hallucination. Miss Giddens' hallucinations are filled with sexual symbolism and innuendo. Religious and moral repression causes her to feel fear and anxiety while failing to control her sexual imagination, which triggers the final behaviour of expulsion in the name of redeeming the children. The relationship of Miss Giddens to Miles, the only real male in Bly House, and Mr Quint, the false ghost in the film, is not elaborated upon in this article. To further explore how Miss Giddens develops her hallucinations would require in-depth exploration of this in the future.

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