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Presence VS. Absence: A Study of Psychological Realism in Aloy's Presence of Mind (1999)

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Abstract

This paper aims at studying the juxtaposition of presence vs. absence in Aloy's Presence of Mind (1999) that occurs to be the cinematic adaptation of a short story by Henry James, i.e. "The Turn of the Screw" in the light of psychological realism. In this study, beside the psychology of characters, the style and aesthetics in this film as fine art are analyzed and the central female character's being stuck amid presence and absence and her endeavors to prove herself have also been discussed in the light of psychological realism.

Keywords: *Presence VS. Absence; Psychological Realism; Presence of Mind, Adaptation; The Turn of the Screw*

1. Introduction

Of all cinematic adaptations based upon the works written by Henry James, it is "The Turn of the Screw" (1898), which James referred to as his "sinister" little "excursion into chaos" (*Literary Criticism*III 1 1 83-84), that stands apart from all other adaptations, for it stands out as the most frequently adapted work by James, that with its 2021 adaptations makes it ahead of *Washington Square* (13 adaptations), "The Aspern Papers" and *The Wings of the Dove*(11 adaptations each).

The particular effect of James's gothic tale lies in the fact that it leaves room for an ambiguous sphere through its bringing up several unanswered questions and interpretations. "Taking their cue from deconstruction and post-Freudian theory", as Bloom observes, "critics have [recently] shied away from the 'either/or' approach and placed supreme value on the story's ambiguity itself" (Bloom 2001, p.17).Even though Henry James has referred to "The Turn of the Screw" as a "simple money-making venture" – "a pot-boiler" in a private letter, he has somewhat contradicted his own stament later in a preface to the story made public where he referred to "The Turn of the Screw" as "a fairy tale, pure and simple" (qtd. in Orr 2009, p.21). His evaluations has further been contradicted in the same preface where he describes his gothic tale as an "excursion into chaos" and a "piece of ingenuity" meant "to catch those not easily caught" (21). Left amidst the ambiguous sphere of unanswered questions, the adapter might tend to turn to the author in order to learn how and what to make of his tale and still find no better way

out which is by itself highly reminiscent of a statement made by a Jamesian scholar: “James was happy to sow genre-confusion” (Orr 2009, p. 20). Under such circumstances when neither side can offer any definitive interpretation, then an adapter might prefer to turn to and apply the “Foucauldian maxim that [t]here is absolutely nothing primary to interpret, for after all everything is already interpretation” (qtd. in Straumann 2015, p. 251). Creative adaptation, also known as appropriation, may well be at the service of an adapter in rendering the original in a way as to make it conformto the expectations of the audience. The adapter, consequently,can create their own cinematicinterpretation of the source text without necessarily neglecting the source text or abusing its author’ rights.

2. Objective and Scope of the Study

Since literature and cinema belong to two different forms of art, this comparative study is interdisciplinary. It is through interdisciplinary studies that the information and theories of various branches of art and science are interweaved. This essay has two objectives. First, it endeavors through interdisciplinary approach to study this cinematic adaptation in the light of psychological realism and goes through the devices comprising it. Second, since demonstrating the focal character’s psyche is of prime significance for acquiring insight into the psychological process she goes through, in order to better display presence vs. absence, the audio-visual art deployed presenting gestures, facial expressions and a symbolically suggestive mise-en-sce-ne are analyzed in order to provide clues of her psychic unfolding revealed.

3. Significance of the Study

Even though the psychological realism appears to be almost always the dominant aspect in every work written by Henry James and thus has been deployed and depicted in the adapted visual works in different eras and different contexts, there are still works in which this perception bespeaks of its existence to the mind of the audience more promptly. The selected cinematic adaptation has been chosen accordingly; It discusses how Alloy in this cinematic adaptation of “The Turn of the Screw” contextualizes and appropriates his portrayal of the absence vs. presence of the mind in the light of psychological realism.

4. Review of Literature

“The Turn of the Screw” has interested the reading public since its publication. Various adapters have also displayed their interest in adapting this novella to the screen. From an adapter’s perspective, as Griggs asserts “ it is the narration (or the ‘how’ of storytelling) rather than the narrative (or the story events) that makes this such an intriguing and complex piece of writing” (Griggs 2016: 143). The ambiguities of James’ prose can be read in several ways, it is the psychological unravelling of the governess that has won the majority’s appeal for long hence its fundamental Jamesian form.

From among works written by Henry James, "The Turn of the Screw" is his most adapted story: since the late fifties, ten film and television adaptations produced together with a number of films appropriating it in part. It has even been considered by some as ‘unfilmable’. As Director, Jacques Rivette, observes, his work is “perhaps unfilmable because his stories can be translated to screen diagonally…but never literally" (Rivette qtd in Mitchell 282).

"The Turn of the Screw" has continuously attracted the attention of filmmakers who have managed to deal with the difficulties of representing ghosts. “In their translating the complexities of the tale into a ghost narrative that fits the horror genre template”, as Griggs observes, some screen adapters

take the literal path. Others, on the other hand, explore the psychological complexities embedded in James's prose, though most retain its period detail (Griggs 2016: 143) .

Due to its ambiguous nature, "Turn of the Screw" can provide various interpretations. Despite all these qualities, the governess's being subjected to several unknown occurrences under unprecedented circumstances magnifies her role and how she copes with it as an independent woman enacting on her own. Apparently, James has not provided any clear-cut answers for any of these queries, but has instead presented ample opportunity of treatment for both the readers and the adapters. Its "one common and enduring feature" according to Griggs, "is its capacity to disturb and disrupt, whether in a Victorian or a contemporary cultural context, and it is this thread that continues to unravel as the novella is reworked, re-imagined and revised" (Yvonne Griggs 2016: 146).

Although a number of cinematic adaptations of this story stay as fidel as possible to the main tale, there are others that have transformed the setting, the action and even the gender of the protagonist. "Adaptation is" as Hutcheon observes, "a survival strategy, in this case ensuring that an author's stories, characters, and name do not die out and are selected as fit to speak to another generation. Adaptation of a literary work should generally be welcomed, indeed sought, by its admirers as a means to maintain the work's vitality and cultural importance" (Hutcheon 2014: 31–2, 176–77). The cinematic adaptation based on "The Turn of the Screw" analyzed in this study from psychological realism perspective is *Presence of Mind*, a Spanish film directed by Alloy in 1999.

5. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Comparative literature itself does not have a single definition and does not rely on a specific theory, approach and method. Basically, the vitality and the secret of the survival of comparative literature among the multitude of theories and criticism approaches and literary research methods, especially in the contemporary era, is due to its being dynamic and flexible (Aushiravani 2012, p.3). This study is based on two theoretical bases: Remak's theory about interdisciplinary studies and Hutcheon's theory of adaptation. According to Remak's "Comparative Literature: Its Definition and Function", comparative literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the arts [in this case a cinematic adaptation], on the other (Remak 1961, p.1-57).

As Linda Hutcheon argues in *A Theory of Adaptation*, "Neither the product nor the process of adaptation exists in a vacuum: they all have a context—a time and a place, a society and a culture" (Hutcheon 2006, p. xvi). Since adaptations occur in different places with their own customs and cultures, the adapted and the original works may vary significantly. Holland's film adaptation of Henry James's *Washington Square* goes through the process of "Repossessing and ... creation to the adaptation's context of reception" (xvi). This is why Holland's cinematic adaptation of *Washington Square* is different from James's text, for the adapted work in its being contextualized, has been "reinterpreted" and then "recreated" (8) in order to delineate her own conception of the focal character's psychological process of self-development.

6. Cinematic Presentation

Among these many, varied adaptations of the last wave, there is one that stands out specifically for its noticeable attempt to bring up the main dilemma of the novella to the screen and use the work to make both a political and religious statement. James's novella as something generally conceived of as notoriously unspeakable and simultaneously capable of encompassing various subjective retellings of the tale, moved its way to screen-writers, directors and filmmakers of several decades before like Clayton and Winner, for instance safeguarding the tale's ambiguity in their own way before reaching Aloy's rereading

and retelling of the tale's unresolved issue. That"how the notion of successive, 'imperfect' transmissions of something are built into the novella, and how the subjective retellings of the tale began with scores of literary critics of the mid-century, before moving on to screen-writers and filmmakers of the past sixty years" (Treddy 2019, p.128). Even though *Presence of Mind* 1999 has been classified as a relatively low-budget affair shot in Mallorca, Aloy's cinematography in this adaptation can by no means be overlooked, for it acts as a reminder of his background as a director of photography on earlier films, particularly in the way in which it renders certain scenes-most notably those suggesting an incestuous relationship between the children-as aesthetically appealing as they are morally troubling.

The style of the text, and by extension of the adaptations, also stands out due to its disturbingly closed and intimate atmosphere, for this story of two women, two children and (possibly) two ghosts traps the reader in both the dark corridors at Bly and the troubled mind of the governess who roams those halls aiming at enacting her role there as an independent woman. The ambiguity resulting from the dizzying effect is not particularly applied in Clayton's cinematic adaptation, for in Aloy's cinematic presentation as well, the same effect has been deployed most specifically in the final scene and shots concerning the governess's state of mind.

That the uncle is the responsible one for the corruption afflicting the children is not confined to what has been portrayed in *Presence of Mind* (1999), for it has been depicted variously in other adaptions as well. Graeme Clifford's 1989 version has been simulating sexual congress by threading a rolled-up napkin through a metal ring, while Rrusty Lemorande's film, made five years later, transforms him into a drug addict. What renders Aloy's film more intriguing is that Harvey Keitel has been cast in the role—someone more associated with action films (*Taxi Driver, Reservoirs, Pulp Fiction*) than classical adaptation (Raw 2006, p. 243). Keitel's persona—both on and off the screen—has always been that of someone firm both in his opinions and in being intolerant of those who dare to contradict him. One journalist in an interview with him in April 2005 remarked that, while he remained "thoroughly gracious" on the whole, there were times when "a brief glimpse of a man whom it would be best not to cross " (qtd. in Raw 2006, p. 244). The uncle's dominance over his family has somewhat been emphasized by Keitel's presence in the film. Even though he is depicted as keeping aloof with no time left for the children, his will's being imposed on Bly House and everything occurring within it can well be noticed in his absence. Even the children's conception of Catholicism in how it should order their lives is rooted in their uncle's.

The governess in her turn, receives no better treatment even when it comes to her father (Jack Taylor), for even though he is merely seen in the film's pre credit sequence, he nevertheless, makes his presence felt through his voice heard in dreams and visions the governess has despite his absence in reality. In a sequence, for instance, the governess opens a small pocketbook that contains a black-and-white photograph of herself standing beside her father's corpse, which had particularly been propped upright for the occasion. She then taking off her St. Christopher's medal, steps into her bedroom, and starts undressing slowly and thus lets the red welts and scars all over her shoulders, hips, and vagina be revealed. With the noise of heavy breathing being heard on the soundtrack, the governess turns fearfully around as if expecting to be caught before putting on her gown. She picks up the photograph again and stares at it before putting it away in a drawer. Whereas the sequence has in a way been criticized for degrading the governess to a sex object, Aloy's attempt in delineating the presence of the governess's father and how it has been imposed upon her life inside out has not been left unnoticed. The fact that what we are witnessing is what the father would have seen, whenever he entered her bedroom abruptly in order to force himself on her is thus concretely emphasized. As Laura Mulvey asserts in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema": "A woman performs within the narrative: the gaze of the spectator and that of the male characters in the film are neatly combined without breaking narrative verisimilitude" (Mulvey 1975, p. 4). The camera assumes a point -of -view role to show how the governess has been physically, mentally and emotionally assaulted throughout her life.

Through a dream sequence containing images of religion, sex and corrupted innocence, beginning

with two close-ups of the uncle and Fosc (Quint) (Agusti Villarogna), the governess's state of mind is further illustrated. Also, the sound of the governess's voice yelling "Don't!!!" *Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:03-5) can be heard on the soundtrack .What follows is that of a shot of a white dove flying away, according to Cirlot's *Dictionary of Symbols*, the "Slavs believe that, at death, the soul turns into a dove. This bird partakes of the general symbolism of all winged animals, that is, of spirituality and the power of sublimation. It is also symbolic of souls (Cirlot 2001, p. 85). A medium shot of the uncle lifting the winding sheet covering her father's corpse that is by itself suggestive of finding the governess in a helpless position that makes him presumptuous enough to even kiss her. The following shot is that of Miles and Flora, which is followed by a close-up of the St. Christopher medal. According to Kres and van Leeuwen "[e]ach mode of representation has a continuously evolving history, in which its semantic reach can contract or expand or move into different areas of social use as a result of the uses to which it is put" (Kres and van Leeuwen 2006, p.41).

In this cinematic adaptation the idea of the ghosts' being the mere projections of the governess's agitated mind has again been suggested. According to what Edmond Wilson remarks in his essay published originally in *Hound and Horn* (1934) and later reprinted in *The Triple Thinkers* the entire novella was but "a characterization of the governess." Ever since *The Innocents* (1961), fantasy sequences have become standard in the cinematic adaptations of the novella many of them focusing on the governess's disorganized state of mind comprising of increasingly sexually explicit detail. The emphasis put on religion is what differentiates Presence *of Mind* (1999) from other adaptations. There is a sequence in this adaptation during which the governess is shown kneeling in front of the altar during confession. As Christ's body is seen in close up, covered with red welts, another shot follows as the camera tracks upward toward his face and then cuts back to the governess. By design, according to Kres and van Leeuwen "[w]hat towers over us has power over us, and is", socially distant "by design: the vertical dimension is the dimension of power and reverential distance, the dimension of 'highly placed' people, places and things. In this connection it is also significant that sculptures, as works of 'high' art, cannot usually be approached from the most intimate distance, the distance that makes touching possible" (Kres and van Leeuwen 2006, p.251).

The Christ figure here, apparently reminds her of her father or a father figure—someone who has the authority to both control her and expect a godlike devotion from her. Unfortunately, in this case, this father figure provides her with nothing but physical and sexual abuse. In a notebook entry for 1895, Henry James observed how he was affected by religious visions, which inspired him to write, "One has never too many –one has never enough. . .I bow down to fate, equally in submission and in gratitude. This time it's gratitude, but the form of gratitude, to be real and adequate, must be large and confident action—splendid and supreme creation" (Raw 2006, p. 245). The governess's mind might not appear to be equally full of visions, or something to be thankful for. The visions have mostly agitated her mind to such an extent that she is incapable of following the path of virtue, in spite of her efforts to rely on her Catholic faith to guide her, but despite this, she does not waver from her firm decision in carrying out the plans she thinks appropriate enough for the mission she promised.

At the beginning, the children in the thoughts of the governess, are associated with images of light and freshness: Flora, "with her hair of gold and her frock of blue", seems like a figure in "a castle of romance inhabited by a rosy sprite." Throughout the novella, however, the governess's opinion of the children rapidly degenerates, despite the fact that they have not gone too far to cause this shift in mind. The light imagery changes into "glaring" and the children's youthful innocence gives way to Miles's being described "an older person" and Flora is characterized as "an old, old woman" as she becomes more convinced of their supposed corruption through Quint and Miss. Jessel, Eventually by the conclusion of *Presence of Mind*, as the governess attempts to rescue Miles from Fosc's/Quint's trap, the governess is beyond redemption while Miles, looking wild-eyed into her face, screams "Please don't hurt me! Please don't hurt me!" before falling down dead. Aloy then creates a coda that does not exist in the novella, beginning with a panning shot of toys and dolls in the children's playroom, all of which have been

smashed. The governess is discovered cradling a headless doll in her arms, murmuring a little story to herself about a little girl who suffered greatly when a prince took her to a land of pink sky to live there. The film ends with a two -shot of the governess and Miles walking away from the camera down a corridor into the blackness beyond. Clearly, such images are meant to draw attention to the consequences of the governess's actions—the children have been destroyed, while the governess (once a victim of abuse) becomes the abuser in the sexual fantasy involving Miles.

6.1. Deviations from Novelistic Presentation

Antonio Aloy's film adaptation (1999), Originally titled as *Celo* and renamed *Presence of Mind* for English-speaking audiences, adapts James's novella to focus particularly on Catholicism and its effects on individual people. The film creates two behavioral extremes regarding religion :With Miles, Flora and Mrs. Grose (renamed Mado Remei)—for who the religion stands hardly for more than a series of outmoded rituals to be performed every Sunday.On the other hand, there are so-called devout Catholics such as the governess's father who rather stands for an oppressive and devious and potentially tyrannical figure regularly abusing his daughter through imposing patriarchal authority over her by forcing her to keep reticent about her experiences. As the novella suggests (in the passage quoted above), such people are indeed not unshakable in their religious beliefs. The governess remains haunted by the belief that Miles and Flora might have experienced similar abuse through Quint (renamed Fosc), Miss. Jessel or the uncle. She cannot help being scared despite her firm faith in God and simultaneously, she decisively intends to act as a savior for the orphans:

-The governess:"Get out of here, you miserable wretch!" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:12:50-3)

"Do you hear me?" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:12:54-5)

"I said, get out!" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:12:56-7)

"They're mine!" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:12:58-9)

"They're all mine!" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:12:59-13:00)

"Mine to keep". (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:13:06-7)

"Mine to reckon with". (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:13:08-9)

As for the reason why James's the novella altered in this way, Lawrence Raw proposes two reasons—first, that this adaptation (unlike any other adaptation covered in this book) was intended primarily for European distribution, being put on general release in Spain in April 2001, after having been shown at film festivals in France (September 1999), Canada (Fant Asia Film Festival), and Spain (San Sebastian). Consequently, Aloy reshaped his material to what he perceived as the tastes of an art-house European audience. Secondly, we have to remember that the film's original Spanish title was *Celo*, which translates into English as (1) care, diligence, conscientiousness in the pursuance of one's duty, (2) fervor, enthusiasm; (3) envy, jealousy; and (4) sexual heat in animals. The film explores these several meanings of the word in relation to the novella, focusing in particular on the difficulties of sustaining one's Catholic faith with "care, diligence, conscientiousness" in an environment dominated by "sexual heat" or "fervor and enthusiasm" (Raw 2006, p. 242).

Not all at Bly House share the governess's unshakable belief in religion and an instance of this is evident in the sequence involving the governess (Sadie Frost) and Miles (Nilo Mur). As the governess tries to convince Miles to go to confession, the little boy fails to see why he should go since he thinks he has nothing to confess and it is again the governess who tries to persuade him to do it, for it will be good for him. When the carriage draws near with Mado Remei (Mrs. Grose), (Lauren Bacall) and Flora (Ella Jones) inside, Miles jumps in, and the three of them leave for church. On their way to church, they keep

giggling to each other and it is again the governess who staring thoughtfully at the ground decides to remain behind.

The churchgoing episode provides an appropriate prelude for the governess to discover something new about Miles. His appearance being rendered as a grown-up makes governess think "that if he had suddenly struck for freedom I should have nothing to say." She thus discovers "something new" about him—his "sudden revelation of a conscientiousness and a plan." In *Presence of Mind*1999, the scene of their church going displays something more than a Sunday outing; it is depicted as if to put an emphasis of how both children taste and experience freedom away from Bly House. It is demonstrated how going to confession represents little more than a Sunday outing; it somewhat an opportunity for Miles, his sister and Mado Remei to dress up and enjoy themselves away from the claustrophobic atmosphere of Bly House. In a scene that occurs in the schoolroom, the children's cavalier's attitude toward religion is further illustrated; also, "presence" and "absence" are once more juxtaposed. There, Miles on factual terms, insists upon his attitude that there is no distinction between a ghost and a spirit: the Bible continually refers to the trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The governess's argument is based upon the premise that ghosts do not exist whereas the spirit refers to the soul. Mile, on the other hand, smiling triumphantly at Flora argues that if ghost do not exist, then why do they appear in the dictionary. The soul and the spirit mean nothing to him; they are just abstract terms employed in a childish game of semantics:

-The Governess: "There's no such thing as ghosts, Flora" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 49:08-10).

-Flora: "Yes, there is" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 49:11-12).

-The Governess: "What makes you say that?" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 49:13-14).

- Flora: "Because I've seen. . ." (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 49:15-16).

- Miles: "It says so in the Bible" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 49:16-17).

"Father, Son and Holy Ghost" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 49:17-19).

-The Governess: "Yes, but in that case, 'ghost' means spirit" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 49:19-22).

- Flora: "Then why doesn't it say spirit?" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 49:23-24).

- The Governess: "Because sometimes, things have more than just one meaning:" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 49:24-26).

"Ghost" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 49:36).

"One, the spirit, or soul" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 49:39-41).

"Two, or haunting memory" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 49:42-5).

"And three, the supposed spirit of a dead person," (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 49:46-8).

"Appearing to the living as a shadowy apparition." (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 49:49-51).

Miles: If ghosts don't exist, then why are they in the lexicon? (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 49:52-6).

The children's uncle (Harvey Keitel) does not appear to be displaying the requirements of a true believer in faith. Even though at the beginning of the film he makes this remark that "the [Catholic] notion of redemption through suffering fascinates me though I myself haven't the conviction" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 06:21-35) , he acts otherwise, for he exceeds the limits to the extent that he takes the governess's black-gloved hand and fondles it while staring straight into her eyes. Astonishingly enough,

he is the one who has given the governess a St. Christopher's medal, explaining that the saint was "the Protector of the Christ Child to save oneself by saving innocents"(*Presence of Mind* 1999, 07:51-9). As if these statements have provided sufficient excuse for him to act upon his whims in the absence of conviction on his part. Despite his being set as an example for the children, his mentality and character can best be conceived of through his chosen costume: a scarlet dressing-gown trimmed with orange and blue put together with his behavior, for instance the way he downs a glass of sherry in one gulp before addressing the governess. According to Cirlot's *Dictionary of Symbols*, the first group of colors of which include "warm 'advancing' colors, corresponding to processes of assimilation, activity and intensity (red, orange, yellow and, by extension, white)", while the second group is comprisedof "cold, 'retreating' colors, corresponding to processes of dissimilation, passivity and debilitation (blue, indigo, violet and, by extension, black), green being an intermediate, transitional color spanning the two groups" (Cirlot 2001, p.52). With the juxtaposition of the colors classified as such in his costume, that is no wonder to find the uncle's character demonstrated in a dissolute manner.

7.Discussion

7.1. Religion Magnified

Aloy indeed intends to magnify the religious attitude of the governess and from the beginning her religious belief is considered when the Master talks about her being a devoted Catholic and that he himself, although a disbeliever, had always been intrigued by the Catholic religion. There is also Saint Christopher medallion, drawing a parallel between the saint's mission and that of the governess. During the governess's sea voyage, the uncle's words keep echoing in her mind: "The protector of the Christ child—to save oneself by saving innocence…how fitting…." (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 07:51-08:01). .Aloy deploys the medallion as a symbol of the governess's faith, and the faith in herself to save the children. She removes it in the tale only when she considers leaving the island and giving up on the children, and at that time she puts it back on, for she prepares for the final confrontation scenes. The religious theme has been played on repeatedly throughout the movie. We can even see the governess and Flora reciting "Our Father" together. Later we can also see the governess and Mado Remei in the reciting "Hail, Mary" together in front of an statue of the Crucifixion with wounds on which blood can be traced and have altogether given a fish-like appearance to the stone (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 50:22-38).

The governess asks the children to go to Confession at church every Sunday, and she herself can be noticed on several occasions walking around with her Bible as Miles and Flora keep troubling her with their questions concerning the Catholic faith and whether ghosts really exist. In the schoolroom, they discus religious questions and it is during one of these discussions that Miles showing the governess the picture of Lazarus asks her about why Lazarus was resurrected, how he could not make its way to heaven and that whether at that time he was a ghost(*Presence of Mind* 1999, 49:00-08).When the governess states that ghosts do not exist, Miles readily retorts whether she believed in the Holy Ghost and thus puts the governess in a trap from which she can hardly escape, even though she resorts to using a dictionary(*Presence of Mind* 1999, 49:09-59).

The emphasis put upon religion, its relationship to the theme of the story and its importance for Aloy as the director, himself a native of Majorca, as Dennis Terdy observes, is made "apparent by the Spanish title of the film". Its English title ,"Presence of Mind", seems to refer to "the more traditional question of the governess's sanity, one meaning of the Spanish title El Celo is "zeal" or "ardour," which could easily point to the governess's religious fervor".The word "celo also means 'heat' when referring to animals and their desire to mate, thus cleverly blending the themes of religious purity and animal-like sexual desire under one heading" (Tredy 2012, p.57).

Even though Aloy has borrowed several devices and techniques from earlier adaptations, mostly Clayton's *The Innocents*, he has also managed to go beyond mere borrowing, for there are instances of his

expanding upon techniques and motifs. For instance, in the case of the head of a Greek god that rests below the surface of the water in a fountain, the governess is surprised by coming across a broken statue, before even noticing Fosc on the tower and the discovered face appears to be morphing into the Master's face. The dream sequences are there also as the other sort of the borrowed instance. One of these sequences is concerned with shifting images of the Master or the body of a dead child which is by itself highly reminiscent of the broken dolls with smashed faces in Clayton's *The Innocents*1961. In both cases they act as a prelude to an upcoming horror in the final scene. There is also the repeated use of the image of the mirror in this adaptation and also the previous ones, particularly, in Clayton's 1961 *The Innocents*. That the mirrors through which the governess sees herself in *Presence of Mind* 1999, are never perfectly flat surfaces and that they do not faithfully reflect their subject, is highly suggestive of both her agitated psychological stare of mind and the distorted circumstances under which she has inevitably found herself before and during her stay at Bly as a governess. From long time ago, according to Cirlot's *Dictionary of Symbols*, the mirror has been thought of as "ambivalent. It is a surface which reproduces images and in a way contains and absorbs them. it serves to invoke apparitions by conjuring up again the images which it has received at some time in the past, or by annihilating distances when it reflects what was once an object facing it and now is far removed". A mirror has also been regarded as a symbol of" the imagination—or of consciousness—in its capacity to reflect the formal reality of the visible world. It has also been related to thought, in so far as thought—for Scheler and other philosophers—is the instrument of self-contemplation as well as the reflection of the universe" (Cirlot 2001, p. 211).

7.2. Instances of Abuse

7.2.1. Animal Torture

The recurring theme of animal torture and the image of the white dove can also be classified among those borrowed from *The Innocents*1961. One of these themes is portrayed in the way Flora shows the governess during her first visit her "box of secrets" in which she keeps her pet dove named Ophelia. The dove's name Ophelia, as Dennis Terdy observes can be considered as "another reference to *Hamlet*, after its use as a subtext in the 1989 and 1995 versions" (Terdy 2012, p.76).

Soon after his arrival, Miles can be noticed as taking care of pigeons and doves, but before long the governess finds out that he has broken one of the bird's wings in a way that makes it unable to fly. Such scenes of Miles carrying a bird with a broken neck or flora's bird being mutilated in basin al bespeak of horrible instances of animal torture going far beyond what presented in Clayton's cinematic adaptation of "The Turn of the Screw". While Carroll, Giles, Pinedo and Will R. Rockett (1988) have all discussed "the pleasure of not-seeing inherent in the affect of the'imperfectly seen' or the glimpse in horror film, Dennis Giles discusses 'not-seeing' and the"diffuse anxiety in which dread of the return of full vision is commingled with desire for its return to the screen"(Giles 1984, p.42).It is as Giles suggests, this "anticipatory vision - showing little or nothing of the true object of terror - which interests" (ibid) him here. This very thing by itself, demonstrates the juxtaposition of absence and presence once more.

7.2.2. Child Abuse

What Aloy has stressed throughout the movie is perhaps that the governess's reactions were inevitable and not to blame regarding her history of childhood abuse. In its criticism of Catholic faith, *Presence of Mind* (1999), does not suggest that only of the governess's father is responsible for misusing it, but the uncle as well. Whereas the father was a minister of the church, the uncle claims to have no understanding of Catholicism. The sad point is that both seek to use religion as a means to gratify their lust. Through acting thus, they create mental turmoil not merely in the governess but also in the children's minds as well that none of them appears to be finding their way out of this trauma. Still, the governess endeavors to stick to her mission despite being both physically and mentally bruised and aspires to enact her role as an independent woman. As Alloy himself remarked in an interview he "went a little more with the idea of abuse, and I wanted to not only establish the point of the view of the governess. . . . I tried to

make everyone look suspicious; sometimes I'd do it through the governess's eyes. . . but always respecting the mystery and ambiguity" (qtd. in Raw 2006, p. 246).

With a panning shot of toys and dolls in the children's playroom, all of which have been smashed, Aloy creates a gothic texture that does not exist in the original text. The governess is discovered cradling a headless doll in her arms, murmuring a little story to herself about a little girl who suffered greatly when a prince took her far away to live in a land of pink sky. The film ends with a two -shot of the governess and Miles walking away from the camera down a corridor into the blackness beyond. Clearly, such images are meant to draw attention to the consequences of the governess's actions through which the children have been destroyed, while the governess (once a victim of abuse) inadvertently becomes the abuser in the sexual fantasy involving Miles, for her roles both as the governess, the savior and an independent woman standing on her own in performing her mission are there on her mind in the first place.

This cinematic adaptations based upon James's novella produced in 1999, was a first feature for Aloy, the native of Majorca who has previously directed only "Sen~ores de Gardenia. Collaborating with Spanish directors such as Augustin Villaronga, whom can be found acting in Aloy's film in the role of Quint, Although no amicable sign of that Mrs. Grose the audience have long been accustomed to can be noticed in the stern housekeeper, Mado Reimei, acted by Lauren Bacall, the ghost is re-baptized " 'Fosc 'that in both Spanish and Italian means 'dark' or 'unpleasant'" (Tredy 2012, p.74). The film stars Sadie Frost as the governess, and Harvey Keitel, acting as Fosc, together with Nilo Mur and Ella Jones, who act as Miles and Flora respectively.

Antonio Aloy, in his cinematic adaptation of "The Turn of the Screw", similar to those preceding him simultaneously borrows and transforming techniques of ambiguity deployed by those who embarked on the project before him in time. Also, he has added some devices of his own. Despite several radical modifications made to the tale, the outcome has resulted in an adaptation of the original tale that draws near Clayton's 1961 masterpiece when it comes to comparison. Aloy's most apparent modification applied to the tale is most probably his rewriting the character of the good-hearted and simple-minded Mrs. Grose to a stern Mado Remei, who unlike Mrs. Grose in the other adaptations to that date, leaves the governess to herself amid her trauma with no one on her side.

What is unquestionably there, to begin with, is as Edwin Sill Fussel observes in *The Catholic Side of Henry James*, more than anything else authorial *tone* (of governess, not of Henry James). Whatever other virtues or vices governess is possessed of, governess has a *tone*, a fearful, irrational, inimical tone. Governess, as we observe, is a parson's daughter , a daughter of the Church of England, that church which is, or was, a national Protestant communion legally 'established' and virtually inseparable from the 'government' (so that Catholics must be excluded from public office (Fussel 1993, pp.94-5). Although he does not seek to make James a Catholic, he nonetheless, exhaustively analyzes James's religious View-Particularly concerning Catholicism and as Lawrence Raw asserts insists that the author is preoccupied with religious reference, no matter if it be phrased with Protestants and Others (mainly Catholics) or Catholicism and Others (mainly protestants) (Raw 2006, p. 241).

7.3. Protestantism VS. Catholicism Implied

The Protestant governess in "The Turn of the Screw" believes that Quint and Miss. Jessel are representatives of Catholic Church and endeavor to possess and corrupt the children. She thinks they want the children for the evil purposes for which in their time, they both have put into them. She also strongly believes that they still keep up the evil work through the children to bring them back where they've been. The governess adds the apparently innocuous remark that "all roads lead to Rome" with further portentous sayings about "forbidden ground", namely as Fussel suggests "the question of the return of the dead in general and of whatever in special might survive in memory of the friends the little children had lost". For Fussel, such observations reveal the governess's "vague general sense" that Quint and Miss.

Jessel are like Catholics "oppressive and devious and potentially tyrannical (the Inquisition) inciting to the same kind of fear . . . that the country Parson's daughter associates with both pre- and post-Reformation catholicity in England, of all places. " However, perhaps the governess needs this fear of Catholicism to sustain her Protestant faith: "Protestanism in unavoidably a secondary dependent adversarial communion, a movement upon, or against, or away from, or apart from, a prior communion . . . . What would happen to Protestant Reformism if the Catholic Church should cease to exist?" (Fussel 1993, p.98-9).

In the sequence involving the governess (Sadie Frost) and Miles (Nilo Mur), as the governess tries to persuade the little boy to go to confession, the apathy felt towards the Catholic faith by many people is particularly evident. When Miles cannot be convinced that he should go to confession since he has got nothing to confess, the governess 's argument proves inefficient when she tells him that the experience will do him good.

As far as the relationship between the children is concerned, in *Presence of Mind*1999 things go far behind how things have been implied in *The Nightcomers* 1972. Simultaneously, Aloy has skillfully avoided going to extreme even when a serious issue as hazardous as a relationship forming between the two might bring to mind. On Miles's arrival from school, what passes between Miles and Flora doesn't appear to be going beyond affectionate caressing to disturb the audience. Even their being together in the boat at the lake, doesn't make the governess think of this incident as anything but an innocent gathering of siblings. There is, however, one specific scene later that astonishes not merely the governess, but also the audience as well and it occurs the moment when she comes across Miles and Flora in an abandoned room in unspeakable situation that strongly bespeaks of impropriety as horrible as an incestuous-like relationship:

The governess: "What do you think you're doing? "(*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:09:37-9)

Miles: "We're playing dressing up, would you like to…"(*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:09:42-3)

The governess: "Out of here, now, both of you! "(*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:09:44)

Flora: "You're hurting me! "(*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:09:45-6)

Miles: "Let go of her! "(*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:09:47-8)

Miles: "Why are you always spoiling everything? "(*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:09:49-50)

Flora: "We were only playing! "(*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:09:50-1)

The governess: "This is not play! "(*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:09:52-3)

Miles: "You're just afraid, afraid of being judged! "(*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:09:54-5)

The governess: "Flora". (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:10:05)

The governess: "Come along now, it's time to go to confession". (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:10:29-31)

Miles: "I really don't see the point of it". (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:10:33-6)

The governess: "Because it'll do you good". (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:10:37-8)

7.4. The Significance of Visual Representations

Even though in this adaptation Aloy has taken themes from previous adaptations, particularly, *The Innocents* 1961, he has managed to make them more disturbing. The more striking one is as Denis Tredy observes "the importance that Aloy gave to visual representations

of *mise en abyme*, a theme that, as we have seen, has been incorporated in diverse ways in previous films (Tredy 2012, p. 76). The music box, another image taken from Clayton's adaptation, links Flora to her dead governess and there is another image preceding the final encounter with Miss. Jessel at the lake where Flora is dancing by herself to the sound of the music box with the spinning ballerina in it. The sight of Flora spinning there appears to be a recreation of that specific music box in real life texture. In *Presence of Mind* 1999, Aloy skillfully reiterates the use of this device, i.e. the music box, for Flora has a music box here as well and again it has been given to her by Miss. Jessel and she hums and sings with it mysterious words at the appearance of Miss. Jessel's ghost. What singing and musical notes signify is reminiscent of what Cirlot suggests that singing, as the "harmonization of successive, melodic elements, is an image of the natural connexion between all things, and, at the same time, the communication, the spreading and the exaltation of the inner relationship linking all things together, connexion between all things, and, at the same time, the communication, the spreading and the exaltation of the inner relationship linking all things together (Cirlot 2001, p.225).

7.4. 1. The Image of Dolls

The image of dolls at Raixa is also of prime significance to the whole tale and not merely to one particular scene, for the governess herself, with a little doll called Alice, arrives. She offers her doll to Flora, to be closer to her and also make her replace the other doll that occurs to be already dead and that has been given to her by the other governess, that is, Miss. Jessel. Furthermore, she moves closer to Flora as seen when she is preparing for bed. The governess is seen there, in the mirror of the dressing table, sitting behind Flora and brushing her hair and at the same time, Flora is also sitting behind her new doll brushing her hair. For long, "the mirror was seen as a symbol of the multiplicity of the soul appears to be due to its mobility and its ability to adapt itself to those objects which 'visit' it and retain its 'interest'. At times, it even takes the mythic form of a door through which the soul may free itself 'passing' to the other side" (Cirlot 2001, p. 211). That is no wonder then to find Aloy attempting to put a story within a story, a dream within a dream, for in the same way, the Master's chamber is also designated as being a chamber within a chamber and its being almost always closed triggers the governess's curiosity to the extent that makes her ask Mado Remei to open it. It is inside the Master;s chamber where there are disturbing statues and photographs. One of the photographs turns out to belong to the Master and Fosc after their hunting a wild animal. When the governess draws the curtain at the back of the room, she discovers things there covering the walls in that bedroom that are to haunt her during the film and also appearing to her while asleep, that is, nude children and disturbing demons (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 36:25-55). In such a scene by itself both the absence and the presence of the real and the unreal are juxtaposed.

Even though noticing Quint should be regarded as a striking incident coming across the governess in the course of the story, her thoughts act otherwise and are given to the Master's reaction to her instead. Despite this unexpected turn of the mind on the part of the governess, what follows is one of those scene that will take the viewers by surprise. In the afternoon when the governess reads some words aloud to herself alone from a book she is holding in the library, the book turns out to be James's novella of all things as if she is checking her own role in the original tale! When Mado Remei arrives, she quickly puts the book in its place.

What makes the doll motif significant in *Presence of Mind* 1999 is that they keep returning to the scene to the extent that at the end they even come to symbolize Miles and Flora. When, for instance, the governess intends to pack her bags to leave Raxia, even though she takes her Bible, she intentionally does not take the two dolls from her bed; their being a boy and a girl does not appear to have occurred by

chance. Eventually, at the end, the governess can be noticed as being left in a considerably disordered state of mind together with the shattered two dolls after the damage brought to both Flora and Miles.

4.4.7.2. Assumed Corruption and Corruptive Behavior Portrayed

Even though Flora states that "[w]e were only playing! (*Presence of Mind* 1999,1:09:50-1)" when the governess finds them wearing make up with no decent clothes on, she comes to conclude that "[t]his is not play! (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 1:09:52-3). Mado Remi's statements regarding Fosc and Miss. Jessel and their influence upon the two children becomes apparent to her: and that the issue of the two's assumed corruption and corruptive behavior have seriously been imitated by the two still innocent-looking children:

-The governess: "You said the children were close to Fosc and that woman" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 56: 37-9).

-"What kind of a hold did they have on them?" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 56: 40-1).

-Mado Remi: "They are good children, Miss" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 56: 45-7).

-The governess: "I must know what went on in this house" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 56: 49-51).

-"What did the children see?" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 56: 53-5).

- Mado Remi: "I do not know what they saw" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 56: 57-9).

-"They were always closing doors on me, whispering together" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 57: 00-06).

-"One day, I saw the four of them go into that very room" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 57: 07-12).

- "For hours" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 57: 13).

- "And it was not the sounds of the piano I heard" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 57: 16-19).

-The governess: "And?" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 57: 22).

- Mado Remi: "After that, Miss. Jessel held the girl very close to her" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 57: 23-7).

-"While the boy had gone to the tower with Fosc" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 57: 28-32).

- The governess: "And you let this go on?" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 57: 33-4).

Mado Remi: Did not go on for long (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 57: 35-7).

-"Fosc was soon dead" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 57: 37-9).

-The governess: "And what became of the governess?" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 57: 41-3).

-Mado Remi: "With him gone, she began to waste away" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 57: 46-9).

-"You would've thought she would be happy to be rid of him" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 57: 50-3),

-"but she was consumed with the blackest grief" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 57: 54-7).

-"She couldn't eat or sleep" (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 57: 57-58:01).

-“When the fever got her . . .” (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 58: 03-8).

-“There was no help to be found” (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 58: 08-10).

-“The people on the island shun the sick” (*Presence of Mind* 1999, 58: 11-15).

Children have most often been depicted as vulnerable in possessed child narratives and their being vulnerable there has been mostly due to breakdowns occurring in their family. The issue of being possessed in such tale sis demonstrated in a way that either it unites the family members once more or worsens what has already brought about tension and the child is not saved. In both cases, what the audience perceives is that the child becomes the victim of the failure occurring in the family structure and consequently vulnerable to the evil forces taking control of and abusing the inexperienced innocent. Within a religious context as Karen J. Renner observes in “Evil Children in Film and Literature II: Notes Toward a Taxonomy”, “although Satan or his minions are often the culprits, just as often the spirits of former humans inhabit or influence the living”. Frequent victims of demonic possession are children, especially young girls and such stories often culminate in an exorcism. Also, there are cases through which "a child is not literally taken over by a spirit but naively falls under its influence", for they never suspect "that it has insidious intentions. Such narratives play upon the common supposition that children are naturally sensitive to such presences, becoming aware of encroaching spirits long before they are made known to or accepted by adults "(Renner 2011, p.178-9).

Apparently, a standard plot device in *Presence of Mind* 1999 as horror movie demonstrates an innocent child befriending a person or even presumably an entity such as a governess or a valet whom their parents or guardians mistakenly initially believe to be a friendly or at least harmless friend and companion. Beside their director’s objective in producing horror movie to play with the audience’s sensation and enthusiasm, possession narratives, as Renner postulates, “act as cautionary tales that warn us, in symbolic terms, that children are vulnerable to dangerous influences when traditional family structures are damaged and parents are negligent in their duties. In some cases, if parent figures reassume their proper roles, the child can be saved; other times, it is simply too late” (Renner 2011, p.180). it should, however, be considered that the governess in her turn is not necessarily planning to mislead or corrupt the children, for she in endeavoring in the first place to act as promised in enacting her role both as a governess and an independent woman taking rule when necessity arises.

The rare works presenting the ghosts as real, beginning in the 1980s, often took the notion to unexpected extremes (Amenabar in 2001), whereas many adaptations were there that instead demonstrated the governess as suffering from hallucinations and/or hysteria, certain aspects of the story have also been magnified chiefly in order to relate that psychosis to a series of sexual abuse (Lemorande in 1993), sexual obsession (Fydell in 2009), or society's repression of unacceptable sexual desires (De la Iglesia in 1985, Rotunno in 2006) and thus inferring sharp social and political commentary through contextualizing the tale of “The Turn of the Screw” with inherent ambiguity regarding double reading of the story (ghosts vs. hysteria). Also, within such ambiguity, the juxtaposition of absence and presence reinforces the undecidability prevalent in horror films.

Going far beyond the text appears to be the element that has altogether made Clayton's 1961 *The Innocents*, Winner's 1972 *The Nightcomers* and Aloy's 1999 *Presence of Mind*, stand out as landmark cinematic adaptations of Henry James’s "sinister little tale" of “The Turn of the Screw”. In producing adaptation as a transposition from one medium to another that by definition comes as Tredy suggests in *Reading Henry James in the Twenty-First Century* (2019) with the “ need to make much of the invisible visible, to give form to the formless, to fill blanks and to give voice to silences”(Tredy 2019, p.128).As with all film adaptations, as he proceeds, there is also the inherent notion of reaccentuation in accordance with the political and social issues of the time during which an adaptation is made. Though adaptations of the last generation might stitch into the fabric of the story commentary on social issues such as anti Church criticism or the unfair treatment of individuals going against the grain de la Iglesia, Rotunno and

Aloy's adaptation for instance), this would been practiced in the 1950s, for example, when censorship and social norms would not have allowed such discourse, nor would the filmmakers have even necessarily sought to include it. However, "The Turn of the Screw" stands apart from other literary works for its built-in mechanism creating (indeed requiring) "imperfect', subjective and even radical retransmission and filling of blanks"(ibid). Can such a literary work as this one ever be said to have a 'definitive' adaptation? Given the sheer number of adaptations of the tale and the myriad interpretations that have already been made and that are still likely to come, it does not seem possible.

7.5. Reliability of the Governess

The tale of *The Turn of the Screw* has generated critical debate mostly due to the reliability of the governess. The spirits as manifestations of her psychological instability have been treated, for she is the only person who actually sees the ghosts .Her instability has even been attributed to issues as various as her need to prove herself as capable enough in her fight against the evil forces. There are also some critics such as Karen J. Renner who prefer not to take side in the debate over the existence of ghosts including the skepticism that James and his original audience members would not have shared, for such a determination is unnecessary to her point. Regardless of whether or not the ghosts are real, as she argues *The Turn of the Screw* taps into fears about the potential damage that could be done to children raised by hired help (Renner 2011, p.177).

There is no dispute over Jessel and Quint (or Fosc in Aloy's *Presence of Mind* 1999) 's being regarded as immoral guardians for the orphans when alive for their corruptive influence upon them. Even if their ghosts are not real, their enduring impact still lingers and can noticeably be felt both in the villa and in the children's life as if they have been possessed by them despite their being in grave. Aloy, as Dennis Tredy observes, much like De la Iglesia before him, deftly uses the governess's tale as a vehicle to skewer the repressive teachings of the Catholic Church. Myriad aspects of James's story are thus given an extra 'turn' in that direction (Tredy 2019, p.128). Even though we notice Miles's interest in torturing animals, for instance, here the dead birds in this scene are found on an altar in the chapel, as if suggesting that it is done as an offering. The other instance occurs in the schoolroom, when the governess tries to convince the children that ghosts do not exist and that no one returns from the dead. In their effort to counter her argument, they turn to the Bible to find the required proof. The veneration of the Holy Ghost and the story of Lazarus including are also added to their argument. Even before this, in the opening scenes, a highly suggestive religious symbol is introduced, that is, a Saint Christopher medallion Similarly, given to the governess by the Master. This medallion is the entity to which the governess resorts whenever she needs support in encountering the ghosts.

The most antagonistic Mrs. Grose character to date, that is, Bacall's stem and uncompromising Mado Remei, , standing against the governess as the embodiment of the rigid repression of the Catholic Church. together with Miss Jessel are as Dennis Treddy observes, the two other characters who are also tweaked to better convey the antichurch subtext. As he elaborates even Miss Jessel, who is often seen floating above the lake, her hair over her face and her head to the side, cradling an invisible child, can be regarded as a sinister recreation of the Madonna image, and the final shot of Aloy's adaptation demonstrates the broken governess assuming the same role and same position. This pervasive reaccentuation of the themes of repression is even to be found in the Spanish title Aloy gave to the film, El Celo, a double-entendre that connotes both strong religious fervor and uncontrollable sexual excitement-most appropriate for this radical yet faithful rereading of James's novella (ibid). It should not, however, be overlooked that even if Miss. Jessel's behavior be classifies as corrupt, it is fundamentally regarded as such as long as she is under Quint's influence which is something she disapproves of when she feels exonerated. At other times, she takes heeds in enacting her role both as a governess and as an independent woman in her own times stuck between the juxtaposition of the absence and the presence of things. as the governesses in the previously discussed cinematic adaptations or the tutor of the next chapter in his rivalry with the deceased governess.

Conclusion

The present study has endeavored through interdisciplinary approach to study this cinematic adaptation in the light of psychological realism going through the devices comprising it . It has also demonstrated that the focal character's psyche is of prime significance for acquiring insight into the psychological process she goes through, in order to better display presence vs. absence. The audio-visual art deployed presenting gestures, facial expressions and a symbolically suggestive mise-en-sce-ne have been analyzed in order to provide clues of her psychic unfolding revealed.

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