

# Polymorphous Narrative of Gothic Tradition in Linguistic Perspective: Comparing Fiction and Opera Libretto

## Abstract

This article is dedicated to revealing linguistic means that realise *the event* in the gothic narrative – H. James's novella "The Turn of the Screw" and the opera libretto of the same name. The event is treated as a situational change of states and presupposes that *the real* and *the unknown* should meet. This meeting runs through the whole narrative. *The event* is ideal and abstract; it shows itself in concrete manifestations – incidents. Discerning *the event* is possible by analysing linguistic signals of its manifestations – *traces*. In both the novella and libretto (though varying in structural peculiarities of *the event*) the most vivid and noticeable trace is expressed by such a neutral word as *bad*; every appearance of this word in both texts "turns the screw" tighter; it is a common keyword sustaining the original story flavour. As a linguistic sign the word *bad* is analysed from perspectives of different characters.

**Keywords:** narrative, Gothic tradition, event, trace, refracting point, transubstantiation space

## 1. The Event, Polymorphous Narrative, and Gothic Tradition

The idea of comparing means of linguistic realisation of *the event* in a well-known fiction work on the one hand and on the other hand – in such a scarce type of material (for linguistic analysis) as opera libretto emerged on the ground of contradiction connected with essential, but prima facie inexplicable, practically mystical difference of impressions, gained as a result of immersion (viz. in the case of opera) into that seemingly familiar atmosphere of narration about losing children's purity and innocence under the unbearable pressure of *the unknown* (evil, death, the beyond in general). The same event (described in the novella, filmed with varying degree of success, and even interpreted as a ballet performance) happened, but it happened (for the author of this article as a concrete recipient) in some different – painful and tragic – way. Why then? Is it really the music that is the only reason, or is it also the libretto (a text leading this music and lead by it) which is meaningful and representational?

Music making up "the text" of an opera is an additional narrative level, through which the meaning must be apprehended and which facilitates the access to the opacity of words (Halliwell, 2005, p. 127).

**The purpose** of this article is to reveal linguistic means realising *the event* as a foundation of narrative in the gothic novella by H. James "The Turn of the Screw" and its interpretation – the chamber opera libretto of the same name (librettist – M. Piper, composer – B. Britten). The purpose is connected with the following **tasks**: to define the terms *event*, *polymorphous narrative*, *Gothic tradition*, to substantiate their interconnection; to study the structure and to specify the *event's* essence in the narrative of the Gothic tradition; to describe structural peculiarities of *the event* in "The Turn of the Screw" (novella and libretto); to demonstrate systematic correlation between structural peculiarities of *the event* and linguistic signals denoting them (both in the novella and libretto).

*The event* is a multidimensional interdisciplinary complex term that does not have a clear and precise treatment.

It may be defined as an internal state of being, co-existence, becoming, the totality of language phenomena realised temporally and locally in speech for interpreting or describing something, as some specific collective being of subject, object and addressee of some utterance, sequence of something that has happened as wholeness of incidents (Bakhtin, 2003; Deleuze, 1998; Demjankov, 1983; Tamarchenko, Tjupa & Brojtman, 2004; Heidegger, 2003; Derrida, 1994). *The event* is also viewed as consecutive unfolding of being, which allows regarding it as narrative.

The term *narrative* denotes any literary work (priore loco – a prosaic text) recounting a story. Therefore the principal quality of any narrative is eventfulness as a necessity of *the event* (Schmid, 2003, p. 13).

Understanding *the event* as a special narratological category is complicated by the necessity to reduce such different phenomena as communicative eventfulness of discourse and referential eventfulness of "fictional process" in literary works to some common denominator (Tjupa, 2001, p. 20); consequently, discerning something as *the event* in a story becomes an arbitrary research operation, for it is inalienable from a subjective and prejudiced interpretation of something (in a story) being significant or not so very significant from a certain perspective. This stance on *the event's* essence was sustained by Y. Lotman (1970) who treated it as a meaningful digression from a fixed norm. Following the norm is, accordingly, not eventful. However, the norm totally depends, according to Y. Lotman's further reflection, on understanding what it (the norm) is, and the way of understanding is determined in its turn by an opinion (for example, a culturally specific one) (p. 283). In other words – whether any norm seems violated or not is subject to an opinion, and thus *the event* is recognised or not recognised as such (i.e. as the event) depending on that malleable opinion as well.

This interesting idea of a violated norm (treated in terms of various subjective perspectives) might have emerged from G. W. F. Hegel's suggestion that a demarcation line should be drawn between "what relates to a certain purpose" and "what does not" (Hegel, 1971, pp. 470-472). To facilitate the matter, Hegel's recondite suggestion may be clarified as follows: at one end of the spectrum there is something directly connected with a central idea (called "purpose"), at the other extreme there is something else connected with that central idea indirectly or not connected at all. Therefore the former is *the event*, the latter is not, and *the event* makes it possible to see a wholesome "world" where certain actions take place (in Hegel's

terms – "where actions move"). In other words – *the event* is a kind of "intelligible concreteness" recognised as being directly related to some purpose within a paradigm of alternatives (Tjupa, 2001, p. 23).

Since "concreteness" logically presupposes (in comparison with non-realised alternatives) specific details that make it (concreteness) recognisable as for its reference to the purpose, the details form a background inside "the wholesome world" thus becoming a *concrete situation* for a *concrete alternative*. Influenced by the alternative (the actual, realised event), the situation undergoes changes.

Therefore *the event* signals a change in a situation being told about, where the situation is viewed as a totality of circumstances serving the background of a certain story. The event as a situational change is deduced from the formula suggested by A. Danto (2002): if any situation is represented in any narrative as *an initial state (F)* of something or somebody (*x*) at a certain moment of time ( $t_1$ ), this situation may be changed if something (*H*) happens to *x* at  $t_2$  after  $t_1$ , and in the issue *x* changes its state (*F* into *G*) after  $t_2$  (at  $t_3$ ) (p. 223). Thus, if *x* is *F* at  $t_1$ , and *H* happens to *x* at  $t_2$ , then *x* is *G* at  $t_3$ :

*I broke the seal with a great effort – so great a one that I was a long time coming to it; took the unopened missive at last up to my room and only attacked it just before going to bed. I had better have let it wait till morning, for it gave me a second sleepless night* (James, 2008, p. 184).

In this quotation *x* – I (the narrator) – is seriously nervous (*F*) because of the letter at a certain moment  $t_1$  (when the seal is being broken and doubts are at their extreme before the actual reading of that letter). The reading (and the new knowledge acquired through reading) is *the incident (H)* which results ( $t_3$ ) in *x*'s insomnia (*G*).

The term *Gothic tradition* encompasses heterogeneous forms of literary art (including works of XVII-XVIII centuries up to postmodernist texts) reproducing in different authenticity degrees typical content elements of medieval ballads, folklore, and Renaissance literature (Botting, 2005, pp. 4-10). Gothic tradition is an outlook model historically developed and fixed in the artistic literary form. The tradition generalises an idea that assumes human inability of self-identification in "the real world" as a kind of habitual and well-known realm of living. As a single person realises his inability, he faces steady doubts in wholesomeness as well as cognoscibility of himself and the world and thus his vulnerability in case of confronting *the unknown* – evil horrifying forces.

Aforementioned folklore and ballad elements in this tradition are systematically associated with transgressing borders of "the real world" (i.e. habitual, well-known realm of living) and rely on ideas of mystical, unknown, esoteric, sepulchral, etc. which embody supernatural fears. "Traditionalism" of these ideas may be explained by the fact that they are intuitively intelligible (by being transferred through generations) and do not need special elucidation while appearing in literary works of different genres and forms.

The works belonging to Gothic tradition (GT) are connected by common ideas but are also characterised by polymorphism (from Greek πολύμορφος) – the diversity of form.

The name "Gothic" is ascribed to this tradition by analogy with the Gothic novel – a genre contamination of high romanticism and pseudo-medievalism (Birkhead, 2008, p. 29). Gothic standards embrace sinister, dreary, mysterious atmosphere; family vaults, enfilades of cursed castles, ancient ruins as scenes of action, and on top of that – a daemonic insidious antagonist representing *the unknown* that confronts *the real*. These standards are well revealed already in the early works of such masters as H. Walpole, C. R. Maturin, A. Radcliffe, W. T. Beckford who laid a cornerstone of the genre, and their invariability was noticed, inter alia, by M. M. Bakhtin (2012) who defined the space and the time of the Gothic novel as "the castle chronotope" (p. 285). A tough confrontation between *the real* and *the unknown* (realised as beautiful vs hideous, moral vs immoral, living vs dead (undead), etc.) is always conditioned by the presence of some metaphysical evil – passing all understanding and inconceivable. Darkness, low-whispered sounds, obscure glimpses of objects, flitting forms tend to raise in the mind that thrilling, mysterious terror, which has for its object the powers unseen and mightier far than we (Snodgrass, 2005, p. 306).

Much attention in GT is paid to psychological aspects of opposing evil forces. A protagonist is often shown as the one trying not only to combat external daemons, but to look inside one's own self and to hold out against his personal vices which seem to infest his soul to the extent that the slightest attempt to peep into psychic depths is compared with the fear of Caliban who has seen himself in the mirror (Beville, 2009, p. 62). Morality as the absolute truth is substituted (under such conditions) by moral relativism to enable the character, tormented by constant doubts, to stand the Caliban's glare at least a little bit. The world where the evil inhabits even the most sacred, seemingly secure places turns out to be ontologically undetermined (McHale, 1987, p. 141), deprived of priorities and, consequently, horrible, full of and causing uncontrollable terror. It is not at all surprising that in such a world even a little boy may be treated by his governess (who is being constantly torn with doubts and fears) as a little fiend.

## 2. Traces of the Event

*The event* as a meeting between *the real* and *the unknown* transpierces the whole narrative of GT; if this meeting does not take place, then a work may automatically be excluded from the tradition. *The meeting* therefore acquires the features of the above mentioned Hegelian purpose grounding and moving the action in a Gothic story. *The event* as the foundation of GT is ideal and abstract. It emanates in concrete manifestations (though does not fully merge with them preserving its uniqueness as the basic principle) and serves as a border that determines positions of all elements involved in it (i.e. *the event*). In its manifestations the event fuses with time as "clearings" (Heidegger, 2003, pp. 414-419, 469-476) consisting

of actual (happening now) moments. This reflection may be illustrated with the abovementioned Danto's formula: actual moments ( $t_1, t_2, t_3$ ) fix changes in the states ( $F-G$ ) of  $x$ . But a concrete manifestation of the event is  $H$  (an incident) making  $x$  change states.

Incidents may be primary, secondary, etc. due to their significance and proximity to the ideal event, i.e. meeting *the unknown*. Therefore discovering *the event* becomes possible only by analysing signals of its manifestations – the so called *traces*.

A *trace* is a way of correlation of a narrative incident with *the event* through language signals. The method of searching for traces may be named *narrative trace-analysis* where narrative is a certain milieu where traces may be found. Any trace is a sign in dynamics (Avtonomova, 2000, p. 22); it becomes obvious only in case of its signifier's correlation with other signifiers of one and the same signified, i.e. it realises as existing or presupposed *difference*, otherwise it erases itself. Therefore any trace is structurally (no less than) binary and is based on a privative opposition both elements of which are categorially important.

The formula of deducing a trace may be noted as follows:  $T = (s_1 \Rightarrow H_1) \wedge (s_2 \Rightarrow H_2)$ , where  $T$  is a trace,  $H_{1,2}$  – incidents,  $s_{1,2}$  – signals showing them;  $\Rightarrow$  – accordingly, implication,  $\wedge$  – conjunction.

An incident is thus a kind of "knot" binding states before it (the incident) and after; it is a point refracting (Lat. *punctum refractionis*)  $F$  on the one hand and  $G$  on the other;  $F$  and  $G$  in *punctum refractionis* get an opportunity to realise as *the event's* co-existences (i.e. totalities of actual moments) only through the incident, only having *refracted* ( $F \rightarrow H \leftarrow G$ ;  $H = F :: G$ ).  $F$  and  $G$  understood this way are not only transient characters' moods involved in *the event*, but *transubstantiation spaces* (*vestigia habituum* (Lat. *vestigium* – a spot in time and space, place; *habitus* – state, qualities, peculiarities), co-existing (having states) *by the event*).

## 2.1. The Event in "The Turn of the Screw"

### 2.1.1. Traces in the Novella

The opposition ( $F$  (*vestigium habitus*<sub>1</sub>) vs  $G$  (*vestigium habitus*<sub>2</sub>)) is expressed by linguistic markers indicating the change of  $F$  into  $G$ . For example:

*I broke the seal with a great effort – so great a one that I was a long time coming to it; took the unopened missive at last up to my room and only attacked it just before going to bed. I had better have let it wait till morning, for it gave me a second sleepless night* (James, 2008, p. 184).

*Vestigium*<sub>1</sub> is characterised by excessive duration, prolixity; if expressed in musical terms – played *largo* ("broke the seal with a great effort – so great a one that I was a long time coming to it"). The narrator's qualms and torments are exposed through the adjectives *great* (about the effort) and *long* (about time), the first one being reduplicated and intensified by the adverb *so*. Moreover, the syntactical construction detaching the attribute *great* as *so great a one* complicates this detachment with a related subordinate clause ("that I was a long time coming to it"). All that takes away from the action which actually does not take place. But it befalls a bit later – with the verb *attack* (expressing a wish to cut the Gordian knot by one decisive movement) – and an instantaneous repent ("I had better have let it wait till morning"), though relative due to the prolixity of action mentioned above. The rapid incident thus reflects *the largo tempo* of *vestigium*<sub>1</sub> and indicates its difference from *vestigium*<sub>2</sub> that is more laconic syntactically ("it gave a second sleepless night") under the incident's influence.

Syntactical simplicity of the form suggests alteration in content, i.e. a physiologically responsive primary confrontation (sleepless night) with real difficulties after coming into collision (attack) with them, but not a cowardly delay out of some ulterior fear (as in the case of *vestigium*<sub>1</sub>).

The collision is the first in the line of incidents connected with *the event*. On the whole the chain of incidents is organised as follows: 1) reading the letter about Miles' expulsion; 2) the first vision of the governess (Quint's ghost on the tower); 3) the second vision of the governess (Miss Jessel by the lake); 4) the third vision of the governess (Quint on the stairs); 6) the children's behaviour at night (Flora – on the windowsill, Miles – near the tower); 7) the children's behaviour during going to the church; 8) the fifth vision of the governess (Miss Jessel by the lake after Flora's escape); 9) Flora's departure; 10) the sixth vision of the governess (that of Quint calling Miles through the window); 11) the death of Miles.

It looks obvious that in terms of quantity the event is realised as visions of the governess never proved by anyone or anything. Furthermore, the eighth incident affords contextual ground for presuming that the ghost of Miss Jessel showed itself only to her because Flora and the housekeeper (present at the moment of supernatural visitation) remained blind in that respect, e. g.:

*She isn't there, little lady, and nobody's there <...> How can Miss Jessel – when poor Miss Jessel's dead and buried? <...> It's all a mere mistake and a worry and a joke (the housekeeper); I see nobody. I see nothing. I never have. I think you're cruel. I don't like you!* (Flora) (James, 2008, p. 249).

Such a narrator's type is known as *unreliable* (Halliwell, 2005, p. 126) – he lacks knowledge, is prejudiced and has a system of values conditioned by that prejudice. The governess is the youngest of several daughters of a poor country parson. She never doubts the existence of ghosts representing, surely, spawns of hell and enticing clever and cute children away from the path of righteousness. Therefore traces of *the event* in the above totalled chain of incidents indicate the ghosts' presence or at least some kind of their involvement in a radical plan of spoiling, corrupting the children by inciting them to actions

never actually mentioned but qualified (by the governess) as horrible. Depravity, perversity, and "horridness" of the ghosts alone testify as evidence of *the bad* at Bly – the estate where all characters live. Otherwise it could never be distinguished from heaven.

Since *the bad* in heaven (literally unique) is connected with the devil incarnate, the ghosts at Bly are not only complacent nonentities (as it can seem at first, for their "inhuman sins" are just (absolutely human) drinking and licentiousness), but the indescribable Nietzschean abyss *gazing into* the poor governess from a Victorian park.

The most obvious trace exposing the governess's understanding of *the evil* as influence and presence of seducing ghosts is such a neutral word as *bad* (often marked graphically in the story as it is shown in the example below). Every appearance of this word in the text "turns the screw" tighter: enforces the suspense and makes the governess's interpretations ambivalent. On the lips of a sensitive, hypochondriac narrator it acquires almost infernal connotations since in the majority of cases it presupposes some painstakingly suppressed vices, e.g. 1. "*The child's dismissed from his school. <...> Is he really BAD?*" (James, 2008, p. 184) – A ten year old child is expelled from his school for *being an injury to the others*. The governess is shocked, and the degree of that shock is measured by capital letters. 2. "*I have it from you then – for it's of great importance – that he was definitely and admittedly bad?*" (p. 202) – Here she characterises Quint who has become a ghost after death. The word *bad* means *too free with everyone*, and it frightens the governess greatly ("*I forbore, for the moment, to analyse this description*"). 3. "*What was it you had in mind when, before Miles came back, over the letter from his school, you said, under my insistence, that you didn't pretend that he had not literally EVER been "bad"?*" (p. 211) – In this fragment *bad* denotes Quint's corrupting influence, for the boy's behaviour seemed suspicious just because "*for a period of several months Quint and the boy had been perpetually together*", and notwithstanding the fact that he had never been caught red-handed as *bad*. 4. "*And if he was so bad then as that comes to, how is he such an angel now?*" (p. 212) – The governess is so scared by her own suspicions that forbids herself to think ("*There are directions in which I must not for the present let myself go*") about the opposition of angelic-devilish in Miles. 5. "*Think me – for a change – BAD! At midnight. When I'm bad. I AM bad!*" (p. 223) – These words produce the most painful impression on the woman emaciated by constant worries. She sees "the end of everything" in them:

*I shall never forget the sweetness and gaiety with which he brought out the word, nor how, on top of it, he bent forward and kissed me. It was practically the end of everything. I met his kiss and I had to make, while I folded him for a minute in my arms, the most stupendous effort not to cry* (p. 223).

Now she understands the word *bad* not only as *corrupted by the ghost*, but nearly as *doomed*. It may seem strange under the circumstances when Miles (a ten year old child) just confessed to his night prank targeted at frightening the governess. Her exaltation may be taken for some kind of psychic imbalance, and the ghosts (never confirmed by witnesses) look like hallucinations. In this case the death of a child is more than just a tragic coincidence – it is malfeasance that the governess committed. And *meeting the unknown* must then be interpreted as *adjusted* for the corresponding diagnosis.

### 2.1.2. Traces in the Libretto

In contrast to the novella, the ghosts' existence in the libretto does not depend on the governess and her perception; it is objectively conditioned by the librettist, for both ghosts have the ability to speak, and they speak even when alone on the stage. Supernatural entities therefore are represented in the libretto as independent active characters, which fact changes the attitude to the governess as an unreliable narrator.

The event is understood by the librettists as a series of incidents ("the opera utilises these incidents as its scenic framework"), the so called incidents of tension starting as premonitions and ending as interpretations and analyses (Halliwel, 2005, p. 131).

The libretto (Piper, 2010) consists of fourteen incidents connected with *the event*: 1) "The Letter" (Act 1, Scene 3); 2) "The Tower" (Act 1, Scene 4); 3) "The Window" (Act 1, Scene 5); 4) "The Lesson" (Act 1, Scene 6); 5) "The Lake" (Act 1, Scene 7); 6) "At Night" (Act 1, Scene 8); 7) "Colloquy and Solloquy" (Act 2, Scene 1); 8) "The Bells" (Act 2, Scene 2); 9) "Miss Jessel" (Act 2, Scene 3); 10) "The Bedroom" (Act 2, Scene 4); 11) "Quint" (Act 2, Scene 5); 12) "The Piano" (Act 2, Scene 6); 13) "Flora" (Act 2, Scene 7); 14) "Miles" (Act 2, Scene 8). In all the incidents but for the first and the eighth (where their influence is presupposed) the ghosts participate directly.

As a form of narration libretto has an important difference from fiction – narrative proper (telling a story) is realised only as recitative, i.e. representative style, musical declamation where intonation and rhythm of speech are preserved. Aria – a long, accompanied song for a solo voice – does not have a quality of *eventfulness* since it is meant for expressing characters' feelings and for bringing the action (in an opera) and "real time" to a *temporary halt* (Greenberg, 1997, pp. 7-8, 47-48). In the modern opera transitions between arias and recitatives are less vivid, but still arias "freeze" time laying emphasis on a character, but not an incident. Aria is "a copy of a character's mind", and this copy is by definition a static verbal-and-musical illustration of his attitude to what is happening. Therefore in libretti the actual moments are "glyptic", fixed steadfastly: an incident as a concrete manifestation of *the event* changes in its structural peculiarities. Accordingly, *vestigia habituum* are opposed to each other not as altering *transubstantiation spaces*, but as *portraits of involved entities*, and *punctum refractionis*, i.e. the actual moment of states' change, turns into the moment of (already) altered perception of an entity, acquiring the quality of perfectiveness whereas in fiction it is the culmination of narrative inside the incident. In opera libretto a recitative is one more element of *the event's* structure, a connecting link between the incident and arias as illustrations of that incident.

Recitative may be expressed as a dialogue (Scene "The Letter"):

*Governess: Mrs. Grose! He's dismissed his school.*

*Mrs. Grose: Who*

*Governess: Little Miles.*

*Mrs. Grose: Miles?*

*Governess: What can it mean – never go back?*

*Mrs. Grose: Never?*

*Governess: Never! Oh, but for that he must be bad.*

*Mrs. Grose: Him had?*

*Governess: An injury to his friends.*

*Mrs. Grose: Him an injury? I won't believe it!*

*Governess: Tell me, Mrs. Grose, have you known Miles to be bad?*

*Mrs. Grose: A boy is no boy for me who's never wild. But bad, no, no!*

*Governess: I cannot think him really bad, not Miles. Never!*

*Mrs. Grose: Never! Not Master Miles. He can be wild, but not bad (Piper, 2010, p. 54).*

In this fragment reading the letter, the incident, is *punctum refractionis* of *vestigium*<sub>1</sub> (reactions of Mrs Grose and the governess to its content). Mrs Grose knows Miles for a long time and does not believe that he may be *bad* ("*Him an injury – I won't believe it!*"); the governess, on the contrary, has just come and the letter gives her the first impression ("*What can it mean – never go back? Oh, but for that he must be bad!*").

Consequently the letter does not change the women's opinions (*vestigium*<sub>2</sub>): "*A boy is no boy for me who's never wild. But bad, no, no!; I cannot think him really bad, not Miles.*"

*Vestigium*<sub>1</sub> is syntactically represented (on the part of Mrs Grose) as a set of interconnected rhetorical questions expressing surprise and verging on emotional upset ("*Who? Miles? Never? Him had? Him an injury?*"). The governess either does not expect the answers at all ("*What can it mean – never go back!*"), or positive answers, which fact makes the concrete question ("*Tell me, Mrs. Grose, have you known Miles to be bad?*") rhetorical.

*Vestigium*<sub>2</sub> is represented by exclamatory and affirmative sentences expressing incredulity and indignation of both women ("*I won't believe it! But bad, no, no! Never! Not Master Miles. He can be wild, but not bad. I cannot think him really bad, not Miles. Never!*").

The trace of *the event* (Quint is going to appear on the tower in the next scene) shows itself in the libretto as well as in the novella through the word *bad*. It (the word) is mentioned in the scene five times and is interpreted as *an injury to his friends*, which is not clearer than *an injury to the others* in the novella, but in the novella and libretto it indicates something sinister – something the governess is about to learn.

The librettist accentuated the word on purpose: it is a common keyword shared with the novella and sustaining the original flavour of Henry James's story (Desblache, 2008, p. 113). However, in the libretto a little more time is dedicated to explaining what is actually meant by *bad* as *an injury to the others/friends*. As a linguistic sign the word *bad* is fully revealed if its designatum is analysed, i.e. when *bad* is viewed as one and the same signified from subjective perspectives of different interpreters (Morris, 2001, p. 48), for example, Miles, Quint, the governess. These interpreters create "potential semiotic continuum" for this word to expose (in each particular incident) various characteristics of its referent.

The governess and Mrs Grose do not use this word to express anything intelligible, but for horror and shock, still Miles concludes that he is *bad* ("*You see, I am bad, I am bad, aren't I?*" (Piper, 2010, p. 69)) judging by the concrete conversation with Quint in "At Night" (Incident 6). He takes Quint as a model and his (Quint's) self-identification as something attractive for himself – as his own self-identification. Miles expresses his interest by repeating separate words out of Quint's cues addressed to him (printed in boldface type further):

*QUINT: I am all things strange and bold,/ The riderless horse Snorting,/ stamping on the hard sea sand,/ The hero-highwayman/ plundering the land./ I am King Midas with **gold** in his hand. – MILES: Gold, O yes, **gold!** – QUINT: I am./ The brittle blandishment of counterfeit./ In me **secrets**,/ and half-formed desires meet. – MILES: **Secrets**, oh, **secrets!** – QUINT: I am the hidden life that stirs/ When the candle is out;/ Upstairs and down, the footsteps/ barely heard./ The unknown gesture, and the soft,/ persistent word,/ The long sighing light of the/ night-winged **bird**. – MILES: **Bird!** (66-67).*

Quint is very interesting for the boy as he embodies a seething and mysterious life hidden from *good* people – openhearted, but ordinary: boring governesses, simpleminded housekeepers, self-indulgent guardians. He understands that *the bad* represented and suggested by Quint is not only opposite to *the good* (i.e. something he cannot resist); it is also something dangerous.

In the libretto the boy's doubts and anxiety are conveyed by a song (mentioned in the novella just as *incoherent, extravagant song* (James, 2008, p. 243)) in which the meanings of the Latin word *malus* (apple tree, bad, false, ill-fated)

are played on: "*Malo, I would rather be/ Malo, in an apple-tree./ Malo, than a naughty boy/ Malo, in adversity*" (Piper, 2010, p. 62). Miles sings that he would rather climb trees (as boys do) than would be *a naughty boy in adversity*, i.e. he prefers not to have that choice between the bad Quint and the rest of the good and living world. He is so weak for such a choice; he is such a little boy. The song serves the function of aria – it copies his mind.

The occasionalism *malo* repeated several times has a hidden meaning (like the ghosts' presence) of calling for help; it is a symbol of lost innocence (Desblache, 2008, p. 113).

Since Miles says to the governess consequently that he is *bad* (*I am bad, I am bad*), he opts for Quint (gives in) then, and *bad* here means everything embodied by Quint – "*strange and bold, riderless horse, hero-highwayman, plundering the land, King Midas, counterfeit, secrets, half-formed desires, hidden life that stirs, soft, persistent word, long sighing light of the night-winged bird*" – everything strange and frightening for the governess, everything suppressed by her up to the moment when in the last scene (Incident 14) she is singing that song (*Malo*) by which he asked her for help and holding the poor boy (already dead) whom she has not managed to save.

By simple words of the poem the librettist underlines her delayed understanding that she has been mistaken – and her error is so tragic. The boy died not because he was *bad* as she called him, but because both sides of this metaphysical conflict, pulling the ten year old boy egoistically and obstinately, never thought that their adults' demand to see the difference between the good and the bad at that age would kill him. "Pulling" Miles made a thing of him, a thing that must be won in fight, must be made one's own. Things break under such conditions – in the case of Miles only the heart broke, but that is, as it is known, enough.

It turned out that both sides are *bad*. The evil exists, but it does not matter whether in reality or somebody's mind; it matters that it can spoil even child's innocence, even (as it seemed) a sincere love for the child. Good intentions of the governess appeared corrupt because her love was corrupted. It became possessiveness, and she was aware of it (Halliwel, 2005, p. 124).

The results of this article may be used in the course of Communicative Linguistics (Unit "Narrative Communication"). Perspectives of the study are seen in a more detailed analysis of *the event structure* in libretti, in working out systematic criteria of differentiating traces inherent in prosaic works and libretti as forms of one and the same narrative.

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