

impression of Bells is that it is “as mute and solitary as the family vault”. In Female Gothic fiction, the domestic setting serves as a vehicle to illustrate patriarchal oppression (Weinstock, 2008; Lundie, 1996). The isolation of Bells estate is a metaphor that illustrates the isolation of the lives of its female inhabitants. The house has served for centuries as a silent vault which has witnessed the family’s sins and has kept her female dwellers prisoner. Wharton challenges the traditional view of the house as a shelter where women can find solace; instead she represents it as a prison where both ghosts and women are trapped.

CONCLUSION

Wharton’s ghost tales are as worthy of study since they provide a crucial insight of her literary career and, as I have illustrated, they are reflections of its author’s internal concerns about gender in the Progressive Era, as historians have called the period ranging from the 1880s to the 1910s.

In “Mr. Jones” we find the figure of a different female that we cannot find in previous short stories: Lady Jane. She is different from previously found female characters: she is independent, economically emancipated, and she does not live her life shadowed by a man. This new type of female character that appears in the last stage of Wharton’s career can be seen as a reflection of the changes that took place in the United States which granted women more freedom and opportunities to participate more actively in what was widely regarded a male-dominated society.

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