

Specters of the Past: Linda Hutcheon's Historiographic Metafiction and the Haunted House in Oscar Wilde's *The Canterville Ghost*

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Abstract

Examining Oscar Wilde's, The Canterville Ghost through the lens of Linda Hutcheon's theory of historiographic metafiction, this article questions how the novella simultaneously employs and subverts conventional ideas of historical portrayal. Examining the text's self-conscious engagement with gothic tropes, the novella's portrayal of anachronistic ghost, and the conflict between the antiquated British setting and the rational American family, the analysis will show how The Canterville Ghost questions the way historical narrative is constructed. Moreover, the sardonic tone and intertextual references of the book are taken as proof of Wilde's conscious participation with historical norms. In the end, this article contends that Wilde's novella serves as an example of historiographic metafiction, therefore encouraging a reevaluation of how we fictionalize the past.

Keywords: Historiographic Metafiction, Linda Hutcheon, The Canterville Ghost, Oscar Wilde, Gothic, History, Intertextuality, Self-reflexivity, Historical Narrative, Irony.

Introduction

The Victorian era, marked by rapid industrialization, scientific advancement, and profound social shifts, was captivated by the unseen and the unknowable. The ghost story thrived in this cultural terrain, emerged as medium for investigation of concerns about the past, the present, and the essence of reality itself. Oscar Wilde, a man praised for his wit, social criticism, and daring of his aesthetic vision, was among the literary stars of this age. Renowned for his challenge of accepted wisdom and customs, Wilde imbued his writing with a special mix of irony, humor, and a great awareness of human frailty. Though most known

for his tragedies and epigrams, his short story, *The Canterville Ghost* (1887), reveals a less-known aspect of his ability: a sophisticated participation with the way we build and view the past. More than just a ghost story, *The Canterville Ghost* is a masterfully written piece of historiographic metafiction that questions conventional wisdom about historical objectivity and reveals the narrative basis of historical knowledge.

Set against the backdrop of a ghostly English manor estate, *Canterville Chase* expertly balances the old world with the new, the ancient with the modern. The backdrop of the narrative, where a centuries-old ghost fights with the pragmatic ideas of a just arrived American family, clearly shows the delicate relationship of the Victorian age with its past. Still, this conflict goes beyond simple comedy arrangement. It provides a prism through which Wilde examines the very essence of historical representation, challenging whose voice affects historical accounts, and how those stories acquire power. The narrative pushes the reader to challenge the fundamental concept of a single, objective past by means of its self-awareness and constant attention to its own created nature.

The basic argument of this research is that *The Canterville Ghost* (1887) is a sophisticated work of historiographic metafiction rather than a simple ghost narrative. The story aggressively interacts with the past while also realizing it is a created tale. This is accomplished using several linguistic techniques: by blending the real and the surreal, by contrasting the gothic traditions with their parodic subversions, and by stressing the part interpretation plays in forming our perspective of historical events. This study will show how Wilde challenges conventional historical narratives by concentrating on important issues as the instability of historical reality, the power of narrative, and the conflict between several points of view on the past. The book shows the constructedness of the "past" rather than only a recounting of a conventional haunting.

This study will be done within the lens of Linda Hutcheon's idea of historiographic metafiction in order to correctly handle these concerns. In *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988), Hutcheon defines this genre as one that both exposes its own narrative structure and interacts with the past at the concurrently. Stated otherwise, historiographic metafiction employs historical components but does not show them as objective "facts". Instead, it shows that these components are also stories, created from one point of view. Under this description, Wilde's story becomes a sophisticated illustration of this genre since it uses techniques to

highlight the part narrative plays in forming our perspective of the past. Thus, the study will concentrate on certain metafictional devices inside *The Canterville Ghost* and their interactions with and subversion of traditional historical knowledge.

The plot revolves on the difference between the pragmatic, ahistorical American family and a romanticized, conventional view of the past, embodied by the ghost. Acting as a living relic, Sir Simon the ghost represents a past laden in tragedy and custom. But the Otis family's modern sensibility undermines his performance as a haunting apparition repeatedly; they view him as an annoyance rather than as a terrible specter. This draws attention to the main criticism of conventional historical objectivity in this work. History, this book implies, is always filtered via the viewpoint of people interpreting it rather than a straight record of "what happened." Thus, the Otis family stands for a viewpoint that wants to "fix" or eradicate the past, rather than to understand it; the ghost reflects a theatricalized and melodramatic history.

The *Canterville Ghost* also subtly criticizes what defines authoritative historical narratives. The standard approaches of historical description sometimes stress factual accuracy, therefore ignoring the subjectivity and bias that always impacts historical perceptions. Stories are created to serve particular agendas, to force particular interpretations, not objective reflections of the past. By proving that the past is equally a function of perspective and that the "facts" are often more about the ideals of the tale teller than a real representation of events, the *Canterville Ghost* questions the "truth claims" of conventional history. This is shown in the ghost's dramatic re-enactments of his life, which the American family eventually "reads" as humorous farce, or the "cleaning" of the bloodstain. These acts underline the malleability of historical reports and the created character of the past.

Unlike traditional history books, which frequently seek to create a single, national identity, Wilde's account offers an alternate worldview exposing the variety of interpretations and points of view on the same events. Wilde stresses the need of interpretation as a fundamental component in determining our attitude to the past. The pragmatic attitude of the American family to the ghost, for example, contrasts significantly with the conventional wisdom about haunted places since it implies that the "same" data might generate somewhat diverse conclusions. This interaction of several ways of knowing emphasizes the subjectivity of

historical accounts since each perspective, with its own cultural background, beliefs and presumptions, will provide its own rendition of the historical past.

Therefore, The novella functions as a work of historiographic metafiction, thereby subverting the limits of a basic ghost narrative. Wilde writes a story that not only interacts with the past but also reveals the techniques of historical narration and the part interpretation plays in producing different historical accounts. Wilde challenges the notion of a set, objective historical narrative by use of humor, satire, and self-conscious narrative. He reminds us that our perspective of history reflects the past itself as much as it does of our present values and narrative structures. The following study will explore the particular methods Wilde used to create this intricate and provocative story as well as expose the continuing significance of his criticism of historical accounts. The study will show that the narrative questions the authority of single interpretations of "the past," not provide solutions.

Literature Review

Victorian age was also deeply enthralled by the supernatural and the past, which was defined by fast industrialization, scientific advancement, and significant social changes. This obsession showed up in the explosion of popularity of the ghost story, a genre that frequently explored fears about the invisible and the unexplained using gothic techniques. With its unique haunted environments, enigmatic events, and examination of the darker sides of human nature, Gothic stories gave a forum for addressing these cultural obsessions. Though not primarily a gothic writer, Oscar Wilde, known for his wit, social satire, and sophisticated examination of artifice, who would provide a unique and perceptive text to the genre evolved within this rich literary terrain.

Wilde's works, which frequently challenge Victorian society's standards and practices, are distinguished by his widespread use of satire and social commentary. He revealed the hypocrisies and absurdities of his day by using irony and contradiction. Furthermore, essential to Wilde's style and approach to narrative was his fascination with aestheticism, with its emphasis on the artificial, the performative, and the created character of art. His works thus are typically complex, interacting with the surface as well as the depths of social and creative standards. Wilde's unique voice in Victorian literature is distinguished by his ability to blend lighthearted satire with severe social commentary, therefore making his works very interesting and provocative.

Under this framework, *The Canterville Ghost* (1887) becomes more than just a humorous ghost tale. Wilde's novella gently explores the conflict between the "old" world of English tradition and the "new" world of modern, American pragmatism, so quietly addressing the social dynamics of the moment. While parodying the gothic genre, the narrative explores more general socioeconomic concerns using the structure of the ghost story. Using aspects of comedy, parodies, and satire, Wilde deftly combines these genres to produce a singular story that both challenges and fascinates the reader. Consequently, the narrative transcends a mere retelling of ghost story, utilizing its elements to provide a nuanced commentary on the essence of historical narrative.

Research on *The Canterville Ghost* already in publication mostly addresses these facets. Emphasizing Wilde's parodic approach to the genre, critics such as Fernandes (2024) examine how the narrative subverts conventional gothic clichés by means of comedy and irony. Examining the humorous contrast of English tradition with American pragmatism, Balakrishnan (2011) notes how the narrative plays on the conflict of several cultural points of view. These readings powerfully highlight the social critique and humor in the book. Moreover, Beaumont (2015) emphasizes how the novel criticizes the commercialization of English history, especially in the purchase of the haunted mansion by the Otis family. This is a critique of commodification as well as a means of illustrating how the past is reduced into something to be consumed. Though they provide insightful analysis, these studies sometimes ignore the more fundamental metafictional components at work and fail to look at how the novella self-reflexively interacts with the created history. The *Canterville Ghost* has been contrasted by Kowshikah et al. (2024) with other supernatural books; nonetheless, this line of research has sometimes neglected to interact with the text's own commentary on history. Thus, current scholarship has mostly turned the book to its social and cultural critique without recognizing how its very parodic approach to the gothic is itself part of a more general metafictional goal.

Although these methods offer great insight into the humor, social critique, and gothic tradition stance of the text, they sometimes ignore a vital component of Wilde's work: his interaction with historical narratives outside simple parody. These readings hardly examine

how the parodic acts themselves are meant to expose the fictionality of historical texts, or how history is presented as a sequence of narratives rather than as an objective reality.

This is the setting in which Linda Hutcheon's thesis of historiographic metafiction finds especial significance. Histiographic metafiction, according to Hutcheon (2007), is self-consciously fictional works that challenge historical narratives by revealing their interpreted and produced character instead of offering them as objective realities. This method challenges conventional ideas of historical power by use of self-reflexivity and intertextuality, therefore encouraging readers to evaluate the part narrative plays in forming our knowledge of the past. Scholarship on historiographic metafiction has applied this approach to several historical and literary settings. Donated and Guimarãe Deeply enthralled by the supernatural and the past was also the Victorian age, which was defined by fast industrialization, scientific advancement, and significant social changes. This obsession showed up in the explosion of popularity of the ghost story, a genre that frequently explored fears about the invisible and the unexplained using gothic techniques. With its unique haunted environments, enigmatic events, and examination of the darker sides of human nature, Gothic stories gave a forum for addressing these cultural obsessions. Though not primarily a gothic writer, Oscar Wilde, known for his wit, social critique, and sophisticated examination of artifice, who would add a unique and perceptive text to the genre arose within this rich literary scene.

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more general socioeconomic concerns using the structure of the ghost story. Using aspects of comedy, parodies, and satire, Wilde deftly combines these genres to produce a singular story that both challenges and fascinates the reader. Thus, the narrative is not only a retelling of a ghost story but also makes use of these features as a medium for a more general commentary on the essence of historical narrative itself.

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Thus, this paper attempts to close this important gap by means of an analysis of The Canterville Ghost within the particular framework of Hutcheon's theory of historiographic metafiction. Using this approach, this study will show how Wilde reflects on the core nature of historical narration itself rather than only parodies by using the interaction with gothic standards. The argument will show how cleverly metafictional tactics allow Wilde's work to explore how history becomes discourse and how historical narratives are produced and understood. This will offer a fresh perspective on Wilde's work as well as the purposes of gothic stories generally.

This thesis contends that The Canterville Ghost actively interacts with historical metafiction, challenging conventional ideas of historical fact by means of its gothic not simply narrative construction. This paper will show by an analysis of its self-reflexive techniques, intertextual references, and problematizing of historical narratives that the novella not only interacts with history but also reveals, in the process, its own nature as a textual construction. Examining particular instances of how Wilde employs these devices will help to highlight the metafictional elements of The Canterville Ghost, therefore providing a fresh viewpoint on this famous work and its contributions to the genre of historical metafiction.

Theoretical Framework

This study of Oscar Wilde's The Canterville Ghost will be done via the framework of historiographic metafiction, a critical paradigm increasingly important in postmodern literary theory. With its focus on the created nature of reality and its mistrust of great narratives, postmodernism has caused a reevaluation of history, knowledge, and the basic process of storytelling. The idea of historiographic metafiction first surfaced in this larger intellectual setting, providing a means of understanding works about the past that are both self-consciously aware of their own fictional character and Given Linda Hutcheon's work on historiographic metafiction, which offers a theoretical framework for comprehending how literature could simultaneously interact with history and reveal its constructed character, her work is especially relevant to this subject.

Fundamentally, metafiction is a kind of writing that exposes the artifice of narrative by highlighting its own position as a created item. It achieves this by means of several self-reflexive strategies that expose the constructedness of the story and therefore disrupt its illusion. In this way, self-reflexivity is a fundamental component of metafiction; it promotes a

critical awareness of the text as a purposeful creation instead of a clear window onto reality. Though it claims to offer an objective view of the past, historiography is nevertheless a storytelling technique subject to interpretation and molded by cultural values. Like all other stories, it is thus a perception of events.

Poststructuralist theory, which holds that meaning is actively created by speech and interpretation rather than fixed, greatly shapes this approach. Our conception of story and power has been much shaped by thinkers as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Through his writings on discourse, Foucault emphasizes how history is a complicated web of power relations rather than a straight line of occurrence. According to Derrida's deconstruction of books, meaning is never fixed or unambiguous. Drawing on these concepts, Hutcheon's (1988) framework of historiographic metafiction, which she describes in her book *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, argues that books in this genre purposefully blur the lines between history and fiction, therefore subverting any neat separation between them. Historiographic metafiction holds that both fiction and history are narrative constructions with interpretability. It's therefore a framework that lets us recognize history as a sort of "telling a story".

Histiographic metafiction's primary thesis is that fiction changes our view of the past while history informs fiction: they are in a reciprocal connection. These are not distinct categories; rather, they are in a continuous discourse whereby both can be changed and reinterpreted. Combining these two genres, historiographic metafiction questions conventional, grand narratives of history that offer a totalizing, unified perspective of the past. It welcomes a plurality of viewpoints and interpretations rather than a one, absolute truth. This exposes the created, subjective character of historical accounts rather than any assertions of total objectivity. By means of their metafictional techniques, the historical narratives we narrate expose themselves as interpretations rather than a faithful recording of events.

From this point of view, the reader actively participates in the building of meaning rather than merely absorbs knowledge. A work can be comprehended only if the reader participates in the process of interpretation, of meaning construction, and interacts with the text. Emphasizing that the "truth" of a tale is finally influenced by the viewpoint and prejudices of those who narrate it, histiographic metafiction respects the subjective character of historical records. The reader thus starts to actively participate in the "meaning" creation of the book.

Thus, with an emphasis on spotting the particular metafictional strategies used in *The Canterville Ghost*, this study will mostly use close textual analysis as its methodological instrument. The study will spot and study how Wilde questions conventional historical narratives using strategies including self-reflexion, intertextuality, irony, and parody. It will especially look at how Wilde blurs the line separating the real from the fantastic, therefore highlighting the constructedness of the past. The aim is to expose the intricate link between historical events and their portrayal as well as to demonstrate how *The Canterville Ghost* serves as a model of historiographic metafictional device. This essay seeks to show using this framework that Wilde offers a critique of the way history is created and interpreted rather than a "answer" on how we should grasp the past.

Analysis: The Canterville Ghost as Historiographic Metafiction

The Canterville Ghost (1887) by Oscar Wilde goes well beyond a basic ghost narrative. Operating as a sophisticated example of historiographic metafiction, a type identified by Linda Hutcheon (1988) that simultaneously interacts with the past while acknowledging its own existence as a manufactured narrative. Though it self-reflexively reveals the mechanisms of historical storytelling, it employs the clichés of historical fiction including setting and characters. Wilde questions conventional ideas of historical objectivity, the nature of the past, and how stories shape our understanding of it by means of its humorous and often contradictory portrayal of a haunted English manor and the attempts of an American family to negotiate its supernatural inhabitant.

The *Canterville Ghost* deftly challenges the reader to explore the created character of historical narratives by blurring the line between the real and the fanciful. The narrative is set in a familiar historical environment, with a clearly defined English manor house, *Canterville Chase*, and its past offered as part of the appeal to the new owner, Mr. Otis. Early in the book, this interaction among historical "facts" and otherworldly components starts. For instance, Lord *Canterville* says, "My family had to move out many years ago, after my great-aunt had a terrible experience," (Wilde, 2006, p. 4), and then shows the great aunt screaming about a skeleton. The story so instantly shows that there is a past, but that it is related to a haunting, or supernatural element.

But the book rapidly throws off this apparently solid historical structure. Clearly inserting the supernatural is the arrival of the titular ghost, Sir Simon and his attempts to scare the Otis

family. Though presented to the reader as "history," Sir Simon's tale, that of the murder of his wife, Lady Eleanor, is simultaneously a ghost's lament and a tragic melodrama. The book notes "It is the blood of Lady Eleanor Canterville." Five hundred years ago, her husband, Sir Simon Canterville, killed her just on that same site. Seven years later Sir Simon Canterville vanished. His body never has been located (Wilde, 2006, p. 9). Therefore, the story presents it as "historical fact" even if the ghost has been there at the spot for "five hundred years". The bloodstain's recurring presence, which disappears each time it is cleaned clean, further blues the temporal and the timeless, the "real" and the supernatural.

This blur goes beyond the supernatural. It is also clear in how the American family, a representation of modernism and pragmatism, responds to the haunted aspects. They consider the ghost as a pragmatic issue. They interact with the "history" of the manor as a collection of challenges rather than as a "historical" event. The continuous attempts to "fix" the haunted events are a direct contrast to an English attitude of "honouring" historical events. The book describes how Washington "jumped down onto the carpet and scrubbed at the blood stain." It disappeared within seconds (Wilde, 2006, p. 10). Though this is a "real" action, it deviates from the "historical" relevance of the haunted component. The humorous and ridiculous nature of the introduction of oil for the ghost's chains (Wilde, 2006 p. 17) is underlined even further. By use of the juxtaposition of two opposing worldviews, the conventional ghost narrative and the pragmatic, scientific approach, Wilde blues the lines separating accepted genre norms from historical "fact."

The contradictory person that embodies the complexity of historical portrayal is Sir Simon, the Canterville Ghost. He is both a relic of the past and a caricature of it, a presence and an absence with great power but equally impotent.

As a classic from the past, Sir Simon is constantly visible at Canterbury Chase as a representation of the local past. Still, his "physical" presence is transient; he can only show up as a ghost. Beyond the frequent appearance of the blood stain, he cannot really interact with the physical world in a significant sense; he can create clanking chains and seem in horrible visions. The Canterville Ghost was still for a moment. He then slammed the oil bottle on the ground (Wilde, 2006, p. 18). In the same line, the twins provoke his "fright" by throwing pillows at him, but they do not physically interact with him in any real manner or

hurt him. Therefore, even if he is quite present, his influence is diminished particularly in view of an American modern sensibility.

The acts of the Otis family constantly undermine Sir Simon's potency as a fear. They consider him as a nuisance rather than fearing him. The book reveals that "Mr. Otis left the bottle on a table and went back to bed," Wilde, 2006, p. 17, indicating that the American family regards Sir Simon's threat as a pragmatic one. The ghost is himself terrified by their counterattacks instead of terrifying them; "Sir Simon fell back, hiding his face in his bony white hands" (Wilde, 2006, p. 27). The fact that Sir Simon's haunting is only a performance act, a historical cliché that has lost relevance in the face of a pragmatist viewpoint, emphasizes even more his anxiety from the "fake" ghost, a ghost created from a white sheet and a pumpkin. His duality as a terrible ghost set against his helpless responses emphasizes the flimsiness of historical accounts.

Sir Simon is an antique aspect connected to the gothic heritage. The narrative derives from a lengthy history of legends including dramatic family tragedies, ghosts seeking retribution, and haunted castles. Described as having "long greasy hair and ragged clothes," Sir Simon personally epitribes many of the elements of the gothic. Wilde, 2006, p. 16; he is prone to dramatic outbursts and shows clear "fiery red eyes". Still, Wilde parodies the gothic using the ghost at the same time. The failing attempts at haunting by the ghost, the family's pragmatic reaction to his apparitions, and his own self-pitying thoughts all help to undermine the conventional gothic form. Constant attempts by Sir Simon to "rehearse" his frightening acts show that they are essentially performative, that is they lack real presence. Not great. Not awful at all (Wilde, 2006, p. 34), he muses over his appearance as the Headless Earl. This duality, being both a parodies of the gothic and an embodiment of it, helps to accentuate the metafictional aspect of the work by showing how the past is a narrative to be repeated and reinterpreted rather than a fixed object.

Using strategies that accentuate its artistry, Wilde's story often emphasizes its own identity as a created work. One of the main techniques is the use of humor since it lessens the gravity one could anticipate from a ghost story. Continually shattering the fictitious fantasy is the manner the Otis family treats the haunting, the oil, the scrubbing, as well as the absurd efforts of the ghost.

The poem appears on the library window. Wilde (2006, p.7) directly points to the narrative framework of the work: "If a child will enter the secret room / And stay until the dead of the night / Then at last Sir Simon can sleep in his tomb / And at Canterbury all will be right." The poem presents the story arc but also makes clear that this arc is "pre-written," that it is a predefined narrative that has to be followed for Sir Simon's atonement to occur.

The self, conscious narrative also shows that we are aware of a narrator, a "authorial" voice with intervening ability. For instance, the book mentions "Sir Simon retreated inside the fireplace, which , fortunately for him , wasn't lit. Returning to his room in a horrible state, he found (Wilde, 2006, p.38). This narrator can "comment" on the action, or expose inner ghostic thoughts. This serves even more evidence for the imaginary construct. These various approaches show the manufactured character of the story and show that The Canterville Ghost is a narrative about storytelling rather than only history.

Deeply intertextual, the Canterville Ghost echoes several literary and cultural traditions. As already noted, the gothic novel is the clearest tradition it borrows. Plot aspects, characters, and setting of the tale all fit gothic clichés. All of the descriptions of Canterville Chase, with its "dark and dismal rooms," the ghost as a tortured soul, the familial tragedy driving his suffering, all point to this accepted literary convention.

Still, Wilde's use of intertextuality transcends genre rules. The novella also references venerable ghost tales like Hamlet, in which the ghost has to be exacted revenge. Although Sir Simon considers himself as a traditional "revenge ghost," finally the youngster (Virginia) finishes the story. Wilde parodies classic ghost stories in this sense, but he also employs them as a reference tool.

The book also makes indications regarding English history itself. "That is Lady Eleanor Canterville's blood. Five hundred years ago, her husband, Sir Simon Canterville, killed her on that identical site. The housekeeper notes, as if reporting a "well-known" historical fact: Wilde also used the often-used literary device known as "American vs. English". Therefore, a major component in the narrative is the difference between the pragmatic attitude of the American family toward ghosts and the English legacy of embracing them. By stressing its embeddedness in other stories and proving that the narrative itself is constructed on layers of other textual allusions, this intertextuality improves the metafictional nature of the work.

The Canterville Ghost questions conventional ideas of historical objectivity by showing how history is more of an act of interpretation and representation than of a record of the past. The story compares the pragmatic American family, who stand for the modern, ahistorical viewpoint, with the ghostly presence of Sir Simon, a "living relic" of the past.

As a ghost, Sir Simon stands in for the "lived" history of Canterville Chase, a past life with misery and tragedy. But his is hardly an objective portrayal. His narrative is also a sorrow, a melodrama self-justifying. Sir Simon cannot thus be regarded as a reliable "source" for the "historical facts". Conversely, the American family tries to "sanitize" the house, so eradicating the past, so discounting the "lived history". Rather than a historical person who captures the essence of a place, they view the ghost as a problem to be solved. "I'll clean it again" (Wilde, 2006, p.13), Washington says when the bloodstain resurfaces. This method shows how American modern perspective prefers to "fix" history rather than interact with it. The difference between Sir Simon and the American family emphasizes the arbitrary character of history. Wilde teaches us that rather being an "objective truth" regarding the past, simply interpretations depending on the perspective of the individual.

The novella also looks at how interpretation could shape historical images. The book implies that one gains authority by dominating the narrative of the past. The Otis family's continuous retelling of the ghost's narrative reveals their capacity for challenge to accepted wisdom. The ability of re-interpreting the past is shown by the fact that the ghost's story either makes one laugh or irritate. From a dark, gothic, sad story, they create a farcical comedy.

Virginia's interactions with Sir Simon show how empathy and understanding could subvert the received story. She interacts personally with the spirit, finds out about his suffering, and finally enables him to reach peace. "I was unaware of that." Currently are you hungry? (Wilde, 2006, p. 45) Virginia shows Sir Simon empathy not shared by the rest of the family by asking. This is an understanding approach of interacting with the past rather than something to be "fixed" or ridiculed. By Virginia's deeds, the narrative shows how understanding the past could inspire compassion and peace. This ability to reinterpret the story finally becomes the ability to help Sir Simon to be atoned and to govern his fate.

Conclusion:

Oscar Wilde creates a profound metafictional masterpiece in *The Canterville Ghost* that goes well beyond mere entertainment. Wilde subverts conventional ideas of historical objectivity

and representation by purposefully combining historical and fanciful aspects, by using a ghost that serves both as an antiquated relic and a satire of the gothic, and by using self-reflexive narrative. He emphasizes how story building shapes our perspective of the past and finally shows how flexible and always changing historical knowledge is rather than a set reality. Wilde produced not just a clever ghost story but also a strong commentary on the nature of history itself, and how our perspective of the past is always mediated by the stories we tell about it, by means of this mixing of sarcasm, intertextuality, and a little tenderness.

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