GHOSTLY TALES OF HENRY JAMES: APPARITIONS TO APPERCEPTION

ABSTRACT

THE EVOLUTION OF THE GHOSTLY TALES
OF HENRY JAMES: FROM APPARITIONS TO APPERCEPTION

BY

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
APRIL 1970

James's ghostly tales span the whole of his career and present a microcosm of his development as a writer. An increasing complexity of technique parallels the deepening moral vision. A critical, chronological reading of these tales reveals a progression from exterior romance to interior drama. The interest in the early tales is largely situational; in the later tales it is wholly psychological. The ghostly motif served James well and is central to his total drama of consciousness. In the early tales the supernatural element helped release his imaginative inspiration. In the tales of the nineties it facilitated the dramatization of abstract ideas. In the later tales the supernatural became the vehicle for James's deepest probings of consciousness: James's poor sensitive gentleman is a universal quester in search of self-realization. In James's last work, his unfinished ghost novel, the subject is no longer consciousness but the consciousness of consciousness. Thus the total pattern reveals an evolution from apparitions to apperception.

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INTRODUCTION

Henry James wrote approximately a score of stories which, to a greater or lesser degree, exploit the use of supernatural elements. For the purpose of this study I shall follow the precedent established by Leon Edel and refer to them as his ghostly tales. As one sixth of his total production of short stories they merit consideration on the grounds of number alone, but more importantly his achievement in the genre includes perhaps the most famous ghost story in the language, and three or four of his most impressive novellas. These stories span the period from his earliest ventures in the realm of fiction to the unfinished novel on which he was working at the time of his death. They exhibit a remarkable evolution in depth and complexity. James's first story making use of supernatural elements was the comparatively crude and simple "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes"; the last, his unfinished novel and final variation on the recurrent theme of the sense of the past, combines the ultimate refinement of the ghostly motif with the ultimate over-refinement of method. An examination of these tales affords a unique opportunity for the study of James's evolution as a writer in terms both of his increasing technical virtuosity and his deepening moral vision. The two cannot be separated. It is the purpose of this study to trace this evolution through a critical reading of each of these tales. Although certain of the later tales like "The Turn of the Screw" have received their fair share, and perhaps more than their fair share, of critical comment, comparatively little has been written about the earlier tales or the group as a whole.

Leon Edel has pioneered the way. His interest in this group of stories resulted in his collection The Ghostly Tales of Henry James which

was published in 1948. In writing this paper I have relied wholly on his selection of ghostly tales and have benefited from the substantial introduction and prefaces in this edition. However, here as elsewhere, Edel's approach is largely biographical: he is interested not so much in what James wrote but in why he wrote it. He explains James's initial attraction to the supernatural mode in terms of his father's "vastation" and his brother's similar experience. Edel then attributes James's neglect of the ghostly tale during the first fifteen years of his residence abroad to his being too busy writing about and living in the real world to trouble with any other. Finally, while admitting that the intellectual ambience of fin de siecle London might sufficiently account for James's renewed interest in the ghostly tale in the eighteen nineties, Edel prefers a psychological explanation. He offers the theory that James, distressed by the waning popularity of his works, began to write plays; then, after the failure of "Guy Domville," when he was hissed off the stage on opening night, he retreated to his study and again took up the writing of fiction, finding refuge in a world of childhood fantasy. According to Mr. Edel "The Turn of the Screw" is a "a product of the same daydreams and 'hauntedness' as all the tales of the post-dramatic years."[1]

The value of this type of criticism is limited. It may tell us more about James but it does little to illuminate the works. Earl Miner, who has written a perceptive article advocating the term "metaphysical romances" as a descriptive title for these tales,[2] doubts the existence of such a "geometrical" correspondence between art and psychological biography.

[1]The Ghostly Tales of Henry James, ed. Leon Edel (New Brunswick, 1948), Introd., p. xxii.

[2]Earl Roy Miner, "Henry James's Metaphysical Romances," Nineteenth Century Fiction, IX(1954), 1-21.

But, more importantly, he challenges Edel for his misrepresentation of the facts. Using Edel's own chronology and selection of ghostly tales, he points out that eleven of them were written before James was hissed off the stage for "Guy Domville." Actually, James's play-writing period largely coincides with the decade of ghostly tales; there is a close and important connection between the two forms. Both are actuated by the same search for economy, for cutting away the inessentials. James's version of the ghostly tale is always a dramatization. In his early romances it is a dramatization of a situation; in some of the tales of the nineties, like "The Private Life," it is the dramatization of an idea, but in its final form James's ghostly tale becomes the dramatization of a state of mind.

Curiously enough, this final development is most closely foreshadowed in a passage from The Portrait of a Lady, the great novel of James's realistic middle period. This realistic period affords no example of the supernatural mode, which in the somewhat arbitrary dichotomy between realism and romance, must be aligned with the latter. But, as Richard Chase has pointed out, even in this prevailingly realistic period, the romance elements have been deflected and transmuted to James's novelistic purposes rather than extinguished.[3] They find their outlet in an enrichment of metaphor of which the finest expression is the deep probing of consciousness which marks Isabel's journey to self-awareness during the long hours of her lonely reverie by the dying fire.[4] This dramatization of her consciousness is the high point in the novel; the atmosphere of this internal meditation is not so different from the atmosphere prevailing in the house at the jolly corner, as Spencer Brydon stalks his ghostly alter ego.

[3]Richard Chase, The American Novel and its Tradition (New York, 1957) p. 119.

[4]Henry James, The Portrait of a Lady (New York, 1908), Chap. XLII, pp. 186-205.

The language explicitly evokes the supernatural as James describes Isabel's mental state: "her soul was haunted with terrors which crowded into the foreground of thought as quickly as a place was made for them."[5] It is not far from the strange and sinister fantasies which materialise in Isabel's imagination to the beast which haunts John Marcher or the black stranger who confronts Spencer Brydon. James finally comes to use the supernatural as a metaphor to express the inexpressible and as a vehicle to explore the depths of consciousness and even to suggest the mysteries lying beneath these depths.[6]

Thus James's ghostly tales are far from an aberrant departure from what Gorley Putt has termed James's normal "magisterial concern for conscious behaviour."[7] Rather they provide James with a new form and an added dimension for what Osborn Andreas has called his constant endeavour to "define the most conscious man."[8] James's ghostly tales do not attempt to relate human behaviour to a world outside itself. His emphasis is never

[5]The Portrait of a Lady, p. 188.

[6]The focus of this study is the Jamesian ghost story, but it would be insular to pretend that James was the only writer to exploit the supernatural in this way. Nor was he the first. Recent criticism has stressed the importance of the Gothic tradition which established a break with the rational and provided a vehicle for the exploration of the dark side of man's nature. In The Divided Self (New York, 1969), Masao Miyoshi has traced the progression from the early Gothic romances to the dual personality stories of the 1890s. Surprisingly, he makes no mention of James's supernatural tales, not even of "The Jolly Corner."

[7]Gorley Putt, Henry James: A Reader's Guide (Cornell, 1967), p. 389.

[8]Osborn Andreas, Henry James & The Expanding Horizon (Seattle, 1948), Introd., p. 2.

upon the ghost, but upon the normal consciousness reacting to it.[9] This consciousness is, vicariously, the reader's consciousness and constitutes his felt response.

In the end the response must be a moral one, for all these tales are characterized and linked by their deeply moral basis. They have been variously described as fables, parables, and allegories, not to mention Miner's designation "metaphysical romances." It is perhaps for this reason that Putt feels uncomfortable with them. Like D.W. Jefferson, another English critic, he prefers to see James as part of the mainstream of the English tradition; for these critics James is primarily a social historian, a novelist of manners. Jefferson argues most strongly against the moralistic approach of James; he states, "To describe a novel of manners by James is a delicate task, since the essence of it lies in the poetry; to give a mere abstract of 'social content' would be just another of the ways of cheating the reader. But at least the social content is there."[10] I would argue that in these tales it isn't there, or at least, only very thinly so.[11]

James's unfinished ghost novel, The Sense of the Past, exemplifies this final point. Here the elaborate plot structure provides a unique

[9]In this connection there is an interesting parallel in the essay "Is there a life after death?" as H.J. discounts the evidence of an after-life as revealed by mediums in the trance state. He writes, "I can only treat here as absolutely not established the value of those personal signs that ostensibly come to us through the trance medium. These often make, I grant, for attention and wonder and interest--but for interest above all in the medium and the trance." This essay, contributed in 1910 to a symposium on immortality, is reproduced in The James Family, ed. F.O. Matthiessen (New York, 1947), pp. 602-614.

[10]D.W. Jefferson, Henry James & The Modern Reader (London, 1962), p. 22.

[11]"Sir Edmund Orme" is certainly an exception; the description of Brighton is an integral part of the atmosphere. A possible exception is "Owen Wingrave," which is on one level a document of social protest. And perhaps the impression of the changed New York in "The Jolly Corner" would qualify as social content, but this is a peripheral level of the story.

potential for social content. The young American hero is transported not only across an ocean, but also into a previous age. The unwary reader can hardly be blamed for anticipating the characteristically Jamesian "international" conflict, here further heightened by the contrast between contemporary manners and those of a previous age. But instead the conflict is wholly moral and spiritual and ruthlessly interiorized. For ultimately these final stories in the supernatural genre are James's spiritual testament and the culmination of his passionate concern with consciousness. In the essay "Is there a life after death?" which may be taken as his personal credo, James writes of the artist, "His case, as I see it, is easily such as to make him declare that if he were not constantly, in his commonest processes, carrying the field of consciousness further and further, making it lose itself in the ineffable, he shouldn't in the least feel himself an artist."[12] A.R. Orage remarked shortly after James's death that he "was in love with the next world, or the next state of consciousness; he was always exploring the borderland between the conscious and the superconscious."[13] It is not surprising that Orage was the first critic to recognize the centrality of James's ghostly tales,[14] for in this borderland between the conscious and the superconscious we find the Jamesian ghost.

[12] James Family, p. 611.

[13] Quoted by Matthiessen, James Family, p. 592.

[14] See A.R. Orage, "Henry James & the Ghostly," The Little Review, V (August 1918), 41-43.

CHAPTER ONE

FOUR EARLY TALES

James's ghostly tales fall naturally into three chronological groups. The first group comprises the early supernatural tales, the last of which was written in 1875. The second group covers James's ghostly decade; these are the tales written in the eighteen nineties. Making up the third chronological group are the three major tales written after the turn of the century, "The Great Good Place" (1900), "The Beast in the Jungle" (1903), and "The Jolly Corner" (1908). To these must be added the unfinished ghost novel, The Sense of the Past. The tales in the first group are little known, nor do they merit careful scrutiny. Yet they have a certain freshness and clarity, and it is interesting to see how the impulse to romance released James's imagination and artistry.

The first of these early tales "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" appeared in 1868 when James was twenty-five. This first ghostly tale was James's seventh published story; it was, however, his first romance and also his first contribution to The Atlantic Monthly, to which William Dean Howells had recently been appointed assistant editor. The linking of Howell's name with James's first experiment in romance is no fortuitous coincidence. It has been convincingly argued (by Cornelia Pulsifer Kelley, among others)[1] that Howells was to a large extent responsible for James's experiments in the romantic vein. Howells, James's senior by seven years, had made the acquaintance of the James family upon his appointment to Boston and had formed a firm and lasting friendship with

[1]Cornelia Pulsifer Kelley, The Early Development of Henry James (Illinois, 1965), p. 82.

"Harry" James, based on their common passion for literature. In a letter Howells mentions a "famous" talk "two or three hours long" in which he and James "settled the principles of literary art."[2] Kelley suggests that it may well have been as a result of this talk that James interrupted his flow of explanatory, analytical tales modelled on Balzac to produce an altogether different type of tale. This tale, in its early New England setting, in its pictorial effects, and in the very cadences of its prose, harks back not to any foreign realistic influence, but to Hawthorne.[3]

Although Howells himself shared James's ambition to write the great American realistic novel, he was a warm admirer of Hawthorne, chiefly for his artistry. Comparing Hawthorne to George Eliot, he wrote, "He was always dealing with the problem of evil, too, and I found a more potent charm in his more artistic handling of it than I found in George Eliot."[4]

It was artistry that had been lacking in James's earlier realistic tales. They are earnest, searching and analytical, but they are the product of intellectual volition rather than of imaginative inspiration. The sudden impetus towards romance acted as a liberating influence upon James. For James, romance is to be defined in terms of the experience with which it deals: "Experience liberated...experience disengaged,

[2]Letter to E.C. Stedman, as quoted in Life in Letters of William Dean Howells, ed. Mildred Howells (New York, 1928), Vol. 1, p. 116.

[3]Witness the opening sentence: "Towards the middle of the eighteenth century there lived in the province of Massachusetts a widowed gentlewoman, the mother of three children, by name Mrs. Veronica Wingrave." The Complete Tales of Henry James, ed. Leon Edel, 12 vols. (London, 1962), I, 297. All subsequent references will be to this edition. Volume and page numbers will be indicated in parentheses within the test.

[4]William Dean Howells, My Literary Passions (New York, 1895), p. 33.

disembroiled,...disencumbered, exempt from the conditions that we usually know to attach to it and...drag upon it."[5] In James's first venture into romance, into representing this kind of experience, he no longer feels called upon to analyse or explain. Moreover the romantic convention of setting the tale in the past eliminated his constant striving to reproduce the tone of his own time and allowed instead the release of his imagination and its intuitive awareness of "the sense of the past." This is by no means to claim that "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" is a great story, or even a good one, but it does show considerable artistic advance over what James had been producing up to this time.

Kelley juxtaposes this tale with "The Story of a Masterpiece," which had immediately preceded it. Both tales deal with the theme of jealousy, but in "The Romance," unlike the earlier explanatory tale, James treats the theme pictorially. His series of highly coloured pictures shows the effect of jealousy; they do not attempt to analyse the emotion. As Kelley states, these pictures are the result of analysis, but analysis itself is kept in the background.[6] In the wedding clothes James found a symbol which would carry the weight of the moral burden of the story and give it artistic form. The wedding clothes symbolize not only the splendours attendant upon the position of being a rich man's wife, but they also epitomise earthly vanity. Most critics have found the older sister more culpable, but I would suggest that the younger one is equally so. Her insistence that the wedding clothes be locked away for her own daughter is surely spiteful and hardly motivated by selfless love. Even on her deathbed,

[5]Henry James, The Art of the Novel, ed. R.P. Blackmur (New York, 1962), p. 33.

[6]Kelley, p. 81.

"The last feeling which lingered in her heart was one of mistrust" (I,310). The sisters destroy each other, but they are also self-destructive. Although the ghost from the grave wreaks its physical vengeance, it functions also on a figurative level to suggest the self-destructiveness of corrupt passion.

This may be putting too heavy a moral load on this slight tale. James himself appears uneasy in this first experiment in the metaphysical romance. On the one hand he exploits and indeed overexploits the genre, and on the other he cannot take it quite seriously. The result is confusion of tone; the melodrama is constantly undercut by the supercilious, detached voice of the omniscient author. Even allowing for the fact that this is romance, the summary way in which the author disposes of the younger sister Perdita, who has just been successfully delivered of a child, is surely too contrived: "Mrs. Lloyd made a little moan, and turned about. But she continued to do very well, and for a week her improvement was uninterrupted. Finally, however, through some indiscretion in the way of diet or exposure, it was checked, and the poor lady grew rapidly worse. Lloyd was in despair" (I,310). The hurried and flat tone of the prose hardly prepares the reader to sympathize with Lloyd in his despair. But perhaps this response is not called for.

In 1914 James, now an eminent and established author, was to repudiate this youthful tale when he was asked permission for its inclusion in a volume of short stories. He wrote back to the publisher, "I should be willing to be represented by something representative."[7] To the elderly,

[7]As quoted by R. Haven, "Henry James on One of His Early Stories," American Literature, XXIII (1951-52), 131-133.

supersubtle author, this early tale of his youth must have seemed impossibly crude and amateurish; it is not representative because the drama is conveyed externally. It is not the drama of consciousness.

Even less representative is the next romance that James wrote for Howells, "De Grey: A Romance." In atmosphere and theme this tale looks to Georges Sand, who at this time had replaced Balzac in James's esteem. The story deals with love as an overwhelming passion, and again the supernatural helps suggest the extremes of passion. I would claim, however, that this tale is even less representative than the preceding romance in that the emphasis is placed not on the characters, but on the sensational situation. The subject of the story is the old-world family curse blighting the house of De Grey. Since the time of the crusades, in punishment for the sins of a De Grey ancester, the first loves of the De Grey heirs are destined to die. The young girl in the story, showing typical American independence, attempts to thwart the curse, but succeeds only in reversing it. She herself does not die, but she lives at the expense of her lover: "As she bloomed and prospered, he drooped and languished. While she was living for him, he was dying for her" (I,425).

The vampire theme, which was to culminate in the surrealistic fantasy of The Sacred Fount, is given its simplest and most literal expression in this Gothic romance where the melodramatic plot line takes precedence over psychological insight. The characters are in the end mere puppets, helpless in the thrall of an ancient curse. The cool, detached tone of the story militates against any attempt to invest the curse with moral or metaphysical significance. The curse simply provides the basis for a highly coloured yarn; the supernatural is invoked to facilitate its dramatization.

Kelley commends this story for moving along by itself and "not at the command of the author; it is not hampered by any prejudice either for or against his characters on the part of the author."[8] But focusing on the situation instead of the characters seems to run completely contrary to James's instincts as a writer. Each of the characters in turn is invested with an interest which deflect the focus, distracts the reader and gives rise to confusion. The tale starts with a vivid thumb-nail sketch of the mother who "had taken life, as she liked a cup of tea,--weak, with an exquisite aroma, and plenty of cream and sugar...She had the very best taste; but, morally, one may say that she had no history" (I,388-9). Walter Wright appears to have been so diverted by this opening that he concludes that the story is Mrs. De Grey's and its theme "the importance of suffering as an initiation into life."[9] James also gives the curious figure of Father Herbert an importance which his subsidiary role in the story does not justify. Almost despite itself this early story demonstrates that characters and not situations are James's true concern. In this respect the earlier tale, modelled on Hawthorne, whom James admired primarily for his caring for the "deeper psychology,"[10] is far more within the mainstream of James's writings.

So, too, is "The Last of the Valerii," James's next venture into the supernatural, which appeared in 1874. In this tale James abandons the omniscient narrative mode of the two earlier tales for first-person narration through a character not directly concerned in the action who mediates between the action and the audience. It is a far more complicated

[8]Kelley, p. 87.

[9]Walter F. Wright, The Madness of Art, (Lincoln, 1962), p. 137.

[10]As quoted in F.O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance (London, 1954) pp. 294-295.

form of narration; it is typically Jamesian, and it will lead eventually in the later tales to the technique of dramatized consciousness.

This tale owes its conception, somewhat inauspiciously, to James's having translated Mérimée's "La Vénus d'Ille." Far from plagiarising, James has completely transformed Mérimée's story. Mérimée's tale is highly coloured melodrama; its interest is entirely situational. In this story of an ancient statue, disinterred and claiming for its own a young human lover, the statue is an agent--it invades the house, it crushes the young husband in a supernatural embrace, it even leaves footprints! But James de-emphasises the supernatural elements of the story and places it on a more moral basis; melodrama gives way to parable. In Mérimée's story the young couple is manipulated by the situation, but James establishes them as autonomous beings. For once this is not a story of people separated but of people brought together. Nor is it a story of renunciation. The young American girl, wholly in love with her enchanted Roman count, takes active steps to save her marriage, thus adumbrating one of James's later heroines, Maggie Verver.[11] The focus is on character; through the strength of her character, the young bride is able to regain her husband.

The statue of Juno which is disinterred, ironically enough at the instigation of the young wife, does not come to independent life but functions as the symbol of a primitve and pagan past, a past to which the

[11]It may be going too far to see a foreshadowing of the sophisticated and complex Prince Amerigo in the almost primitive young count, but there is a certain kinship in their sexual magnetism.

young count immediately and passionately responds.[12] In this story the supernatural element enables James to simplify and render concrete his abstract theme; when the Juno is replaced in the earth, the young count is released from his obsession and returns to his American wife. While the tale undoubtedly marks a refinement of the ghostly motif, the statue must not be interpreted as an externalisation of the count's obsession. The narrative is still presented from the outside; no attempt is made to penetrate the count's mind.

The last of this early group of tales is "The Ghostly Rental," a delightful example of James's early manner. Were it not for the final turn of the screw when the haunter becomes the haunted, this tale would stand as a parody of the Gothic romance. All the familiar props are used; the evocation of the past, the winter season, the lonely road, the frightened neighbours, and finally, the haunted house. But as Edel points out, here already James has gone beyond the merely apparitional; the narrator's definition of "haunted" shifts to one of "spiritually blighted,"[13] thus heralding the emergence of the psychological ghost. This view of what haunting really means survives even the comic denouement when the "ghost" turns out to be a living woman.

The note of parody undercuts the Gothic convention--any terror must be dispelled when the narrator disarmingly remarks, "to have seen a well-authenticated goblin is, as things go, a feather in a quiet man's cap" (IV,77) , but the parody is in turn undercut by the strain of

[12]Wright says, "it is at once apparent that the contrast is between the ideal beauty of the pagan world and the actual of the present." Wright, p. 168. Wright is wrong. Contrary to common assumptions James's "sense of the past" made no concessions to sentimental nostalgia; he was always acutely aware of the cruelty and suffering of the past.

[13]Ghostly Tales, p. 132.

seriousness below the surface entertainment. In the end there is a real ghost, and the girl who had impersonated a ghost is punished, not only for her unfilial treatment of her father, but also for her implicit mockery of the spirit world.

This early tale, moreover, contains a most effective justification of the supremacy of the role of the observer when a subsidiary character remarks:

> Observe closely enough, and it doesn't matter where you are. You may be in a pitch-dark closet...Shut me up in a dark closet and I will observe after a while, that some places in it are darker than others. After that, (give me time), and I will tell you what the President of the United States is going to have for dinner (IV,63).

This surely refutes J.H. Raleigh's simplistic assertion that "James's beloved consciousness, the chief subject matter of his work, was nothing more than an artistic presentation of the idea of the tabula rasa being written upon by experience or sense impressions."[14] For James, consciousness was not passive, but active. In the final stories in the ghostly genre, the darkest places in the closet, the places of the mind itself, receive illumination.

It is remarkable that in these four early tales, while the supernatural element is present as a palpable external force, it has yet to manifest itself as an actual ghost. I would therefore question Edel's delineation of the evolution of the ghostly tales as a progression starting from the "merely apparitional."[15] In these early tales James is not yet

[14]J.H. Raleigh, "The Poetics of Empiricism," Henry James: Modern Judgements, ed. Tony Tanner (London, 1968), p. 57.

[15]In his introduction to "The Jolly Corner" Edel traces this development: "He had moved from the 'merely apparitional' to the individual with his inner ghosts and now finally to the exercising of a haunting spell by the individual." Ghostly Tales, p. 720.

confident enough in the genre to posit a genuine apparition and assimilate it to his own purposes. My next chapter opens with a discussion of the first of James's more mature experiments, the first ghostly tale in that extraordinary decade of ghostly tales. With "Sir Edmund Orme," enter the Jamesian ghost.

CHAPTER TWO

GHOSTS REAL AND ACTUAL

James's ghosts are so highly individualized and distinctive that they tend to seem more numerous than they are. There are actually surprisingly few truly "apparitional" stories. I would restrict this definition rather more closely than Leon Edel does, and reserve it for the tales in which the supernatural element becomes objectified and can be seen as a ghost. In the four early stories discussed above only the effects of the ghost are apparent.[1] Even in the dozen ghostly tales of the nineties, James's haunted decade, the ghost remains elusive. In this chapter I shall consider four tales in which the ghost does appear and which offer interesting comparisons and contrasts in technique, tone and effect. These tales are "Sir Edmund Orme," "The Friends of the Friends," "The Turn of the Screw" and "The Third Person."[2]

To attempt to discuss "The Turn of the Screw" in the company of three of James's least known tales might well appear foolhardy, but perhaps to do so is one way to determine whether it is indeed the "perfectly independent and irresponsible little fiction"[3] which its author claims it

[1]In "The Ghostly Rental" the haunting presence turns out to be a hoax, and the real ghost is seen neither by the narrator nor the reader. He is visible only to the guilty daughter.

[2]Leon Edel's paperback "apparitional" edition of The Ghostly Tales includes among its tales of the nineties "Sir Dominick Ferrand," "Owen Wingrave," and "The Altar of the Dead." In none of these does a ghost appear. Only in "Nona Vincent," "The Private Life," and "The Real Right Thing" could a case be made for a ghost. In "Nona Vincent," despite the Jamesian ambiguity, the chances are that the visitor is not a ghost. "The Private Life" is too explicitly allegorical to qualify as a ghost story, and "The Real Right Thing" is merely a supernatural variation on the theme of the inviolability of the artist.

[3]Art of the Novel, p. 169.

is. In its form of a first person narrative preceded by a prologue it invites comparison with "Sir Edmund Orme" and "The Friends of the Friends." Furthermore although I cannot discount entirely the apparitionist versus non-apparitionist controversy which threatens to overwhelm James's most famous ghostly tale, discussing "The Turn of the Screw" in the context of other apparitional stories may lend a new perspective. It may seem that by doing so I have sided with the apparitionists, but I suggest that this story, as well as the others, may be approached more fruitfully through R.P. Blackmur's very valid distinction between the "real" and the "actual."[4]

"Sir Edmund Orme" (1891), James's first ghostly tale after an interlude of fifteen years, marks the appearance of the Jamesian ghost. He arrives with a quiet but compelling assurance. His entrance is heralded by no chill blasts, no shrieks, and no clanking of chains. He appears not by moonlight in a ruined chapel, but in a friendly country church on a peaceful Sunday morning. The scene is perfectly normal, totally reassuring. The guests of a country house party have walked to church service in the village. The family pews being occupied, the narrator and the girl he loves take their places on a bench near some decent rustics. The narrator sits next to the villagers to spare the girl this rude contact; the seat on her aisle side remains empty. Halfway through the service the narrator notices that it is no longer empty, although his companion has not moved up to accommodate the latecomer, a pale young man with the air of a gentleman.

[4]Blackmur makes this distinction in writing on "The Friends of the Friends:" "The ghost here comes near representing one of those hallucinated hysterics, those sensible looming fixations, those deep abortions of the human spirit, which destroy the humanity in which they fester precisely by seeming real when they are only actual--actual in the sense that a mirage is actual; it is experienced. The actuality for the imagined person concerned is ineluctable..." R.P. Blackmur, "The Sacred Fount," Kenyon Review, IV (Autumn 1942), 332.

Dressed in black, and with his hat beside him, he crosses his hands on the knob of his cane as he gazes at the altar. The narrator, noting that the newcomer has no prayer book, reaches across the girl to offer him his own, but at this moment the stranger rises, and passing down the centre of the church, departs as noiselessly as he had appeared. Only two people (apart from the reader) have been aware of his presence, the narrator and the mother of the girl.

The young man in black, Sir Edmund Orme, is in many ways the prototype of the Jamesian ghost. His pallor, his silence, the intensity of his gaze and the sheer brooding power of his presence all make for a marked resemblance to those two formidable spirits, Peter Quint and Miss Jessel. But his unobtrusive entrance, which in no way disturbs the tranquil atmosphere, is part of the considered effect of this particular story. In the preface to "The Altar of the Dead" James commends the tale as a specimen of "the finest...of the gruesome."[5] He has entirely abandoned the romantic approach of the four earlier tales. The special note he sought to achieve was "that of the strange and sinister embroidered on the very type of the normal and easy."[6]

Contributing more than anything else to this effect is the easy, confident voice of the first person narrator. In contrast to the beginning of "The Friends of the Friends" and "The Turn of the Screw," the prologue to this story does little to establish the identity of the narrator apart from attesting to his general veracity. It serves only to set the scene and to prepare the reader for a tale which will strain his credulity

[5] Art of the Novel, p. 260.
[6] Ibid., p. 261.

as it is accounted "too extravagant to have had a demonstrable origin" (VIII,119). But the matter-of-fact voice of the narrator inspires confidence, and he impresses the reader as a man of the world, competent to handle any situation, even a ghostly one. His attitude towards the ghost changes in the course of the tale, but he is never frightened, thus precluding this response on the part of the reader. Edel calls the tale a "dark little drama,"[7] and while the narrative voice may mitigate this effect, the plot is indeed sombre: the ghost of a rejected suitor punishes his cruel mistress for having jilted him in her youth by haunting her daughter when the girl is in a position to jilt a lover. The tension results from the mother's trying to shield her daughter from an awareness of her "unconscious obsession."[8] The narrator comes to share the mother's burden when his love for her daughter opens his eyes to the ghostly presence. In the end the mother dies, the girl accepts her suitor, and the spirit is exorcised. The disappearance of the ghost coinciding with the death of the mother makes it on one level the objectified symbol of the mother's guilt, but the fact that the narrator sees the ghost argues against a purely psychological reading. The narrator is neither guilty nor neurotic, and it is best to accept the ghost as not only actual but real.

He is certainly real for the narrator. The love for the girl which qualifies him to see the ghost also accounts for the change in his attitude towards the apparition. His initial reaction upon learning the identity of the pale young man who had entered the church is one of curiosity

[7]Ghostly Tales, p. 142.

[8]James is not anticipating Freud here as Edel would seem to suggest by claiming in his Introduction that "Henry James used these words before the modern era of psychiatry." The term is not used in the Freudian sense.

and excitement. On Sir Edmund's second appearance the narrator is conscious of feeling cold and aware of the soundless silence. Despite this he rejoices in this extension of his perceptions and decides that "ghosts were much less alarming and much more amusing than was commonly supposed" (VIII,137). But soon his sympathy as a lover alerts him to the possible danger for the innocent young girl were she ever to become conscious of the haunting presence: he admits that "if it wasn't curious and interesting it might easily be very dreadful" (VIII,140). The spectre as the manifestation of the mother's guilt is the guardian angel of aspiring suitors, but he is nevertheless unnatural. The narrator realizes that were the girl's eyes opened to this "perfect presence" she would then "have to work (it) as she could into her conception of a young lady's universe" (VIII,146). His concern for the daughter makes him finally see the case as "simplified to the vision of a frightened girl whom I loved" (VIII,148).[9] The end of the story foreshadows the ending of "The Turn of the Screw." The narrator tries to shield the girl from the vision of the ghost just as the governess at first attempts to prevent Miles from seeing Peter Quint.[10]

For the modern reader the "weak specifications"[11] of this tale detract from its terrors. It is difficult to take the jilting of a lover seriously enough to warrant such a punishment.[12] But terror was not the

[9]This is put much more forcefully in the final New York version, where it becomes a case of a "vision of an adorable girl menaced and terrified."

[10]The whole rhetoric of the two passages is very similar. At the risk of putting too heavy a moral strain on "Sir Edmund Orme," one can see the selflessness of the narrator's love, which saves the girl, in sharp contrast to the possessive love of the governess for Miles.

[11]James uses this phrase in his preface to "The Turn of the Screw" to justify his lack of specifics in the later tale. Art of the Novel, p. 176.

[12]Blackmur claims: "The act of jilting is for James, throughout his work, an act of moral abasement, for in performing it one damaged one's integrity." p. 335.

effect James sought; he worked against it not only in his choice of narrator, but also in the setting. The tale is set in the past, but this distancing in time is not, as in the four early tales, a somewhat artificial concession to the romantic tradition, but rather an integral part of the whole narrative conception. James turned to an earlier time to emphasize the note he wanted. The past is evoked not in order to heighten the mystery but, on the contrary, to reassure the reader. The atmosphere of the decadent nineties was too unsettled for James's purpose; he chose the earlier Victorian era in order to recapture the note of respectability essential for his desired effect of the "normal and easy." His Victorian Brighton, at the height of its prosperity, recreates an era of bourgeois complacency which contrasts effectively with the uncanny events of this tale: "Brighton was full of people; it was the height of the season, and the day was even more respectable than lovely--which helped to account for the multitude of walkers. The blue sea itself was decorous..."(VIII,119).

In most ghost stories, (including "The Turn of the Screw") the action takes place in a lonely setting; the isolation is emphasized. But in "Sir Edmund Orme" the scene is always crowded. Mrs. Marden may be terrified by her private visions, but she is always shown against a background of social conviviality. The story opens with the gay scene at the Brighton Parade where the narrator makes the acquaintance of mother and daughter. The next scene is at a crowded tea party, where the mother's unaccountable terror is underlined by the banality of the setting.[13] The serene village church in which the ghost first appears to the narrator underscores the

[13]In one of his brilliant flashes of social comment James deepens the whole tone of the tale: "There were other people present--idle Brighton folk, old women with frightened eyes and irrelevant interjections..." but this note is not sustained.

peculiar function of this spectre. While I cannot agree with Blackmur that Sir Edmund Orme as man and ghost is "an object and guiding principle of human sympathy,"[14] he is clearly not symbolic of evil.[15] Only in the stark setting of the closing scene at the mother's deathbed does the note of the "strange and sinister" threaten to prevail over the "normal and easy."

"Sir Edmund Orme" is not a great story, but on the whole James's formula works well, and Sir Edmund with his beautiful manners and impeccable wardrobe is certainly an engaging ghost.[16] The supernatural element is handled with far more assurance than in the early tales. While the tale is psychological in so far as the ghost centres attention on the mother obsessed by guilt, never again does James posit a 'real' ghost in quite this way.

Whereas in "Sir Edmund Orme" a ghost points the way to marriage, in "The Friends of the Friends" the central question seems to be whether or not it is a ghost which prevents an arranged marriage from taking place. This rather weak and mechanical little tale, written shortly before "The Turn of the Screw," is of interest solely in relation to the later work.

[14]Blackmur, p. 336.

[15]For James the forms of traditional religion meant little, but he would have considered it obscene to introduce Peter Quint in this way.

[16]Virginia Woolf wrote of James's ghosts: "The beautiful urbane spirits are only not of this world because they are too fine for it. They have taken with them across the border their clothes, their manners, their breeding, their band-boxes, and valets and ladies' maids. They remain always a little worldly. We may feel clumsy in their presence but we cannot feel afraid." (Granite and Rainbow (New York, 1958, p. 71.) This is an admirable description of Sir Edmund Orme. It applies less well to the other ghosts.

It may be linked by its theme of the love of a man for a dead woman with the denouement of The Wings of the Dove, but in James's deliberate exploitation of what he called in the preface to The Ambassadors, "the terrible fluidity of self revelation"[17] it bears directly on "The Turn of the Screw." More importantly the implicit ambiguity of the latter[18] is expressed quite explicitly in "The Friends of the Friends" and forces the reader to ask was there or was there not a ghost? Did the unnatural events really take place or are they merely the hallucinations of a woman maddened by jealousy? One wonders, too, where is the focus of this story--is it on the strange relationship between the man and the woman to whom death is no barrier, or on the neurotic personality of the narrator herself?

It is futile to try to answer the first two questions. James has covered his tracks too carefully; the circumstantial details are presented in such a way that either answer is possible. James's long Notebook entry on the story stresses the ambiguity but gives no clue to the truth.[19] But the last, crucial question does admit an answer; this is the essential contrast to "The Turn of the Screw." Perhaps because James himself felt

[17]Art of the Novel, p. 321.

[18]This has exercised the pens of hundreds of critics from the very time of its publication when The Critic observed that the governess "has nothing in the least substantial upon which to base her deep and startling cognitions." The Critic, XXXIII, old series (December 1898) 523-4. As early as 1919 Henry A. Beers anticipated Wilson: "The true interpretation of that story I have sometimes thought to be, that the woman who saw the phantoms was mad." As quoted by T.N. Cranfill and R.L. Clark, Jr. in An Anatomy of The Turn of The Screw (Texas, 1965), p. 5.

[19]"The possible doubt and question of whether it was after or before death. The ambiguity--the possibility." The Notebooks of Henry James, ed. F.O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock (New York, 1961), p. 243.

the mechanical stiffness of the plot, he worked out an elaborate scenario for the story in his Notebooks.[20] It is therefore possible to trace the way the emphasis changes from the objective plot to the narrator and her jealousy. The plot concerns a man and a woman "who have constantly heard of each other, constantly been near each other, constantly missed each other."[21] Linked by similar extrasensory experiences, the two are in every way compatible, yet sheer chance prevents their meeting. The narrator is outside this charmed couple but a friend of both. She eventually becomes engaged to the man, although she is aware of the subtle bond between the other two. In the first Notebook entry the first person narrator functions only as a narrative device to keep the story "objective,"[22] but there is a sudden shift in focus and a mounting excitement as James catches by the tail the very notion of his little 'cochonnerie' and the narrator herself becomes an agent in the action: "The LAST empêchement to the little meeting, the supreme one, the one that caps the climax and makes the thing 'past a joke,' 'trop fort,' and all the rest of it, is the result of my own act. I prevent it, because I become conscious of a dawning jealousy."[23]

James uses "The Friends of the Friends" in his preface to "The Altar of the Dead" as one of the several stories to illustrate his thesis

[20]Unlike the scenario for The Ambassadors which James used only in the sense that he was able to draw on the solidly established background, the scenario here serves as the outline for the story.

[21]Notebooks, p. 231. This is from the first Notebook entry on the story written a few weeks before the detailed scenario.

[22]"There would be various ways of doing it, and it comes to me that the thing might be related by the 3rd person, according to my wont when I want something--as I always do want it--intensely objective." Ibid., p. 231.

[23]Ibid., pp. 241-2.

that the wonderful and strange are best presented "by showing almost exclusively the way they are felt, by recognizing as their main interest some impression strongly made by them and intensely received."[24] In the actual story the "impression," as Matthiessen points out,[25] is the jealousy roused in the narrator. The long postponed meeting between her lover and her woman friend mysteriously takes place after the latter's sudden death. Maddened by jealousy the narrator breaks off her engagement, convinced that her lover would not resist any future calls from beyond the grave. At the end of the story the latter dies; the narrator's continuing obsession is evident as she records: "It was sudden, it was never properly accounted for, it was surrounded by circumstances in which--for oh I took them to pieces!--I distinctly read an intention, the mark of his own hidden hand. It was the result of a long necessity, of an unquenchable desire. To say exactly what I mean, it was a response to an irresistible call" (IX,401).

The final notebook entry makes clear that the narrator's consciousness, and not the quasi-supernatural events she describes, becomes the subject of the story: "From here to the end, the attitude, on the subject, is mine: the return of my jealousy, the imputation of the difference that seeing her has made in him; the final rupture that comes entirely from ME and from my imputations and suspicions."[26] There can be little doubt that the tale is intended as the portrait of a psychologically unbalanced woman. The important truth which lies behind the

[24] Art of the Novel, p. 256.
[25] Notebooks, p. 244.
[26] Notebooks, p. 243. James has merged with his persona.

ambiguity is that the marriage is prevented not by any outside intervention, supernatural or otherwise, but by the narrator herself. Real or actual, the ghost figures metaphorically as the externalization of the narrator's obsession.

Edel asserts that "the personality of the jealous woman--as indeed all the elements of this tale--foreshadows the governess of "The Turn of the Screw."[27] K.B. Vaid, on the other hand, uses this tale to bolster his theory that the governess in "The Turn of the Screw," in contradistinction to the narrator in this story, is entirely reliable.[28] I think both positions oversimplify and exaggerate the relationship between the two stories. However, since they were written within two years of each other, it is unlikely that James, who had consciously introduced ambiguity in the earlier tale, should have done so unconsciously in "The Turn of the Screw." But an important distinction remains. In "The Friend of the Friends" the ambiguity is simply on the superficial level of mystification. In "The Turn of the Screw" it is far more disturbing as an integral part of the total vision.

[27]Edel, Ghostly Tales, p. 396.

[28]K.B. Vaid, Technique in the Tales of Henry James (Cambridge, 1964) pp. 90-98.

In this brief study I can do no more than acknowledge the vast amount of critical attention expended on "The Turn of the Screw."[29] I shall offer no further twists or turns on the screw but shall try to examine this work in the context of the other tales. It is therefore relevant to ask why this tale, which the author casually tried to pass off as a mere pot-boiler,[30] has continued to fascinate countless readers and critics who have never heard of his other apparitional work.

Whereas in "Sir Edmund Orme" and "The Friends of the Friends" James was experimenting with refinements of the ghost story, "The Turn of the Screw" is far closer to the Gothic tradition in James's deliberate exploitation of the human appetite for horror.[31] The response he sought, with such consummate artistry to evoke, is the kind which Mrs. Radcliffe elicited from her readers; not at all the kind of response called for in

[29]Most of the critical comment is polarized around the apparitionist and non-apparitionist viewpoints. Critics like Robert Heilman and Dorothea Krook have favoured a theological approach. Recently critics have become more venturesome--and more tiresome--and posited readings with Mrs. Grose as villainess or Douglas as Miles. Edel's most recent theory, put forward in Vol. IV of his biography of James is only slightly less absurd. He traces the impetus of the story back to James's terrors at the impending purchase of Lamb House. According to Edel the latter was filled with James's private ghosts, the family ghosts of his childhood. The little governess has become a Jamesian projection. It is interesting to note that Edel who, in the Introduction to The Ghostly Tales, insisted that the tale must be read on three levels and that these must not be scrambled, has now cast his vote with the non-apparitionists--the governess is the only haunted one in the story. Henry James: The Treacherous Years, 1895-1901 (New York, 1969), p. 211. The bibliography I found most helpful is that appended to that extraordinarily biased volume An Anatomy of "The Turn of the Screw" by T.N. Cranfill and R.L. Clark (Texas, 1965).

[30]In a letter to Paul Bourget, dated 19th August 1898, in The Letters of Henry James ed. Percy Lubbock (London, 1920), Vol. I, p. 297.

[31]"The Turn of the Screw" is primarily a horror story and if it fails to horrify it has failed. I understand that some young students today do not find the tale terrifying. If our sensibility has indeed changed, James's ghost story will survive only as a literary curiosity.

the other two tales, or indeed in any other Jamesian ghost story. James consciously looked back to the Gothic novelists and specifically to Mrs. Radcliffe. Perhaps, as Manfred Mackenzie suggests, he even tried to invoke their tone[32] when early in the story the governess wonders: "Was there a 'secret' at Bly--a mystery of Udolpho or an insane, an unmentionable relative kept in unsuspected confinement?" (X,38) True, Bly is no romantic castle but merely a "big, ugly, antique, but convenient house" (X,27), yet the Gothic note has been sounded and is sustained throughout the work though it remains muted and self-deprecatory. For James was aware that his more sophisticated audience would fail to tremble to the crude horrors of the conventional Gothic romance. Instead, capitalizing on the contemporary interest in psychology and psychic phenomena, he aimed his 'amusette' "to catch those not easily caught...the jaded, disillusioned, the fastidious..."[33] who would once again thrill to the dear old sacred terror.

James's elaborate prologue, so different in scale from the brief remarks which precede "Sir Edmund Orme" and "The Friends of the Friends" functions on many levels; most importantly it sets the tone. In "Sir Edmund Orme" the prologue warns the reader that the events of the story are strange. In "The Friends of the Friends" the emphasis is largely upon the narrator's indiscretion, but in "The Turn of the Screw" the reader is prepared for a tale which surpasses everything "For general uncanny ugliness and horror and pain" (X,16). By the time Douglas receives the manuscript and starts his tale the original audience is depleted; the

[32]Manfred Mackenzie, "Jamesian Gothic," Essays in Criticism, XII, (January 1962), 36.

[33]Art of the Novel, p. 172.

weaker members have already left. The reader has been given every chance to join them; if he remains he has been prepared for the worst.

The choice of narrator, too, is well calculated to create this response. A worldly man like the narrator of "Sir Edmund Orme" would be more reassuring; an obviously neurotic middle-aged woman like the narrator of "The Friends of the Friends" would alienate the reader's sympathies. James's inexperienced sheltered young girl is not only more susceptible to the kind of experience represented by the story, but also more likely to make the reader fear for her; he does so even before he catches the contagion of her own fear.

The ghosts are not frightening in themselves. In spite of James's assertion that they are to be agents, they actually do very little. They are limited in the same way that Sir Edmund Orme was limited:[34] they appear and disappear, and they gaze fixedly. Francis Roellinger has proved that they are far closer to the ghosts of psychical research, which James rejected in his Preface, than to the old-fashioned ghosts he claimed to have resurrected.[35] But real ghosts do not terrify; Virginia Woolf, writing fifty years ago, has diagnosed the reasons for our fear:

> But what is it that we are afraid of? We are not afraid of ruins, or moonlight or ghosts. Indeed we should be relieved to find that Quint and Miss Jessel are ghosts, but they have neither the substance nor the independent existence of ghosts. The odious creatures are much

[34] In some ways Sir Edmund is more active--he is kept very busy changing his clothes.

[35] Francis X. Roellinger, "Psychical Research and 'The Turn of the Screw,'" American Literature, XX (January 1949), 401-412.

> closer to us than ghosts have ever been. The governess is not so much frightened of them as of the sudden extension of her own field of perception, which in this case widens to reveal to her the presence all about her of an unmentionable evil. The appearance of the figures is an illustration, not in itself specially alarming, of a state of mind which is profoundly mysterious and terrifying.[36]

"The Turn of the Screw" is, on one level, the record of such a state of mind, but only on one level; for here the ambiguity comes in. The little governess combines the functions of the narrators of the two previous tales. Although the narrator of "Sir Edmund Orme" is an active protagonist in the story, he is still comparatively detached from the events which he relates. His is not a subjective story: he neither interprets nor explains. "The Friends of the Friends," on the other hand, is almost entirely the record of a state of mind. The narrator does not even see the apparition; her cognitions are based only on intuition. The governess's role is much more onerous, and it is central not only to the conception of the story but also to its structure.

"It was 'déjà trés joli', the general proposition of our young woman's keeping crystalline her record of so many intense anomalies and obscurities--by which I don't of course mean her explanation of them, a different matter."[37] This is the somewhat maddening clue which James has provided in his Preface. The story must both horrify and mystify; the governess's dual role of recorder and interpreter assures its purpose. Donald Costello, who has illuminated the structure of the story, maintains that when the governess reports the action the result is horror, and when she interprets it the result is mystification.[38]

[36] Granite and Rainbow, pp. 63-4.

[37] Art of the Novel, p. 173.

[38] Donald P. Costello, "The Structure of 'The Turn of the Screw,'" Modern Language Notes, Vol. 73 (1960), 312-321.

He asserts that each supernatural incident is given an air of authenticity by being placed in the centre of a carefully documented scene of representation, and that the authenticity is subsequently negated by the interpretation. For example, the vivid physical detail surrounding the first encounter with Miss Jessel at the lake compels belief, but the governess's interpretation of the scene forces the reader to doubt not only the ghost but also the governess herself.[39]

James's crafty device of conceiving this as a 'do-it-yourself' ghost story, in order to avoid precisely those weak specifications which had inhibited the earlier tales, compounds the ambiguity. Whether real or only actual, the sinister figures of Quint and Miss Jessel are emblematic of evil. But the kind of evil is never defined, nor was this James's intention. He writes in the Preface: "Only make the reader's general vision of evil intense enough...and his own experience, his own imagination...will supply him quite sufficiently with all the particulars."[40] It is a fact that Quint and Miss Jessel died in mysterious circumstances; it is a fact that Miles was expelled from school, but the reasons are never more than hinted at. As James so complacently stated, he has left his values all blanks.[41]

Critics have sought diligently to fill in these blanks. The critics of the forties like Edmund Wilson, influenced by the teachings

[39]Costello has shown painstakingly how the story is structured around a series of thirteen sequences in which the governess first presents an occurrence and then interprets it. Each sequence involves four parts; the two central elements are framed by foretelling (for suspense purposes) and by the outlining of a plan of action (to lead into the next sequence).

[40]Art of the Novel, p. 176.

[41]Ibid., p. 177.

of Freud, insist that the evil exists only in the mind of the governess and that the ghosts are sex ghosts. It is indeed likely that the evil has sexual connotations. This work belongs to the same period as The Awkward Age and What Maisie Knew, in which James's preoccupation with the corruption, and more specifically the sexual corruption, of the young and innocent, is equally apparent. But this conjecture does little to elucidate the central ambiguity. Dorothea Krook has gone further than other critics in recognizing that this ambiguity is closely connected with the supernatural element and that the two combine to testify to a profound and insoluble, moral and metaphysical, existential dilemma.[42] She nevertheless persists in her theological interpretation of the tale, with the governess as saviour, albeit a saviour flawed by the Christian sin of spiritual pride.

I would argue that she is more deeply flawed, and in a more typically Jamesian way. Quoting from The Princess Casamassima Krook lists the three qualities which define the Jamesian heroes and heroines.[43] Hyacinth Robinson is commended for "his composure, his lucidity, his good humour." As Krook puts it, though morally earnest, James's perfect vessels of consciousness "are never portentous, never boring, never violent or brutal, but always charming and civil and good tempered."[44] Because the governess so flagrantly contravenes these Jamesian tenets of civilized conduct, she must stand condemned. She is an imperfect

[42]Dorothea Krook, The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James (Cambridge, 1967), p. 130.

[43]Ibid., p. 18.

[44]Ibid., p. 18.

vessel in the same way, and for the same reasons, that Laura Wing in "A London Life" and Adela in "The Marriages" are imperfect vessels. It must be pointed out that the woman who made so favourable an impression upon Douglas is no longer the inexperienced, immature young girl who lived through the horrors at Bly. It is safe to venture that had James's heroine been the governess as she was at the time of her meeting with Douglas, the horrors (whether internal or external) might have been eliminated. But then, of course, there would have been no story.

In "Sir Edmund Orme" James departs from the Gothic convention, but nevertheless produces a story whose main interest is apparitional. In "The Friends of the Friends" the interest is psychological. In "The Turn of the Screw" the apparitional and the psychological are ineluctably and incontrovertibly fused, triumphantly defying critical attempts to penetrate its "gleams" and "glooms."[45]

James's last and least known apparitional story, "The Third Person" (1900),[46] contrasts effectively with the gloom of "The Turn of the Screw." The humour of the tale, the loving representation of the physical setting, and above all, the subversion of the Gothic convention when the sinister figure of a hanged man becomes for two spinster ladies a welcome male presence, all recall James's earlier tale "The Ghostly Rental." But the special note of tender irony which irradiates the tale marks it as the work of an older man. Perhaps this effect is facilitated by James's abandonment of the first person narrator. As omniscient author,

[45]This phrase occurs in a Jamesian anecdote quoted by Edel in Ghostly Tales, p. 435.

[46]"The Jolly Corner" and The Sense of the Past posit ghosts, but they are not external independent apparitions.

James is able to comment on the action with affectionate sympathy; he may laugh, but he ever ridicules.

The subject might well have been rendered ridiculous. The tale concerns two elderly spinsters who jointly inherit an ancestral country house. Their fascination with the history of the house results in the discovery of some old documents, and this, in turn, activates the ghost of an ancestor who had been hanged for smuggling. He is the third person of the title, a distinctly palpable presence. He is awful, unnatural, and with his head twisted grotesquely to one side, more than a little frightening.[47] But the initial panic of the two maiden ladies is subtly modified: "What really most sustained our friends in all ways was their consciousness of having, after all--and so contrariwise to what appeared--a man in the house. It removed them from that category of the manless in which no lady really lapses till every issue is closed. Their visitor was an issue--at least to the imagination..." (XI,152). Even a ghostly man shared between two ladies leads to suspicion and estrangement; the two finally realize that "he had converted them into wandering ghosts" (XI,153),[48] and that they must placate the visitor by allowing him to return to rest.

The eventual exorcising of the ghost retains the note of gaiety, but a deeper significance in this episode links this little tale to the life-affirming works of James's final period like The Ambassadors and

[47]Edel's latest suggestion that the third person is William James shorn of his power as the hanged smuggler, while the two women competing for him might be Alice and Henry James himself is altogether ludicrous. Henry James: The Treacherous Years, p. 327.

[48]This foreshadows the final development of the ghostly tale in "The Jolly Corner" and The Sense of the Past where the haunted becomes the haunter.

The Golden Bowl, in which the characters are no longer passively acted upon, but existentially define their own salvation. This aspect of "The Third Person" highlights the contrast between the two spinster cousins, who, up to this point, have not been clearly differentiated. The older cousin tries to redeem the ghost by sending conscience money to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but the haunting persists. The ghost is left over from an age which, while more brutal, was also more adventurous. No wonder the unrepentent spirit of Cuthbert Frush rejects the propitiatory gesture of his timid, if well-meaning, descendant. The response he exacts is not repudiation but affirmation. The younger lady, more intuitive as well as more courageous, realizes this; she exorcises the unhappy spirit and assures their mutual salvation by her genuinely existential action: she defines herself as a true descendant of her unfortunate ancestor by smuggling in a Tauchnitz volume. This may indeed seem the ultimate in "weak specifications," but the gentle mediation of the narrative voice never allows the comedy to degenerate into farce.

The decade opens with James's first truly apparitional tale; it closes with his last. Cuthbert Frush is as real a ghost as Sir Edmund Orme, but a comparison between the two tales reveals James's shifting emphasis in his approach to the ghostly tale--in "The Third Person" the approach is far more psychological, though never portentously so. It need not be pointed out that Cuthbert Frush is as much of a sex ghost as Peter Quint. But I find it fitting that in this, his last supernatural tale to focus on the female sex, James should triumphantly, if comically, vindicate the "thwarted Anglo-Saxon Spinster."[49]

[49]Edmund Wilson's phrase in his controversial essay, "The Ambiguity of Henry James," reprinted in A Casebook on Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw," ed. Gerald Willen (New York, 1969), p. 121.

CHAPTER THREE

MORE TALES OF THE EIGHTEEN NINETIES

The eighteen nineties, the decade of James's ghostly tales, is also the decade of his tales of writers and artists. In three of the stories to be discussed in this chapter, "Nona Vincent" (1892), "The Private Life" (1892), and "The Real Right Thing" (1899), the two groups overlap. "Sir Dominick Ferrand," another tale of 1892 is closely linked with these three. It is, like "The Real Right Thing," a parable about the inviolability of a dead man's private life; in this case the dead man is a statesman and not a writer, but to compensate for this the high-minded young protagonist is himself a minor writer. "Owen Wingrave," also written in 1892, is not about writers or artists and is therefore outside this group of stories; I include it only for contrast with "The Private Life" in its use of supernatural elements to dramatize an idea. In "The Private Life" the result is wholly successful; the tale's glaring incredibility in no way detracts from its thesis, but is on the contrary fully consonant with it. But in "Owen Wingrave" the supernatural denouement is reductive and for the present-day reader out of keeping with the seriousness of the theme. In "The Private Life" James delightedly exploits a supernatural shortcut in order to render concrete his ideas concerning artistic creation; the result is explicitly allegorical. But in "Owen Wingrave" the introduction of the supernatural has the opposite effect; it particularizes a theme which might well have been allegorized. What might have been a public cry of social

protest remains instead the dramatization of one man's private conflict.[1]

"Nona Vincent," the first tale in this group, is the second of James's mature ventures into the supernatural, a pitiably weak story which James excluded from his New York edition. It almost deserves Ezra Pound's scathing comment: "He writes like an adolescent, might be a person of eighteen doing a first story."[2] To the biographical critics the supernatural stories and the artistic parables both represent a retreat from reality into a world of fantasy and self-compensation. This tale fully supports their contention. It grew directly out of James's experience with the theatre and reflects his hopes and dreams of success. The tone of the tale is mawkish and sentimental; a brief summary of the plot indicates how the supernatural element only adds to the sentimentality.

The hero writes a play, "Nona Vincent," whose heroine is clearly based on his close woman friend and confidante Mrs. Alsager (all good and all wise). The actress chosen to play the title role has difficulty in her interpretation until she is visited by the benevolent Mrs. Alsager who allows her to "drink" of her essence. At the same time the young playwright receives a similar inspiriting visit from his own creation Nona Vincent. Both visitors are dressed in the same light-coloured clothes: hence the ambiguity, which is not, as in "The Turn of the Screw," an intrinsic part of the total vision, but merely an attempt to invest

[1]I am fully aware that any attempt to establish James as a social historian rather than as the "historian of fine consciences" is directly counter to the spirit of his works. Nevertheless I find it difficult to accept the too private ghost in "Owen Wingrave."

[2]Ezra Pound, "Henry James: A Shake Down," The Little Review, V (August 1918), 34.

the hero's benignly maternal confidante with the aura of the supernatural by relating her to the apparition of Nona Vincent. The "ghost" here, unlike the one in "Sir Edmund Orme," is purely psychological, but it does little to illuminate the mysteries of consciousness. It is the hallucinated projection of a sickly day-dream.

James's instinct in originally titling the next tale "Jersey Villas" was sound. The tale's amended title, "Sir Dominick Ferrand," focuses on the dead man whose privacy must be protected from the unscrupulous intrusion of the living, but on this level the tale is but the faintest echo of The Aspern Papers. What little merit it has lies in the glimpse it gives into the lives of a class which James tended to ignore--not the rich, as in most of his work, nor the poor as in "Brooksmith" and "In the Cage," but the genteel, that large but neglected section of Victorian society. Unfortunately the least attractive attributes of this class appear to have pervaded the atmosphere and tone of the story. The result is again one of cloying sentimentality, unmitigated by the self-pitying satirical side-thrusts at magazine editors, who figure in this tale as the "publishing scoundrels."[3]

The hero, a struggling young writer, buys a davenport whose secret drawers reveal scandalous letters incriminating a late public figure Sir Dominic Ferrand. The young man's attachment to an attractive young widow in the same lodging house prompts him to resist the bribes of his eager editors who promise to publish his own articles if he hand over the papers. He burns the papers; in a scene of particularly cloying

[3]This epithet of course comes from The Aspern Papers.

sentimentality the heroine coyly confesses that she is the illegitimate daughter of Sir Dominic Ferrand. The supernatural element in this tale has been diluted to a slight touch of E.S.P. As in "Sir Edmund Orme" this extension of perception is attained through love, and it is thus that the heroine is able to protect the memory of her dead father.

James's acute eye for social detail saves the tale from utter dreariness--the gimcrack gentility of life at Jersey Villas is shrewdly portrayed. And his sympathy for the forlorn and forgotten of modern society, the lonely unattached females whose only place is on the periphery of other people's lives, brings the portrait of Miss Teagle, an altogether minor character, to vivid life. I am content to leave Putt the final comment on this tale: "All 'Sir Dominick Ferrand' has to tell us about life, or art or even the occult, is of less value than the passing remark, in Victorian London, that 'there is nobody so bereft of joy as not to be able to command for twopence the services of somebody less joyous.'"[4]

Chronologically "The Real Right Thing" (1899) is widely separated from "Sir Dominick Ferrand" (1892) but since it adds little to the overall development of James's use of the ghostly motif, and is thematically a reworking of the earlier tale, it seems appropriate to discuss it here. This time the theme is given more forceful expression and the tone of the tale is refreshingly different from that of "Sir Dominick Ferrand."

The tale's somewhat inauspiciously named hero is George Withermore, a young critic and friend of Ashton Doyne, an eminent author recently deceased. Doyne's widow charges Withermore with the writing

[4]Putt, p. 284.

of the great man's biography. The humorous and subtle portrait of the widow, whose motivations in commissioning the work are far from disinterested, provides the special interest of the story. It is hinted that she had neglected and misunderstood her famous husband; she intends the biography rather to clear her name than to add lustre to his. George Withermore accepts her offer but the work is never to be completed; the great man's displeasure is all too literally 'manifested' when his ghost appears to protest this violation.

The spirit of the dead man is with the other two from the start. At first Withermore interprets it as helpful and positively welcoming; papers are shifted and chosen for him by the unseen hand of his dead friend. When the mysterious presence removes itself Withermore feels, "It was somehow stranger he shouldn't be there than it had ever been he was" (X,480), but eventually he realises that the signs he had taken for sympathy were really the dead man's efforts to communicate with the living and indicate his "horror." Withermore tells Mrs. Doyne: "He's there as a protest...He's there as a warning...He's there as a curse" (X,484). Mrs. Doyne is not yet convinced, and at her insistence that they not give up till the dead man gives them a clear sign, Withermore resolves once more to enter the study and continue the work; this time he perceives the ghost as an actual physical presence barring the study door. The widow herself ascends the stairs and the bleak ghastly face with which she confronts Withermore on her return, is sufficient to convince the young critic that now she will give up.

On one level this tale is James's most explicit statement of Ashton Doyne's own dictum, "The artist was what he did--he was nothing

else" (IX,475). On this level the ghost is purely psychological and can be interpreted as the projection of subconscious guilt shared by the young critic and the widow at this violation of the dead man's privacy. But for James, consciousness was synonymous with life, and on another level the ghost exemplifes the very tenuous barrier between the living and the dead. The ghost of Ashton Doyne is not only "actual" but "real."

With "The Private Life" this distinction becomes irrelevant. This tale is the supreme justification for James's assertion that the ghost story is "the most possible form of the fairy tale."[5] This tale is quite simply a fantasy; curiously enough the ghostly dramatization is not just the most possible, but also the most plausible.

Ezra Pound objected to this story on the ground that it was "au fond, merely an idea."[6] The origin of the idea is fully documented by James himself in the preface to "The Altar of the Dead." His imagination had been sparked by two luminaries of London society. He had noted the contrast between the man of genius whose public presence was that of a bored and boring diner out, and the artist and man of the world whose public presence represented a "plenitude of perfection" which allowed for no private life. In the Notebook entry the two men are designated by the initials R.B. and F.L.; the preface actually names Robert Browning, and the other man has been widely recognized as Frederick, Lord Leighton. Tempted by his love of balance and symmetry, James sought to combine the two cases in a single story. The narrator,

[5]Art of the Novel, p. 254.
[6]Pound, p. 31.

intrigued and puzzled by the contrast between Clare Vawdrey of the dinner table and Clare Vawdrey the author, discovers that while the one is boring his dinner companions, the other sits and writes in a darkened study. There are in fact two Clare Vawdreys: "One goes out, the other stays at home. One is the genius, the other's the bourgeois, and it's only the bourgeois whom we personally know" (VIII,21). The case of Lord Mellifont, the brillant man of the world, represents the reverse side of the coin--the public mask is everything, there is nothing left for a private being.

The fantasy allows James to suggest the complete disjunction between private and public being.[7] Like "The Real Right Thing" this story is an explicit statement of the "private life" of the artist. But once again, as in "The Real Right Thing," the supernatural invokes another dimension. As Wright has pointed out, the ghostly elements "with the writer discovered working in a darkened room when he is unmistakeably elsewhere" suggest also "the uncanny nature of the mind."[8]

The close connection between this tale and The Sacred Fount seems to have escaped most critics. The most obvious similarity is, of course, in the personalities of the prying narrators and their female collaborators. But in technique, tone and atmosphere this tale closely foreshadows the later work, although the "fantastic" simplification of the ghostly solution eliminates the ambiguities which characterise the

[7]It is, however, possible that James was suggesting too that Browning's fare at the dinner table provided the material for his works, just as it did in his own case. Still, no "Jacobite" has had the temerity to accuse James of being a bore at the dinner table, so the same disjunction would not apply.

[8]Wright, p. 157.

later work. The two works are also linked thematically; at their most serious level both enquire into the very sources of being.

The curiously surrealistic atmosphere distinguishing both tales is partly created by James's choice of a setting deliberately removed from the "real" world of London. Ezra Pound objected also to the "waste verbiage at the start" of "The Private Life,"[9] but this elaborate placing of the story was central to James's purpose. The first Notebook entry on the story reads:

> "The Private Life" (title of the little tale founded on the idea of F.L. and R.B.) must begin: 'We talked of London, face to face, with a great bristling primeval glacier....The high valley was pink with the mountain rose and the pure air as cold as one's submission to nature. The desultory tinkle of the cattle bells seemed to communicate a sociability with innocent things.'"[10]

In the story itself this opening is kept almost word for word. Far from being superfluous verbiage, this introduction functions intrinsically to open up several dimensions of interpretation. The mountain, traditionally emblematic of the mysterious powers of the universe, is the perfect setting for the most serious level of the story, the quest for the sources of creative power. And at the story's surface level of entertainment the rarified atmosphere of the mountain peak exactly complements its fantastic elements. If Lord Mellifont has to be made to vanish, James could hardly have chosen a more appropriate environment than the thin Alpine air.

Yet another dimension to the story is its implicit social criticism. The setting may be Switzerland, but the focus of the story is the London social scene. The people gathered together, talking of London,

[9]Pound, p. 31.

[10]Notebooks, p. 109.

are "just the people whom in London, at that time, people tried to 'get'" (VIII,189); they are the lions of society, and, in the case of Lord Mellifont, they are its martyrs. The fantasy works on this level too. Jefferson has rightly suggested that the non-realistic elements of the story are used "to give a bizarre and appalling quality to the distortions and curtailments of their humanity which people undergo in the cause of social life."[11] Gorley Putt insists that James's portrait of Lord Mellifont is the "extreme in denunciatory fantasy;"[12] on the contrary, society's debt to Lord Mellifont is amply acknowledged. "He pervaded it, (English public life) he coloured it, he embellished it, and without him it would scarcely have had a vocabulary. Certainly it would not have had a style; for a style was what it had in having Lord Mellifont" (VIII,197). Poor Lord Mellifont literally wore himself out in the service of society.

The fantastic elements in the story justify these allegorical interpretations, but despite this the story remains essentially the "light" and "vivid" entertainment which James's Notebook entry stipulated.[13]

Writing a light, brief and vivid story is far from James's main intention in "Owen Wingrave," where the supernatural element does not complement and complete the idea as in "The Private Life," but seems rather to mock the seriousness of the theme. "Owen Wingrave" concerns itself with the cruelty, futility and barbarism of war. It starts off

[11]Jefferson, p. 54.

[12]Putt, p. 391.

[13]The Notebook entry reads: "It must be very brief--very light--very vivid." Notebooks, p. 110.

as one of James's most open and public works; the issues it raises are political rather than personal. The falsely melodramatic ending denies the universality of the theme.

The tale is told through the consciousness of Spencer Coyle, a rather unlikely and wholly sympathetic "cram" tutor for Sandhurst. His most promising pupil is Owen Wingrave, the scion of a noble warfaring family, who has the courage to challenge the family tradition and abjure his military heritage, but who in the end falls victim to this tradition in the very act of overcoming it. He meets his death in mysterious circumstances in the haunted room of the ancestral house. Although the ghost does not appear, it is definitely an agent in the action and symbolizes the harsh cruelty of the family tradition. The name 'Wingrave' is far more relevant in this story than it had been in James's first ghostly tale, "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes,"[14] but unfortunately the melodramatic ending is no more successful than in that early story. In both cases the ghost is obtrusive and inadequately prepared for. Edel has called "Owen Wingrave" the most deterministic of James's stories because of its implication that man cannot escape his fate.[15] The most he can do is honourably to win his grave. Edel also cites Shaw's characteristic and well-known objection to the play based on this story. Shaw argued that the ending should be rewritten so that the man should kill the ghost, not the ghost the man.

James resisted Shaw's attempts to change his play, but a comparison between the earlier text of the story and the revised New York

[14]In "The Treacherous Years" Edel points out that Owen is Welsh for "the young soldier," p. 100.

[15]Edel, Introduction to Vol. IX, p. 9.

edition indicates a significant change which mitigates, although it does not eliminate, the determinism of the story. In the first version (Edel's edition) the ending reads: "Owen Wingrave, dressed as he had last seen him, lay dead on the spot on which his ancestor had been found. He looked like a young soldier on a battle field" (IX,51). In the New York edition the last sentence reads: "He was all the young soldier on the gained field." The ending thus becomes much more affirmative. No longer is Owen a passive victim; his decision to spend the night in the haunted room can be seen as an existential choice. He accepts his fate and decides to meet it, and in doing so he overcomes it. Owen Wingrave's victory has cost him his life, but the ghost has been laid.

The revised ending would have been more acceptable to Shaw, except of course that it would be difficult to convey these subtle nuances on the stage, where Owen's death must remain a defeat. But the revisions notwithstanding, the ghostly paraphernalia in the tale limit and particularize the story. Owen's battle is finally his own personal battle; it allows for no extension into the universal.

This criterion is moral rather than aesthetic, but even aesthetically the supernatural element in this tale strikes a jarring note. It helped James achieve the brevity which so often eluded him, but the tale gives the effect of having been cut off rather than completed. The stage is set for an extended drama but somehow the characters, who all deserve full development, are hustled off into the wings before they are given a chance to speak their lines. This has been most effectively pointed out by Virginia Woolf who wrote: "Spencer Coyle Himself, and the

boy Lechmere--all bear of course upon the question of Owen's temperament and situation, and yet they bear on so many things besides."[16]

The romantic melodrama of the ending seems out of keeping with the down-to-earth realism of the rest of the story. The Gothic touches in the description of Paramore (the ancestral house) are obtrusive, and the Hawthornesque device of the sinister portrait of Owen's ill-fated ancestor remains unconvincing. In the Notebooks James wrote of this story: "It comes to me one might make some haunting business that would give it a colour without being ridiculous."[17] But in fact the "haunting business" gives a "colour" that is falsely lurid.

The final flaw in the story is the uncertainty of tone, due to James's choice of central consciousness. Somehow the sympathetic, but shrewd and wholly worldly Spencer Coyle cannot take the melodrama quite seriously; the tone is faintly ironic. In the two stories which are the subject of the next chapter this question of tone becomes of crucial importance.

[16] Granite and Rainbow, p. 70.
[17] Notebooks, p. 120.

CHAPTER FOUR

A QUESTION OF TONE

The question of tone becomes a pre-eminent consideration in a discussion of "The Altar of the Dead" and "Maud-Evelyn," the two remaining ghostly tales of the decade of the nineties. In most critical studies "The Altar of the Dead" is paired with "The Beast in the Jungle" and its close thematic connection with "Maud-Evelyn" has been overlooked. This in itself may be due to the enormous tonal disparity between the two works. To compare the deep organ music of "The Altar of the Dead" to the shrill drawing-room tinkle of "Maud-Evelyn" is to compare the sacred to the profane; but nevertheless I would suggest that such a comparison is in order, and that the two works illuminate each other.

At the most fundamental level the concern of both tales is the question of personal identity, and the tales are further linked by the motif of the sense of the past which in both takes the form of an obsession with the dead. Here, it is true, the parallel appears to cease. In atmosphere and tone "Maud-Evelyn" seems almost to parody the high moral seriousness of "The Altar of the Dead." Few critics have failed to respond to the elevated consistency of tone of "The Altar of the Dead" while most have been disturbed, puzzled and repelled by the ambivalence and flippancy of the narrative voice in "Maud-Evelyn." Vaid puts the case most strongly. He concludes his comments on "The Altar of the

Dead" by asserting, "In its tone, more than in anything else, lies its success,"[1] while he remarks of "Maud-Evelyn," "The narrator ruins the effect of her story by her inappropriately frivolous tone."[2] I hope in this chapter to prove that the tone, far from being inappropriate, is in itself the final key to the reading of this enigmatic tale, and that such a reading justifies the pairing of this tale with "The Altar of the Dead." In spite of their surface disparity the two tales are complementary rather than contradictory.

"The Altar of the Dead" appeared in 1895, half-way through James's ghostly decade. Loosely speaking, the decade of the nineties represents the middle phase in the development of the Jamesian ghostly tale in its evolution from external romance to interior drama; but this tale looks forward to the final phase. In technique and moral atmosphere it anticipates the two last great tales in the genre, "The Beast in the Jungle" and "The Jolly Corner." All three are spiritual dramas, but "The Altar of the Dead" is the most deeply spiritual and the least ghostly of James's tales of the supernatural. To use the latter term in connection with this story is to become aware of its religious as opposed to its ghostly connotations. Roy Miner's term "metaphysical romance" most usefully defines this tale.

The ghostly or uncanny elements--the fantastic coincidences and eerie meetings--are introduced merely to facilitate the externalization

[1]Vaid, p. 233. Allen Tate while calling this tale "James's great failure" nevertheless recognizes its "great tone." "Three commentaries: Poe, James, and Joyce," The Sewanee Review, LVIII (Winter 1950), 101. See also William Troy who finds it "sustained only by a marvellous tonality of style." "The Altar of Henry James," Henry James: Modern Judgement, p. 49. Even Gorley Putt who dismisses this tale as "mawkish" grants its "sustained eloquence." Putt, p. 392.

[2]Vaid, p. 61.

of what is essentially an internal drama. This becomes apparent in comparing the finished story with its outline in the Notebook entry. In the latter the uncanny "apparatus" is missing. The germ of the story is the idea of "a man whose noble and beautiful religion is the religion of the Dead,"[3] and who, struck by the way the dead are pushed aside and forgotten erects an altar in the spiritual places of his mind to enshrine their memory. The original idea becomes amplified as James gropes towards a "situation" an "action" to make his idea a "subject." The Notebook entry traces the shift from a spiritual altar in the soul to an actual altar in a church. It suggests the initial impetus for the altar, "the death of his mother--or at any rate--the loss of some dear friend."[4] (In the actual story this becomes, more convincingly, the loss of his betrothed.) The Notebook even adumbrates the ending of the story--the lighting of the final taper which must be for the man himself. But the idea is not fully worked out and the subsequent entries express only dissatisfaction and discouragement. In the actual story James introduces the woman character who is the crucial factor in the externalization of the action. One is tempted to dismiss her as a "ficelle" but her role in the story enlarges and modifies the whole theme. In the Notebook entry the emphasis is on death; in the finished story it is on love and hence on life. In order to make this clear it is necessary briefly to recapitulate the woman's role in the story.

She appears, by coincidence, in the Catholic church into which George Stransom has wandered on the anniversary of the death of Mary Antrim, his late betrothed. She becomes his fellow worshipper at the

[3]Notebooks, p. 164.
[4]Ibid., p. 165.

altar which Stransom dedicates to the memory of his dead. Over the years a deep bond is established between the two devotees, but in the one scene in the story (the rest is summary) Stransom makes the ironic discovery that she had been using his altar to enshrine the memory of the one man whom he had deliberately excluded from the shining company, the man who had been his closest friend but who had done him a great public injury. This revelation interrupts the mutual devotions of Stransom and the unknown lady, and the altar is temporarily neglected: inhibited by egotistical self-love Stransom cannot forgive the man who had wronged him, while the woman, who had herself been victimized by Acton Hague but had long since forgiven him, cannot continue to worship at the altar until Hague is included in the company of Stransom's dead. Love brings the resolution: drawn back to the altar in his great loneliness, the dying Stransom is inspired by a vision of Mary Antrim and renounces his selfish wish for the final taper--he decides to light it for Hague. At the same time the unknown woman makes her own renunciation, and returns to the church for Stransom's sake. It is her role to light the final candle mentioned in the Notebooks, but it is no longer, as in the Notebooks, only for Stransom. The shining altar in the story has lost its particularity of reference. The lighting of the last taper will symbolize the reconciliation of Stransom with his enemy and affirm the unity and the continuity of human life. Stransom's illumination is both literal and figurative. He finds his true self through his exis-

tential choice of renunciation, born of selfless love.[5] Despite the story's preoccupation with death its movement is towards spiritual life and salvation. It is surprising that in discussing this tale, in which every detail is invested with symbolic significance, critics should have overlooked the very obvious connotations of the hero's name. Stransom suggests strange ransom and the hero pays for his revelation with his life.

In "Maud-Evelyn" too the question of names is significant. It is surely no accident that the vapid young man in the story (he is too passive to be designated either a hero or a protagonist) should be called Marmaduke, a name which suggests outward show and very little inner substance, nor that the name of his adopted parents should be Dedrick. This tale, too, is concerned with identity, but the identity which Marmaduke achieves is false and superficial; it has no inner reality. The only love in this story is self love and its movement is towards death.

This story can more easily be fitted into the Jamesian pattern of the ghostly tale than was the case with "The Altar of the Dead." The ghost here is very much a felt presence; although neither hallucinatory nor apparitional it can claim the "actuality" of Blackmur's definition. I would suggest, however, that the biggest ghost in the story is Marmaduke himself. In order to support this assertion it will be necessary

[5]Vaid suggests: "...the altar is a symbolic bridge between the living and the dead, and the fable exemplifies the point that this bridge is never complete, aesthetically or spiritually, so long as there is even the least vestige of egotism in the devotee. Stransom must give up his self to gain his Self." Vaid, p. 222.

first to give an outline of this little-known tale, and then through a closer analysis to compare it with "The Altar of the Dead."

At the beginning of the story Marmaduke is virtually engaged to a young girl, Lavinia, but instead of asking her to marry him he merely assures her he will never marry anyone else. He then departs for Switzerland with some female relatives. While there he is literally picked up by a wealthy, elderly English couple called Dedrick, who invite him to live with them and end by adopting him. The name Maud-Evelyn is that of their daughter who had died at the age of sixteen. She has become a cult for them; they communicate with her through mediums. Marmaduke joins them in their morbid fantasies, although he does not accept the mediums. He uses the memory of the dead girl to avoid any real relationship with the living girl Lavinia, who has remained faithful to him. He and the Dedricks imagine a relationship between himself and Maud-Evelyn, a relationship which brings him very real material advantages. The fantasies of Marmaduke and the Dedricks give Maud-Evelyn an extension of life, and in the end Marmaduke goes so far as to believe he actually married her. This "fulfillment" having been achieved, her death is re-enacted and Marmaduke is left a widower. After this the parents die, acknowledging their "son-in-law" as their heir. Marmaduke does not long survive them, and when he dies he leaves his "treasures" to Lavinia.[6]

This is perhaps the most "external" of all James's stories, and is thus a complete contrast to "The Altar of the Dead" where the characterization is wholly psychological. Marmaduke is seen only from the

[6]It is important to note that the unknown woman in "The Altar" is left as priestess of the temple, while Lavinia is left as curator of a museum.

outside, and generally not even at first hand. The story is narrated by an elderly, worldly gossip, Lady Emma, whose main interest in the case is her concern for Lavinia. Most of Lady Emma's story takes the form of a summary of her interviews with Lavinia, who reports the latest developments. This gives the effect of distancing and diminishing Marmaduke and adds to his unreality. It is like watching him through the wrong end of a telescope. The Dedricks themselves are distanced even further. Lady Emma deliberately avoids any contact with them and sums them up after a chance meeting as: "colourless, commonplace, elderly Britons, of the kind you identify by the livery of their footman or the labels of their luggage, and the mere sight of them justified me to my conscience in having avoided, from the first, the stiff problem of conversation with them" (XI,59). It is safe to say that when James concentrates on the physical appearance of his characters it is because he cares little for the inner reality.[7]

The narrator keeps pace with the development of events by noting the changes in Marmaduke's physical appearance, again suggesting that this is his sole reality. In the first scene she remarks on his "handsome empty young face" (XI,45). The adoption by the Dedricks and its accompanying material prosperity promotes a visible well-being; Marmaduke acquires a certain physical presence. At the time of his "marriage" to Maud-Evelyn he is in his prime: "He had grown like a person with a position and a history. Rosy and rich-looking, fat, moreover, distinctly fat at least" (XI,64). It is a decidedly unpleasant picture; not only is

[7]This is particularly evident in The Bostonians, where almost all the characters are unpleasant and the portrait gallery has an almost Dickensian flavour.

there a suggestion of a fraudulent identity, but also the implication that Marmaduke is a parasite feeding on the memory of the dead girl, and indeed when this "host" dies, he too has to die.

The Dedricks' obsession with their dead daughter also has this greedy, selfish quality: "their feeling had drawn to itself their whole consciousness: it had become mildly maniacal. The idea was fixed, and it kept others out. The world, for the most part, allows no leisure for such a ritual, but the world had consistently neglected this plain, shy couple, who were sensitive to the wrong things and whose sincerity and fidelity, as well as their tameness and twaddle, were of a rigid, antique pattern" (XI,59). Stransom's religion of the dead springs from a desire to keep the dead alive; the Dedricks' parody of this religion is to keep themselves alive.

The obsession with the dead which is central to both these tales may be seen as a metaphor for the Jamesian leitmotif of the sense of the past. The many changes rung on this theme throughout the body of James's fiction indicate a certain ambivalence on his part.[8] In "Maud-Evelyn" the pejorative associations prevail. The past is seen as inimical to life: the "rigid" and "antique" of the previous quotation will support this assertion. The characters in "Maud-Evelyn" use the past to escape from the present and from life's obligations. For James, the sense of life is exemplified in personal relationships, and the extreme solitariness of the Dedricks--they know no one but Marmaduke--is emblematic of their withdrawal from life. Stransom "had not been a man

[8]See chapter I footnote 12. "Covering End" is the most positive vindication of the sense of the past.

of numerous passions," (IX,231) and his great loss had made him "for ever widowed," (IX,321) but in the context of the story his devotion to the dead is seen as life-enhancing. He is not less but more alive than the people around him. Nor had he cut himself off from life; the number of candles on his altar testify to the number of his friendships. He is a man "who had done many things in the world," (IX,231) and the time he ultimately gives to his devotion "came to seem to him more a contribution to his other interests than a betrayal of them. Even a loaded life might be easier when one had added a new necessity to it" (IX,241).

By contrast Marmaduke has no "other interest"; his extreme passivity is his final indictment. In James's later fiction passivity is no longer morally neutral as in The Portrait of a Lady (even here Isabel has finally to make a choice) or The Bostonians, (where Verena's choices are made for her) but rather a positive evil. Marmaduke has no identity because he does not act; he merely allows himself to be acted upon. Lavinia commends him for being so "taking." Lady Emma puns upon this epithet as she sums up the young man: "I had meanwhile leisure to reflect...on what to be taking consisted of. The upshot of my meditations, which experience has only confirmed, was that it consisted simply of itself. It was a quality implying no others. Marmaduke had no others. What indeed was his need of any?" (XI,49).

It will be apparent that Lady Emma's frivolous tone conceals a very real moral sense, and this makes her ambivalence towards Marmaduke's strange case all the more puzzling. Although in the beginning she is convinced that he is a fortune-hunting scoundrel, she appears to change

her mind; she concedes that the case "is the oddest thing I ever heard of, but it is, in its way a reality" (XI,62). She even goes so far as to call it "beautiful." This is why Wright denies any interpretation which would see Marmaduke's participation in Maud-Evelyn's make-believe existence as a withdrawal from life. He writes: "We expect a lover to cherish the memory of his beloved, and we grant an author the right to create imaginary characters who then become real to him. James has merely given an additional turn to the screw. Lady Emma is his spokesman in calling Marmaduke's strange sense of affinity a reality, and, in its humorous way, the story attests to James's belief that true reality is of the imagination."[9]

Wright's interpretation deflects the emphasis of the story and makes it more of an aesthetic than a moral comment. The story must then be grouped with James's tales of writers and artists, and more specifically with "The Real Thing" as another exploration of the nature of reality. But this change of emphasis need not rule out a moral judgement. Clifton Fadiman points out that for James, moral and aesthetic comment are indivisible. Fadiman's perceptive note on "The Real Thing" acknowledges that this tale reiterates the old truth that art is a transformation of reality, but adds that "the real trouble with the Monarchs is that they are dead";[10] indeed they lack any principle of life. This, of course, is also the trouble with Marmaduke and the Dedricks; for this reason Wright must be challenged. The imagination of Marmaduke and the Dedricks is incapable of producing what Wright calls

[9]Wright, p. 126.

[10]Clifton Fadiman ed. The Short Stories of Henry James (New York, 1945), p. 217.

a "true reality." Lady Emma's remark concedes only its own kind of reality.

But the chief argument against Wright's interpretation must finally rest on the tone itself. Lady Emma's voice is undoubtedly the controlling element in the story; her incorrigible flippancy militates against any attempt to read it other than ironically. The humour, to which Wright draws attention, bears no relation to the humour in "The Third Person," a tale which appeared shortly after "Maud-Evelyn." There the note of tender gaiety ensures a sympathetic response, but here the chill frivolity repels the reader. Lady Emma's flippancy barely conceals an irony from which only Lavinia is exempt. Given this reading the tale becomes an ironic restatement of "The Altar of the Dead": Marmaduke's egotistical worship represents a desecration of the altar.

The discussion in this chapter has stressed the moral aspects of the stories, but this is inevitable in any study of James's later work and provides the key for the next chapter, which will deal with James's last three tales in the supernatural mode. Together with "The Altar of the Dead" these may be regarded as James's mythic tales. I use this term advisedly: not only do they represent the core of James's vision, but their underlying structural patterns will be seen to conform to those of archetypal myth. Since all myths are a projection of psychic experience, this basic unity need hardly surprise us. But in James's myth of man's archetypal quest for the enlightenment which comes with true self-consciousness, the stalwart hero of old has given way to a diminished and attenuated quester who speaks much more meaningfully to our modern sensibility. He is James's poor sensitive gentleman, and his prototype is George Stransom of "The Altar of the Dead."

CHAPTER FIVE

THREE MYTHS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

"My attested predeliction for poor sensitive gentlemen almost embarrasses me as I march!"[1] This rueful confession in the preface to the New York volume containing "The Altar of the Dead," "The Beast in the Jungle" and "The Jolly Corner" indicates James's awareness that the proliferation of the persona he had created in the depiction of George Stransom might be too self-revelatory. George Stransom is the first of a succession of poor sensitive gentlemen, diffident middle-aged men, with a painful sense of not having lived life to the full. With Strether in The Ambassadors the type emerges as the hero of a major full-length novel, but the poor sensitive gentleman finds his apotheosis in James's two final stories in the supernatural mode, "The Beast in the Jungle" and "The Jolly Corner." For John Marcher the apotheosis is tragic; for Spencer Brydon it is triumphant.

To insist on an exact correspondence between James and the persona he had created would be misleading, but it would be short-sighted to dismiss such a connection as irrelevant. In his Notes of a Son and Brother James wrote that in seeking as a hero for a story the "man of imagination," he "had in a word to draw him forth from within rather than meet him in the world before me, the more convenient sphere of the objective, and to make him objective, in short, had to turn nothing less than myself inside out."[2] The poor sensitive gentleman is

[1] Art of the Novel, p. 246.

[2] Henry James, Autobiography, ed. F.W. Dupee (London, 1956), p. 455.

the man of imagination in another guise; these last supernatural stories represent James's most searching insights into the hidden recesses of the mind. Just as Freud's theories were the fruit of rigorous self-searching, so too, these stories, James's mythic tales, come from very deep within the author himself.

This chapter dealing with James's three final tales in the supernatural mode is inevitably a chapter of endings; it is also a chapter of origins, for with these stories James returns to his native inheritance. The return is primarily to Hawthorne--the deeper psychology, the theme of the isolated man, and even in "The Jolly Corner" the Hawthornesque symbolic devices of houses and doors. But the return is also to the whole American tradition, with its profound moral and metaphysical bias. To put it simplistically the English tradition is concerned with man in society, while the American tradition focuses on man in the universe. In these last stories James's poor sensitive gentleman becomes a universal hero. His search for his identity constitutes James's spiritual odyssey.[3] The poor sensitive gentleman is a curiously contemporary figure, but his quest is ageless and timeless; its setting is the mind itself.

The basic pattern for this spiritual odyssey is to be found in what Joseph Campbell calls the fundamental monomyth, symbolic of the hero's quest for self realization. According to Campbell, "The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation--initiation--

[3]Vaid uses this term in connection with these stories. p. 214.

return: which might be termed the nuclear unit of the monomyth."[4] The hero departs from the physical world, enters his spiritual labyrinth and confronts its dark forces. He achieves a mystical epiphany, and then returns with his boon to the world of common day. This traditional pattern of death and rebirth is the informing principle in James's last tales of the supernatural. In "The Beast in the Jungle" it receives an ironic reversal; the awakening is not to life but to death. This is indeed a "negative adventure."[5] The pattern may be traced more straightforwardly in "The Jolly Corner." But it appears first and most recognizably in "The Great Good Place," James's strangely prophetic psychedelic trip. This blissful dream fantasy provides the key for the nightmarish journey of the two later tales.

John Shroeder first drew attention to the fact that the two later stories may best be approached through the key of "The Great Good Place,"[6] but for him the integrative symbolic element linking the three tales is not the quest for self but the archetypal mother quest. Although Campbell points out that the figure of the great mother goddess is intimately bound up with the quest of the hero; and the union of hero and goddess is the climax of the primordial adventure,[7] to make this the object of the quest falsely distorts the emphasis of James's three stories and

[4]Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces (New York, 1968), p. 30. Both Mary Ellen Herx in her article "The Monomyth in 'The Great Good Place,'" College English (March 1963), pp. 439-443 and Edwin Honig in his book Dark Conceit: The making of Allegory (New York, 1966) refer to this work.

[5]James's own term in The Art of the Novel, p. 247.

[6]John W. Shroeder, "The Mothers of Henry James," American Literature XXII, (January 1951), 428.

[7]Campbell, p. 109.

of the monomyth itself. The function of the myth, and of the rites associated with it, is to carry the spirit forward into maturity,[8] and this too is the desired outcome of the Jamesian quest. According to Shroeder the women in the later stories figure as a refuge; it follows therefore that the direction of the stories is regressive. I incline rather to Edwin Honig's suggestion that in James's later "allegorical" fiction the role of woman becomes enlarged to assume the aspects of her religious function;[9] I see her as standing here for the principle of life. I have previously remarked that James's later fiction is characterized by an affirmative existential strain and James's mythic stories exemplify this aspect. "The Great Good Place" could be misread as an escapist fantasy,[10] but George Dane is no drop-out. Despite the tale's eloquent protest against the "modern madness, mere maniacal extension and motion" (XI,32) George Dane receives his spiritual renewal precisely so that he may return and carry on in the world. In the pellucid atmosphere of "The Great Good Place" the outline of the monomyth stands clearly revealed.[11] I propose now to follow Shroeder's example and to use this tale to help illuminate the two later excursions into the labyrinthine passages of the mind.

[8]Campbell, p. 11.

[9]Dark Conceit, p. 34.

[10]Matthiessen seems to read it in this way. See F.O. Matthiessen, Henry James: The Major Phase, (New York, 1963), p. 143.

[11]For an exhaustive analysis of "The Great Good Place" as monomyth see Mary Ellen Herx's article referred to in Footnote 4. I am largely indebted to this article. Joseph de Falco posits a similar thesis in "The Great Good Place: A Journey into the Psyche," Literature and Psychology VIII (Spring 1958), 18-20, but his article is more psychoanalytically oriented.

The story opens with its artist hero overwhelmed. Unlike John Marcher at the end of "The Beast in the Jungle" George Dane is overwhelmed not by the void of his existence, but by its pressures, the pressures of success. Dane's passionate outbrust to his servant Brown best describes the anomaly of his situation. In answer to Brown's anxious enquiry whether he is all right, Dane cries out:

> Look about you and judge. Could anything be more 'right,' in the view of the envious world, than everything that surrounds us here; that immense array of letters, notes, circulars; that pile of printers' proofs, magazines and books; these perpetual telegrams, these impending guests; this retarded unfinished and interminable work? (XI, 17)

No wonder George Dane wakes up on the morning of his great spiritual adventure with the consciousness that he is drowning: "It was the old rising tide, and it rose and rose even under a minute's watching. It had been up to his shoulders last night--it was up to his chin now" (XI,14). The water imagery functions throughout the tale as a unifying structural element. The next reference to water is to its more positive aspect of purification and salvation as Dane recalls the rain of the night before: "washing the windows in a steady flood, it had seemed the right thing, the retarding, interrupting thing, the thing that, if it would only last, might clear the ground by floating out to a boundless sea the innumerable objects among which his feet stumbled and strayed" (XI,14). Dane's wistful confession to Brown "I do love the rain" (XI,18) signals his longing for renewal, although his desire for snow can only be seen as an exhausted wish for extinction.

At this point Brown introduces the young visitor through whose supernatural agency Dane is transported into the spiritual world. The mysterious young man is clearly a Jamesian alter-ego in a purely benefi-

cent guise. The moment for the hero's departure has come, and now he must signify his acceptance of his role. In his first positive gesture Dane stretches out the hand which hitherto he had kept in his pocket. He feels it taken, and finds himself in his spiritual realm. The moment of death is the prelude to rebirth, and marks the first phase of the archetypal journey.

Dane's new consciousness awakens to a world of timelessness and stasis. His wakening in the old world had been represented by water imagery; this pattern is repeated, but the rising tide and rushing waters have given way to "a broad deep bath of stillness...a current so slow and so tepid that one floated practically without motion and without chill" (XI,20). One need hardly be an expert in Freudian symbolism to recognize that Dane has been gathered to the universal womb. Indeed this part of Dane's psychic journey lends itself only too readily to the openly Freudian interpretation which Joseph de Falco has provided. De Falco has painstakingly traced the stages of this prenatal initiation. The description of the psychic cloister: "This was the part where the great cloister, enclosed externally on three sides...opened to the south its splendid fourth quarter, turned to the great view an outer gallery that combined with the rest of the portico to form a high, dry loggia" (XI,20-21) becomes for de Falco the first glimpse of the "realm outside the womb."[12] With somewhat questionable zeal he has ventured even to place the actual moment of birth. But even if one objects, as I do, to this sort of psychoanalytical explication, it is impossible to ignore

[12]de Falco, p. 19.

the startlingly explicit allusions to the Great Mother herself as Dane and his mirror image, the "Good Brother" of the dream sequence, seek for a metaphor to describe the bliss of their new kingdom:

> "It's a sort of kindergarten!"
> "The next thing you'll be saying that we're babes in the breast!"
> "Of some great mild, invisible mother who stretches away into space and whose lap is the whole valley--?"
> "And her bosom"--Dane completed the figure--"the noble eminence of our hill?" (XI,37-38).

Shroeder suggests that James consciously inserted this whole pattern of symbolic imagery[13] but I tend to suspect that this dream symbolism arose from the depths of James's own consciousness, and that the full significance of the symbolic components of the tale were unknown to the author himself.

There is, however, a variant of the monomyth which is placed in the tale consciously. I refer to the allusions to the labyrinth and to Theseus' archetypal adventure. This interesting pattern has hitherto escaped critical attention. In the first part of the story Dane's room figures as the labyrinth, "he jerked himself up for another turn in his labyrinth" (XI,17). In the dream the archetypal allusion is reinforced. Theseus found his way through the labyrinth with the aid of a thread, and George Dane, the modern artist Thesus, achieves his quest for the genius which is his Self in the same way. He draws in the genius which "he had been in danger of losing" and which had "at last held by a thread that might at any moment have broken" (XI,30). The final achievement of the quest is described in terms of the same

[13]Shroeder, p. 427.

metaphor: "What had happened was that in tranquil walks and talks the deep spell had worked and he had got his soul again. He had drawn in by this time...the whole of the long line" (XI,35).

The achievement of the quest foreshadows the return of the hero. At the elemental level of the monomyth itself Dane is literally nursed back to health at the breast of the Great Mother, who revitalizes him with the life principle. There is no question of permanent regression; he soon feels the call to return to the battle of life. "They must return to the front sooner or later...the vague unrest of the need for action knew it again, the stir of the faculty that had been refreshed and reconsecrated" (XI,39).

The journey ends as it had begun, with a mystical handshake. Dane holds out his hand in farewell to his Brother, and returns to the world to find it held by his servant Brown. As he struggles to reorient himself, the cyclical pattern is completed, and the rain imagery is again invoked: "The patter on the glass (that) showed him how the rain--the great rain of the night--had come back" (XI,41). All is unchanged yet "it was after everything" (XI,41). The bent back of the strange young visitor writing at his desk turns round to reveal the face of his "Brother." The discovery that "every one was a little some one else" (XI,41) seems to put the seal on George Dane's voyage to the still centre of the universe, where the One and the Many are united, and the taking off of the self leads to the putting on of the Self.

The last words of the story deliberately hark back to the early hours of that fateful morning and Dane's response to his servant's

question, but this time there is no anguished ironical undercutting: "Dane rose and looked about his room, which seemed disencumbered, different, twice as large. It was all right" (XI,42).

As Shroeder has suggested, "The fables of Marcher...and Brydon represent...the intensification of Dane's symbolic quest for the reviving deep,"[14] but the atmosphere of chill doom and stark terror pervading the two later tales is far removed from the trancelike serenity of "The Great Good Place."[15] To put it in religious terms (and in the context of this celestial fantasy this is surely appropriate), George Dane's fall from grace is the result of the sins of the world rather than of his own sin. Unlike Marcher and Brydon he is not guilty of passivity and egotistical self-love, and for this reason his spiritual deprivation at the beginning of the tale is conveyed with no hint of moral opprobrium. Hence George Dane may be spared the climactic encounter with the monsters of the dark which so alters the emphasis in the two later tales. In "The Great Good Place" the focus is on the rebirth of the hero and on his new consciousness; in "The Beast in the Jungle" and "The Jolly Corner" it is on the anguish of his initiation.

John Marcher of "The Beast in the Jungle" and Spencer Brydon of "The Jolly Corner" are guilty men; their sin is a failure to live.

[14]Shroeder, p. 428.

[15]It would be tempting to account for this difference by pointing out that the earlier tale is an artistic parable, rather than the moral comment which we have come to associate with James tales of the supernatural. But the concept of the great good place, where everyone must arrive on his own feet, allows for universal extension. It is the still centre of one's own being. Further, the tale's dramatization of conconsciousness is typical of James's final tales in the supernatural mode.

Their crippling obsessions prevent them from making the existential commitment to life which becomes central to James's drama of consciousness, and which typically takes the form of outgoing love. Although in these two stories the obsession is imaged in strikingly different ways, its common symptom is a spiritual paralysis. John Marcher is haunted by his future; Spencer Brydon is obsessed by his past. Both refuse to live in the present. Their salvation lies in the ritual search for the self embodied in man's fundamental monomyth; the search which liberates man from the bondage of his fears. The end of the quest is knowledge; its reward is love. "Woman in the picture language of mythology represents the totality of what can be known. The hero is the one who comes to know."[16] John Marcher and Spencer Brydon both come to know, but for John Marcher there is no union and no redemption. "The Beast in the Jungle" is a story whose basic premise is paradox.[17] John Marcher, who believes himself singled out for a unique destiny, is fated to be the one man on earth to whom nothing ever happened. No wonder that in this tale the monomyth itself is undercut by tragic irony.

Only James would have conceived of writing the history of consciousness of a man to whom full consciousness must ineluctably be

[16]Campbell, p. 116.

[17]"Almost every thought and development in the story is cut by paradox and undermined by irony." This is Francis E. Smith's perceptive comment on the story in "'The Beast in the Jungle': The Limits of Method," Perspective, I (Autumn 1947), excerpted in Henry James: Seven Stories & Studies ed. Edward Stone, (New York, 1961), p. 247. Owing to the limitations of the library I have occasionally had recourse to this text.

denied, and only James would have compounded the difficulty by presenting the story through the consciousness of the man himself. The wonder is not that the tale succeeds but that it should ever have been attempted. James succeeds by allowing his own mediating vision to be superimposed upon Marcher's impaired consciousness. As L.C. Knights has pointed out, "Things are 'seen' largely through the eyes of Marcher, but the seeing is flecked with unobtrusive irony so that we are aware of two views--Marcher's, and that of James himself--existing simultaneously."[18] In a way both "The Beast in the Jungle" and the "The Jolly Corner" are stories of a second chance. After an interlude of ten years John Marcher is reunited with the one person in the world to whom he had confided his obsession that he is reserved for some awful destiny. She shows her willingness to share his fate, but Marcher's overscrupulous timidity, which he rationalizes as selflessness, denies her this fulfillment. She is forced into a situation of watching passively with him while they grow old together. The author's own indictment of Marcher's egotism is so subtly conveyed that it is almost impossible to isolate, yet it colours practically every line. The irony reaches its height in the description of Marcher's reaction to the news of his friend's fatal illness:

> When the day came, as come it had to, that his friend confessed to him her fear of a deep disorder in her blood, he felt somehow the shadow of a change and the chill of a shock. He immediately began to imagine aggravations and disasters, and above all to think of her peril as the direct menace for himself of personal privation. This indeed gave him one of those partial recoveries of equanimity that were

[18] L.C. Knights, "Henry James and the Trapped Spectator," Explorations: Essays in Criticism (London, 1963), pp. 166-167.

agreeable to him--it showed him that what was still first in his mind was the loss she herself might suffer. "What if she should have to die before knowing, before Seeing--?" (XI,376).

The death of May Bartram precipitates the story's climax, which is the reenactment of the monomyth, but a large part of the story leads up to this climax, mostly by way of summary.[19] The summary bows in the direction of realism, avoiding the fantastic oversimplification of Dane's dream vision, but the story's central metaphor and the denseness of its symbolism places it firmly within the tradition of Hawthornesque romance. The beast remains a figurative beast; it has no substance save that of the imagination, yet it is as real as any of the ghosts in the apparitional stories. The jungle is ultimately a metaphor for Marcher's unconscious, and not even Freud could have fastened on a more appropriate symbol. In some ways this story represents the peak of James's achievement in the supernatural mode; the ghost has been refined out of existence, yet its presence has never been more felt.

The central metaphor is supported by a structure of imagery involving the complex interweaving of names and seasons, and the symbolic use of the seasons themselves. The names of the two protagonists, and the name of the house in which their reunion takes place, figure prominently in this pattern.[20] The names Marcher and May have obvious connotations; March is before the Spring, and a marcher is a

[19]For a detailed discussion of the technique of this tale see Vaid, pp. 223-232.

[20]Edward Stone has written an article in this connection; "James's 'Jungle: The seasons," University of Kansas, City Review XXI (Winter 1954) Stone, pp. 256-258.

man who walks into battle; May is Spring, and May is possibility.[21] Weatherend, the name of the house in which they meet, remains, connotatively, tantalizingly enigmatic. There is possibly some merit in Stone's suggestion that May moves "out of weather's end, and into the weather"[22] when she moves to London to watch with Marcher for the spring of his beast.[23] The structural placing of the seasons themselves is part of the total imagistic pattern. The chill, grey, autumn day on which knowledge comes to Marcher stands in contrast to that first autumn day at Weatherend, when the old house and its treasures were bathed in a golden light.[24] The central scene in the story, which ironically foreshadows its tragic climax, takes place "in that long fresh light of waning April days which affects us often with a sadness sharper than the greyest hours of autumn" (XI,380). April in this story of James's is indeed "the cruellest month"; it stands between Marcher and May. "Spring was supposed to have begun early" (XI,380) that year, but there is to be no Spring for John Marcher who is oblivious to the gift of life that May Bartram offers him as she moves

[21]David Kerner has suggested that May is may-be, perhaps this is a little contrived. David Kerner, "A Note on 'The Beast in the Jungle'" University of Kansas City Review, XVII (Winter 1950), excerpted in Stone pp. 249-252.

[22]Edward Stone, "James's Jungle: The Seasons," Stone, p. 258.

[23]James, who in his late fiction, uses words with the dexterity of a poet, was obviously aware of the punning connection between the Spring which Marcher failed to achieve, and the spring of his beast which so fatally "settles" him.

[24]It is possible that the house itself, with its collection of fine art treasures, reaching back over the centuries, represents the illusory shelter that man seeks to make for himself. John Marcher, James's universal anti-hero, is fated to come to knowledge outdoors in "the garden of death."

towards him in her attempt to save him. The only Spring is the spring of his beast but Marcher is unaware of it; although May tells him he has nothing more to live for, she dies still trying to spare him the full horror of the void of his life.

With May's death Marcher loses not only any possibility of life but also any pretensions he might have had to an identity. The outward forms of their relationship had helped him to "pass for a man like another" (XI,375) but now his exclusion from life is complete. Even his beast has "stolen away" (XI,394) leaving a blankness more terrible than the dread of the future. And so the direction of his obsession changes from future to past: "it was only that he shouldn't, as an anticlimax, have been taken sleeping so sound as not to be able to win back by an effort of thought the lost stuff of consciousness" (XI,395). At this point Marcher becomes the active hero; hitherto, with May by his side, he had waited passively for his fate, but now "the lost stuff of consciousness became thus for him as a strayed or stolen child to an unappeasable father, he hunted it up and down very much as if he were knocking at doors and enquiring of the police" (XI,395). Now Marcher starts on his journey, signalling the first stage of the monomyth, but the implacable paradox of the story's theme frustrates the redemptive pattern of the archetypal ritual. Poor Marcher starts his quest when it is already too late, for any hope of life or identity lies buried with May Bartram. He even starts off in the wrong direction; he visits the depths of Asia before he is drawn inevitably back to the plot of ground in the suburban cemetry, "the

few square feet of earth on which he could still most live" (XI,398). May's grave represents the still centre of his own being and it is here that knowledge comes to him. And now the final paradox. Marcher, the impotent anti-hero, is to be denied even the full anguish of initiation. Knowledge comes to him not "on the wings of experience" but with "the disrespect of chance, the insolence of an accident" (XI,401). He had sought to wrest this knowledge by an effort of thought, but the very nature of his impairment precludes this achievement. The naked grief on the face of a stranger, "the image of scarred passion" (XI,400) teaches him that in his selfish egotism he had denied himself even the pain of loss. In missing May Bartram, he has missed love and missed life. His identity is a "sounded void" (XI,401). George Dane and Spencer Brydon awaken to the bliss of knowledge; Marcher awakes to its horror.[25] The hero's reunion with the goddess mother is ironically invoked as the hallucinated Marcher, striving to avoid the leap of his beast, throws himself on May Bartram's tomb. Thus ends his tragic negative adventure.

Allan Tate has objected to the ending of the story claiming that the grieving stranger is too obviously a ficelle, that he has not been sufficiently prepared for, and that he must therefore be termed a deus ex machina.[26] These are the objections of realism; James's own psychological realism demands that Marcher be made to see in precisely

[25]Edwin Honig brings out this distinction. Edwin Honig, "The Merciful Fraud in Three Stories by James" The Tiger's Eye I, No. 9 (October 1949), 90.

[26]Allan Tate, "Three Commentaries: Poe, James, and Joyce," The Sewanee Review, LVIII (Winter 1950), 9.

this way. For as Smith rightly remarks, he "is forbidden by his fate even to think with any remarkable perception,"[27] and thus must suffer the final indignity of having knowledge come to him purely fortuitously. David Kerner has hit on the story's real inconsistency: it is unlikely that Marcher should have so far forgotten himself as to confide in May Bartram ten years before meeting her again at Weatherend; it is inconceivable that having done so, he should promptly have forgotten all about it. David Kerner writes, "A man as lonely as Marcher does not forget his one experience of perfect sympathy."[28] James himself is troubled by this inconsistency, but his explanation of it in the text as the "odd accident of his lapse of memory" (XI,363) is hardly convincing. The difficulty of course lies in establishing any kind of relationship between, on the one hand, somebody as passive as Marcher and, on the other, somebody as self-sacrificing as May Bartram. The story's theme both demands and precludes this relationship; this is its inherent paradox. In this story James has carried to its limit the theme of the unlived life, and written perhaps the ultimate ghost story; there can be no greater ghost than the man who has not lived.

By contrast "The Jolly Corner"'s frankly apparitional approach could be seen as something of a regressive development. On the other hand James provides an altogether new twist in his "turning of the tables"[29] as the haunted becomes the haunter, and Spencer Brydon

[27]Smith, Stone, p. 245.

[28]Kerner, Stone, p. 250.

[29]This phrase occurs in James's preliminary sketch for The Sense of the Past where he refers back to the central idea of "The Jolly Corner." Notebooks, p. 367.

stalking his ghostly alter ego becomes aware that the ghostly presence is every bit as appalled as he himself.

The link between this central idea for the story and the passage in A Small Boy and Others in which James recalls the "most appalling yet most admirable"[30] nightmare of his life, his hallucinatory adventure in the galerie d'Apollon, is too obvious to have been overlooked. This has led to the assumption that the link between Spencer Brydon and James himself must be equally close--a suggestion made all the more plausible by the fact that this story was written shortly after James's own return to the States in 1904-5 when he recovered the scenes of his youth. James's own experiences may indeed have provided the basis for Spencer Brydon's reactions, but this does not mean that Spencer Brydon is James. Yet this inference seems to lie behind many of the critical readings of this story. Saul Rosenzweig was the first to express it when he claimed that the story represents James's attempts to rectify his past.[31] Recent critics see the story rather as James's justification of the present. Maurice Beebe supports this position[32] and Vaid goes so far as to say that "'The Jolly Corner' is a joyous embodiment of a life lived."[33] I suggest that the frame of reference provided by the monomyth offers a more valid approach; the final direction of the story looks not to the past, nor to the present but to the future.

[30]Autobiography, p. 196.

[31]Saul Rosenzweig, "The Ghost of Henry James; A Study in Thematic Apperception," Partisan Review XI, (Fall 1944), 448.

[32]Maurice Beebe, "The Turned Back of Henry James," reprinted in Tanner, p. 87.

[33]Vaid, p. 246.

For I see this story as Spencer Brydon's second chance[34] to find his true self and enter into spiritual manhood. He had missed the first chance thrity-three years before when he left New York, and presumably Alice Staverton, to follow "strange paths and worship strange gods" (XII,205). I suggest that this evocative phrase is explicitly recalled at the end of the story when Brydon comes to knowledge: "knowledge--yes, this was the beauty of his state; which came to resemble more and more that of a man who has gone to sleep on some news of a great inheritance, and then, after dreaming it away, after profaning it with matters strange to it has waked up again to serenity of certitude and has only to lie and watch it grow" (XII,227). The sleep is not only the death sleep of his swoon, but also the death in life sleep of the past thirty-three years, the years of his "selfish frivolous scandalous life" (XII,205).[35] The story's centre of moral reference is Alice Staverton who has kept faith not only with Spencer Brydon but also with their common spiritual heritage. Although she loves Spencer Brydon she does not unqualifiedly approve of him. She points out to him "you don't care for anything but yourself" (XII,206) and it is she who first recognizes that part of himself which Spencer Brydon had refused to face, and had run away from thirty-three years before. Her hint that had he stayed home he would have "anticipated the inventor of the skyscraper" (XII,197) speaks to his own "most disguised and most muffled vibrations" (XII,197). These vibrations

[34]Quentin Anderson also sees the story this way. Quentin Anderson, The American Henry James, (New Jersey, 1957), p. 180.

[35]Although Brydon himself uses this phrase, it is Alice Staverton's judgement.

have been stirred by the sudden emergence of a hitherto latent talent for business which alerts him to the existence of a possible other self. Finally, Alice's confession that she has seen his alter ego in a dream vision, spurs him on to undertake the quest for total selfhood which involves the confrontation of the potential other self. This quest marks the passage from boyhood into manhood, from innocence into experience. The passivity of Spencer Brydon's European life of sensations must, in the terms of late Jamesian fiction, condemn him and attest to his spiritual "innocence." The potential self, which he had refused to recognize still awaits him in the dark passages of his ancestral home, the house at the jolly corner. Thus the climactic encounter with the black stranger is again a reenactment of man's fundamental monomyth, but this time the redemptive pattern of the monomyth is allowed to reassert itself; this story triumphantly negates the bleak determinism of "The Beast in the Jungle."

Critical controversy has raged over the identity of the black stranger, and this question is central to the reading of the tale. If the story is taken as a confrontation between Europe and America then the black stranger naturally becomes the brutal, crippled, dehumanized American self.[36] Such a reading assumes the moral superiority of the European Spencer Brydon, but as I have already indicated, this position

[36]F.O. Matthiessen and Edmund Wilson both seem to read the story this way. Matthiessen, The Major Phase, p. 137 and Edmund Wilson, "The Ambiguity of Henry James," Casebook, p. 142.

is hardly tenable.[37] The Europe America antithesis is reductive, and discounts the role of Alice Staverton who is thoroughly American and yet emblematic of the life principle in the story--in accepting her love Spencer Brydon comes into moral life. By contrast to the "international" reading, the psychoanalytical readings tend rather to the rehabilitation of the black stranger, and Robert Rogers even asserts that "throughout the story Alice Staverton likes--in fact, prefers--the alter ego to Brydon himself."[38] This of course is a deliberate distortion calculated to provoke attention. Quentin Anderson is less sensational; he recognizes the story's profoundly moral basis, "There is no moral distinction" he contends "between the greed of the American expatriate and that of the American millionaire,"[39] and he puts forward the suggestion that Spencer Brydon discovers not what he would have been, but what he actually has been. Anderson's critical position is very close to that of Floyd Stovall.[40] The latter's searching insights and his pentrating analysis of the story's central episode merit close attention. I should like to comment on his central thesis, point out its shortcomings, and offer my alternative reading.

[37]I disagree entirely with Maurice Beebe who speaks of James's "active defense of the passive" "The Turned Back of Henry James," Tanner, p. 88. Beebe uses The Sense of the Past to support his position saying this is "another story of a man who, turning his back on the mundane present, enters the timeless and transcendent realm of a second consciousness." My final chapter attempts to refute this interpretation.

[38]Robert Rogers "The Beast in Henry James," American Imago, XIII (Winter 1956), 438.

[39]Anderson, p. 178.

[40]Floyd Stovall, "Henry James's 'The Jolly Corner,'" Nineteenth Century Fiction XII, 72-84.

Stovall takes careful account of the elaborate diagrammatic detail with which James has staged Spencer Brydon's spiritual adventure. He posits the theory that there are actually three Spencer Brydons. One is the ghostly alter ego, the self he might have been had he never left New York. This self haunts the back rooms on the fourth floor of the house at the Jolly Corner and remains behind the closed door. It is never seen by Spencer Brydon. The second self is the false self of Brydon's European years, his actual self; Stovall explains that the consciousness of this self belongs to the world outside the house and slips in (appropriately) by the front door, while Spencer Brydon renounces his pursuit of the ghostly alter ego at the top of the stairs. The third Spencer Brydon is the true Spencer Brydon who comes into being when he recognizes his false self as false. It is this self which is finally released by Alice's love.

The complicated mechanics of this thesis detract from its real merit which lies in the suggestion that the Spencer Brydon who is reborn at the end of the story is essentially a new man. For Stovall this new consciousness emerges during the long hours when Spencer Brydon stands before the closed door of the upstairs room, so that the apparition of the actual self which rises before him, when he eventually descends the stairs, appears to him as something monstrous. But I suggest rather than this new Spencer Brydon is born out of the confrontation and reconciliation between the self he had been and the potential self. Stovall's over-ingenious suggestion that a confrontation between Spencer Brydon and his ghostly alter ego never did take place

is a valiant attempt to come to grips with the puzzling incident of the door which remains closed, but in his analysis of this incident Stovall overlooks entirely the ironic undercutting of the narrative voice. He takes at face value Spencer Brydon's elaborate rationalization of the cowardice which prevents him from opening this door, and forcing a confrontation with the ghostly presence. "Discretion" at this point is a euphemism for "funk" and James's ironic intention is clearly evident: "Discretion--he jumped at that; and yet not, verily, at such a pitch, because it saved his nerves or his skin, but because, much more valuably, it saved the situation" (XII,218-9). The door remains closed not because to have opened it would have been to "walk into madness,"[41] but because Spencer Brydon hits upon this face-saving formula of "discretion" in an effort to save his dignity.

Stovall's interpretation pays scrupulous attention to all the physical details of James's setting, but it overlooks the story's central imagistic architectural clue. Spencer Brydon's journey into the self begins and ends on the black and white squares of the hall pavement of his house, the squares that "had made in him...for the growth of an early conception of style" (XII,209). For me the black squares are closely related to the black stranger; they represent the unknown mysterious forces within himself with which each man must come to terms, if he is to be totally integrated.[42] Thirty-three years ago

[41]Edwin Honig, "The Merciful Fraud in Three Stories by James,"p. 86.

[42]Fred C. Thompson in his note in The Explicator XXII No. 4 (December 1963) says that Brydon had developed his white and not his black self. Item 28.

Spencer Brydon had chosen the road of the white squares and had evaded experience, passion, commitment, and also the will to power which is a basic part of man's nature. The black stranger represents this hitherto unacknowledged part of himself; the ravages on the stranger's face, his ruined sight and his maimed hands suggest the violence which inevitably accompanies the acquisition of wealth and power.[43] It is foolish to suggest, as Rogers would seem to, that this black part is the more admirable part of man's nature, but it must be faced and acknowledged if man is to be whole and go forward.

The question remains, though, does Spencer Brydon achieve this self-realization, does he not rather reject the black stranger as the totally other? His assertion "He's none of me, even as I might have been" (XII,231) certainly lends itself to this interpretation. But even this reading does not invalidate the necessity for the confrontation and recognition--until something is faced it cannot be truly rejected. I prefer, however, to assert the centrality of Alice Staverton's role which allows for a different reading.

[43]For further light on this point see Lionel Trilling, The Liberal Imagination (New York, 1951), pp. 81-83. Commenting on, and quoting from James's Louvre nightmare, Trilling points out that for James the artist himself is wholly implicated in this striving for power. The "sense of glory" in the nightmare meant "not only beauty and art and supreme design, but, history and fame and power." I would only add that this underlines once again the difference between the European Brydon and James himself. James, as artist, is tainted with the universal guilt of experience. This may seem to negate my reading of James's stories asserting the disjunction between artist and man, between public and private life--stories such as "The Real Right Thing" and "The Private Life;" but even these stories allow for another level of interpretation which itself undercuts the central theme.

Alice has recognized from the first that although Brydon may not be willing to acknowledge his alter ego, he is nevertheless ready to profit from the lucrative gains of this side of his nature. When Brydon protests that the only conceivable reason for living in New York would be one of dollars as "There are no reasons here but of dollars. Let us then have none whatever--not the 'ghost' of one" Alice Staverton shrewdly pulls him up with, "Are you very sure the 'ghost' of one doesn't much rather, serve--?" (XII,202). Spencer Brydon's existence in Europe is entirely dependent upon the beastly rent values he so disdains. The empathy of Alice Staverton's love enables her to envision Brydon's other self long before Brydon undertakes his quest; her total commitment to Brydon permits her to love even this aspect of him. The final scene establishes Alice Staverton as archetypal woman and life principle. Brydon's swoon following the climactic confrontation is emblematic of death. He emerges reborn from the womb of his past: "lifted and carefully borne as from where he had been picked up, the uttermost end of an interminable grey passage." The "break in the long mild motion" (XII,227) brings him to knowledge and to Alice Staverton, who, in the archetypal role of woman "represents the totality of what can be known."[44] Just as George Dane had been nursed back to health by the earth mother of his dream fantasy, so now Alice Staverton brings Spencer Brydon to the true knowledge of himself which is spiritual health. To Brydon's protest that the stranger bears no relationship even to what he might have been had he stayed

[44]Campbell, p. 116.

home she replies, "Isn't the whole point that you'd have been different?" (XII,231). The whole tenor of her remarks is directed towards reconciling Brydon with his black self. At the end of the story Brydon admits that perhaps his own monocle might seem ridiculous beside the other's "great convex pince-nez" (XII,232), and with his final assertion, "he has a million a year...But he hasn't you" (XII,232) the hostility towards the black stranger has given way to pity. The closing of the story indicates that the reborn Spencer Brydon has come into manhood as, no longer looking to Alice Staverton for support, he draws her to his breast. Alice's final murmur, "And he isn't--no, he isn't--you" (XII,232) triumphantly affirms the new Spencer Brydon.

The peaceful coda of this scene is in complete contrast to the terror and tension which surrounds Spencer Brydon's stalking of his ghostly alter ego. This aspect of the story looks back not only to "The Turn of the Screw" but also to some of James's earliest ventures in the supernatural genre, and, in particular, to an early tale which deliberately exploited the same familiar Gothic elements of a huanted house, cavernous rooms and winding staircase. I refer to "The Ghostly Rental" which, in many ways, seems to anticipate "The Jolly Corner" but which, at the same time, demonstrates the difference between James's first tentative forays into the supernatural and his later, assured appropriation of this domain.

The early tale had skilfully evoked the atmosphere of terror and dread and, discounting the obvious stylistic discrepancy, the climactic moment of encounter with the ghost is imaged in terms aston-

ishingly similar to those depicting Spencer Brydon's confrontation with the black stranger. In the early story the apparition at the head of the stairs is described as follows: "Suddenly...I became aware that this gloom was animated, it seemed to move and gather itself together. Slowly...it took the shape of a large, definite figure, and this figure advanced and stood at the top of the stairs" (IV,75). In "The Jolly Corner" the actual manifestation of the ghostly presence as Brydon advances towards it seems almost to echo these words: "He saw, in its great grey glimmering margin, the central vagueness diminish, and he felt it to be taking the very form toward which, for so many days, the passion of his curiosity had yearned. It gloomed, it loomed, it was something, it was somebody, the prodigy of a personal presence" (XII,224). But despite these similarities the early tale had fallen flat: having evoked the terror and dread James deliberately undercut it. In the face of the narrator's cynical detachment the ghostly twist at the end of the tale is unconvincing. James could not, at this time, take the Gothic convention quite seriously, and the result is a curious uncertainty of tone. In the later tale the stock components of the Gothic mode are integrated into the total vision. The ghost is internalized, and the haunted house itself has become the emblem for the mysteries of consciousness. Despite James's ingenuous protestation that he had been drawn to the ghostly tale because of his love of "a story as a story,"[45] it might be truer to say that he had been drawn to it because it

[45] Art of the Novel, p. 252.

facilitated his avowed artistic purpose to carry the field of consciousness further and further. His final tales of the supernatural may ultimately be defined as myths of consciousness.

Nowhere is this lifelong concern with consciousness more clearly manifested than in the unfinished ghost novel which haunted the last fifteen years of James's life, and on which he was working at the time of his death. No study of James's tales of the supernatural would be complete without some mention of this, his most ambitious venture, into the supernatural. In my concluding chapter I propose to discuss this work and to show how here the tyrannising concern with consciousness finally crushes the story as story.

CONCLUSION

THE SENSE OF THE PAST

I have chosen in this concluding chapter to discuss The Sense of the Past, James's unfinished ghost novel, because this one work seems to exemplify the evolution which has been the subject of this study. While on the one hand this work looks back to James's earliest supernatural tales in the situational melodrama of its plot and the Hawthornesque device of the portrait, on the other it surpasses anything attempted even in the final stories in the sustained complexity of its psychic exploration and the concomitant complexity of method. In Book IV of this work James strives for the final turn of the screw in his life-long study of consciousness; in the tales discussed in the previous chapter the focus had been on consciousness, here it is on the consciousness of consciousness. This becomes the "experience within the experience"[1] as James passes from perception to apperception. Unfortunately the tension between the romantic and the psychological aspects of the work is not satisfactorily resolved, and the two tend to work against each other. James's overriding concern with consciousness in Book IV results in an almost desperately analytical method of interpretation. This prevents him from exploiting the framework of fantasy he had so carefully erected in the preceding

[1] James uses this phrase in a somewhat different connection in his Notes for the work. These notes are included in Percy Lubbock's edition which is the text used in this paper. Henry James, The Sense of the Past, (London, 1917), Notes, p. 306.

three books. At the same time his extensive working notes show that the exigencies of his elaborate plot did not cease to obtrude themselves, and may well have hampered the successful completion of the work.

The intricate plot is set in motion in Book I in an outer framework which Gorley Putt finds even more incredible than the story's inner plot.[2] Ralph Pendrel, a romantic and ardent New York historian, with a passion for the "sense of the past" which only Europe can assuage, is shown wooing Aurora Coyne, a repatriated widow, whose own European experiences had apparently thoroughly disillusioned her. She rebuffs his advances, and imposes the condition that she will marry him only if he shows himself strong enough to withstand the enchantment of Europe, and return in a year to claim her hand, never to leave America again. Putt is right in claiming that this sort of test is in the tradition of fairy tale;[3] it sets the note for the opening of the next book where Ralph providentially inherits an old London house. The rest of the book finds him indulging his obsession with the past as he explores his London property. This book is the high point of fantasy in the novel; in contrast to the scenic and dialectical[4] method of the

[2]Putt, p. 411.

[3]Actually I would prefer to say 'myth' rather than fairy-tale, and the myth we see enacted in the novel is again in the tradition of the monomyth. Ralph, whose obsession with the past prevents any existential commitment to the present, dies to the present world when he changes places with his predecessor. His sojourn in the past is his initiation into knowledge. David Beam's invaluable article "Consciousness in James's Sense of the Past" interprets the story along these lines. Criticism, V (Spring 1963), 148-172.

[4]Austin Warren's term in Rage for Order (Chicago, 1948), p. 145.

first book, it is presented through Ralph's consciousness and its heightened Gothic atmosphere is very reminiscent of "The Jolly Corner." The book ends with Ralph's climactic encounter with his alter ego, the young man in eighteenth century dress, whose portrait with its tantalizingly turned back, had fascinated Ralph from his first arrival in the London house. What actually transpired during this fateful meeting is revealed in Book III when Ralph calls on the Ambassador to inform him of his strange compact with the young man of the portrait and their agreement to change places--Ralph would return to the house and step into the past, while the earlier Ralph would step into the future. The Ambassador who, as the Notes make clear, was to provide the link with Aurora Coyne and thus ensure Ralph's rescue from the past in the fifth and final book, watches at the end of Book III as Ralph lets himself in through the door to the past. James's continuing debt to Hawthorne is nowhere more apparent than at this point in his final work, where the portrait and the portentous door function not only imagistically but as structuring devices.

But to step through this same door into Book IV is to step into a different literary world. Hawthorne and the claims of history and romance have been left far behind in its rarified atmosphere. The fantasy of the preceding chapters has been evoked not in order to create the picture of a previous age, nor to illustrate the contrast between Europe and America, but simply because this situation afforded James the opportunity to portray Ralph's dual consciousness as he finds himself reenacting the role of his predecessor, the young man in the

portrait. For James "the very beauty of the subject" was in Ralph's "being both the other man and not the other man."[5] This is the situation that forces Ralph to grow his perceptions from moment to moment[6] thus serving, as Matthiessen points out, "as the final extension of James's method of suggesting the formation of his characters' thoughts."[7]

The checkered history of the writing of this work throws some light on the seeming disjunction in emphasis between the first three books and Book IV. An exchange of correspondence between Howells and James shows that James had started the work early in 1900 but had put it aside by August of that year owing to the "damnable difficulty" of the subject.[8] The unfinished manuscript, which James had left in the middle of the third book, was to lie on the shelf until the autumn of 1914, at which time he took it up again. The Preliminary statement shows that the crucial difficulty, which had caused James to abandon the work in 1900, was the test which he saw awaiting him in Book IV: "the production of the 'old world atmosphere,' the constitution of the precise mileu and tone I wanted."[9] Judging by the romantic atmosphere

[5]Notes to the Sense of the Past, p. 294. At one time James even considered the possibility of putting the ancient young man in the actual world because it would be easier to do. See Preliminary Statement, Notebooks, p. 365.

[6]The Sense of the Past, p. 231.

[7]Matthiessen, The Major Phase, p. 135.

[8]The Letters of Henry James, ed. Percy Lubbock, (London, 1920), Vol. I. Letters of 29th June, and August 9th with PS. of August 14th.

[9]Preliminary Statement for The Sense of the Past, Notebooks, p. 365.

which pervades the second book, the old world atmosphere for which James had been striving in 1900 may well have been more in the order of the atmosphere of historical romance, a vein which his predecessor Hawthorne would have been so much better qualified to provide.[10] But for the supersubtle elderly author of 1914 the physical framework of fantasy had ceased to have any relevance. The atmosphere and tone is by this time composed of vibrations and distinctions so subtle that they all but evade even the most discriminating reader. They crystallize finally as moral distinctions. Even Ralph's superior intelligence, which so alarms his 1820 Midmore relatives, is, for James, a moral attribute. But the central distinction, which separates the world of 1820 from that of 1910, is the streak of brutality hidden beneath the veneer of great manner.

Ralph chooses the past prepared to accept the world of 1820. His growing awareness of these distinctions, his subsequent malaise, the contagion of his terror, and finally his triumphantly expanded consciousness contribute to the process of apperception which becomes the subject of the psychological drama of Book IV. In order to convey this to the reader, James has to resort to endless "going behind" written in his most abstruse and most impenetrable prose. For, despite his passionate plea in the Notes for the novel, "An action, an action, an action must it thus insuperably be,"[11] the method of Book IV precludes action and produces an atmosphere of overwhelming stasis. James

[10]"Both men had that sense of the past which is peculiarly American, but in Hawthorne this sense exercised itself in a grip on the past itself, in James it is a sense of the sense." T.S. Eliot, "The Hawthorne Aspect," of Little Review, V (August 1918), 50.

[11]Notes for Sense of Past, p. 296.

calls the method of this book "narrative representation"; an uneasy combination of scene and picture, it involves his favourite principle of foreshortening, in this case controlled and dominated by Ralph's mind. The elusive distinctions between the world of 1820 and the world of 1910 are supposed to be established through the conversations between Ralph and his 1820 family, but the conversations bear no resemblance to the brilliant "dialectic,"[12] of say, The Ambassadors. Here the speeches are interrupted by as much as seven-and-three-quarter pages of Ralph's interpreting consciousness.[13] The purpose of this minute analysis is presumably to clarify and allow the reader to participate in Ralph's apperception, but unfortunately it serves only to confuse and frustrate. Yvor Winters has somewhat unkindly called this book "the most extraordinary plunge into pure incoherence which James ever made."[14] He overstates the case and Matthiessen is perhaps fairer when he points out that here James "carried to its extreme...his way of suggesting what lurks just behind the words of conversation to beckon us into the realms of the unspoken."[15] Unfortunately the words "strain, crack and sometimes break, under the burden."

David Beams, the chief apologist for James's unfinished ghost novel, has himself called this representation of Ralph's psychic drama "the implacable subtilising of this consciousness."[16] He asks the

[12]Again this term is used in Austin Warren's sense.
[13]I rely on Beams for these figures. Beams, p. 149.
[14]Yvor Winters, In Defence of Reason (New York, 1947), p. 322.
[15]Matthiessen, The James Family, p. 592.
[16]Beams, p. 156.

pivotal question whether Book IV furthers the interesting story of the first three books or virtually forbids it to resume.[17] In his brilliant and perceptive analysis he proves that the novel has all the time been a story about consciousness. The first three books portray Ralph's ever-increasing submission to the ghost of the sense of the past, which culminates in his rejection of the world of 1910 in exchange for that of 1820. James condemns Ralph's obsession with the past as inimical to life and possibility:

> He was by the turn of his spirit oddly indifferent to the actual and the possible; his interest was all in the spent and the displaced, in what had been determined and composed round about him, what had been presented as a subject and a picture, by ceasing--so far as things ever cease--to bustle or even to be. It was when life was framed in death that the picture was really hung up.[18]

He is guilty of the same kind of passivity as John Marcher and Spencer Brydon. Stephen Spender asserts that Ralph entered the world of 1820 precisely because there he would not have to act or chose.[19] His actions there would be completely predestined, his performance just an encore. Book IV of course upsets this expectation and reaffirms James's moral values. Ralph's falling in love with Nan, whose free spirit lies outside his 1820 mode of awareness, constitutes his moral awakening and assures his eventual salvation and the laying of the ghost of the sense of the past.[20] Thus The Sense of the Past is another myth

[17] Beams, p. 156.

[18] Sense of the Past, p. 47.

[19] Stephen Spender, The Destructive Element (London, 1935), p. 109.

[20] It will be remembered that by "growing his perceptions" Ralph is able to intuit his 1820 role. Then comes the alarming gap in his inspirations when he is discovered to be ignorant of the very existence of Nan. Her spirit is not hung up and framed in death, and thus not subject to his appropriation.

of consciousness and the first three books may be seen as the framework for the dramatization of the myth. But in spite of this the effect of the fourth book is indeed to bring the story to a standstill. In a curious way, with this fourth book, the long history of James's involvement with the supernatural seems to turn back on itself.

This study has shown how James's first ventures in the ghostly tale helped liberate him from the limitations of realism, and deflected him from the explanatory tales of his early realistic period. The supernatural mode helped him to make imaginative contact with the unseen and the unknown. "The Turn of the Screw" presents a horrifying encounter with this dark side of life; content merely to "adumbrate"[21] it makes no effort to explain; the reader himself participates in the governess' terror and uncertainty. With the deepening of James's moral vision, and the crystallization of his religion of consciousness, the ghost finally evolves as a metaphor for the crippling obsessions which inhibit the attainment of full consciousness. The supernatural mode becomes the appropriate vehicle for the dramatization of consciousness. James's final work, his only ghost novel, was to have seen the culmination of this evolution--it is his supreme attempt to express the inexpressible. Using a variety of romantic props he elaborately sets the stage for his final drama. But in his very anxiety to let the reader share in the excitement and illumination of Ralph's apperception, he plunges the stage into obscurity. The drama is forfeited in the

[21]_The Art of the Novel_, p.

abstraction of interpretation and analysis.

In tracing the evolution of James's use of the supernatural mode, this study has attempted to prove that the ghostly tale is an integral part of James's total drama of consciousness. It served him well in his artistic mission to carry the boundaries of consciousness further and further. In this last work he loses himself, his story, and his reader in the ineffable.

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