HENRY JAMES:

THE SUPERNATURAL TALES

A CRITICAL STUDY
HENRY JAMES: THE SUPERNATURAL TALES

A CRITICAL STUDY

By

M. Thomasin Duncan, B.A.

A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts

McMaster University
(November) 1971
MASTER OF ARTS (1971)  
(English)  

McMASTER UNIVERSITY  
Hamilton, Ontario  

TITLE:  Henry James: A Critical Study of the Supernatural Tales  

AUTHOR:  M. Thomasin Duncan, B.A. (McMaster University)  

SUPERVISOR:  Professor H. Aziz  

NUMBER OF PAGES:  vii, 82
This study of Henry James's supernatural tales attempts to examine the development of James's attitude to the supernatural, and his technical handling of these attitudes in nineteen of his shorter works, commonly called the supernatural or ghostly tales. For James, the supernatural aspect of life was an extra reality as viable as empirical events. My view is that, although these particular fictions deal with extraordinary apparitions and situations, they are, nevertheless, not significantly different in intention from the rest of James's novels and tales. For James, the extraordinary aspect of life was equally, sometimes more, important than the ordinary. Therefore these tales should be considered an integral and essential part of the James canon.
"The lovers of a great poet are the people in the world who are most to be forgiven a little wanton fancy about him, for they have before them, in his genius and work, an irresistible example of the imaginative to a thousand subjects."

(Henry James, "Browning in Westminster Abbey")

With deepest thanks to Dr. Aziz whose love for Henry James opened for me James's "irresistable example of the imaginative to a thousand subjects."
"... since the question has ever been for me but of wondering and, with all achievable adroitness, of causing to wonder, so the whole fairy tale side of life has used for its tug of sensibility, a cord all its own. When we want to wonder there's no such ground for it as the wonderful ..."

(Henry James, The Art of the Novel.)
Textual Note and Abbreviations

Frequent reference will be made to the following works:


All further references will appear in the following abbreviated forms:

1. Art of the Novel

2. Complete Tales

3. Notebooks

4. Supernatural Stories
## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>pp. 1-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I</td>
<td>pp. 6-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II</td>
<td>pp. 26-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III</td>
<td>pp. 61-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td>pp. 77-78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Works Consulted</td>
<td>pp. 79-82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Between 1864, the year of his first published story,\(^1\) and 1910, the year of his last published fiction,\(^2\) Henry James published some 20 full length novels and 120 shorter tales. Some of his frequent themes in these works are the problems of the artist in society, the experiences of the American confronting European civilization, and the relation of art to life. Common to all James's writing is his method of portraying all experience as it is reflected by the consciousness of intelligent and sensitive characters. In many of his short tales, and to a lesser degree in the novels, the awareness and sensibility of the characters are presented in a way which suggests a reality of experience beyond that of "normal", ordinary life. At times this extra reality seems positively supernatural. In The Wings of the Dove,\(^3\) one of James's later novels, Merton Densher falls in love with his memory of a dead woman, as if he were communing with a ghost; and all the major characters in The Golden Bowl\(^4\) perceive with an awareness so highly developed that it might be called a "sixth sense". Indeed, these people seem to float in a great sea of intuition, so that Bob Assingham imagines his wife, Fanny, to be paddling in a "mystic lake" of thoughts and feelings.

\(^3\) The Wings of the Dove (N.Y: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902).
\(^4\) The Golden Bowl (N.Y: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904).
In some of his shorter fiction, however, James tends to present this extra reality by ghostly apparitions and situations; so that these particular tales appear to be, and are actually referred to, as ghost stories. In 1948, Dr. Leon Edel published eighteen of these short fiction under the title, The Ghostly Tales of Henry James. In 1970, he reissued the same collection under a new title, Henry James: Stories of the Supernatural. In the new edition he rightly notes that the new title is more appropriately inclusive as many of James's tales do not contain ghosts in the traditional sense, such as those in the tales of Edgar Allan Poe, but rather, they deal with this extra-physical reality, commonly called the supernatural.

It is my purpose to examine these "ghostly" tales, and to show how James understood the supernatural side of life and how he used it in his fiction to portray his own vision of reality. Naturally, this vision developed gradually: the tales of his youth are far less characteristic than those of his maturity.

James refers to this supernatural aspect as the "fairy tale side of life", and claims that it had always held a strong fascination for him, because he "wondered" about a reality beyond that which is clearly visible.


6 The Editor's note to this edition reads: "The present edition of Henry James's complete stories of the supernatural was published originally in 1950 as The Ghostly Tales of Henry James. This new title, I believe, more accurately describes both the 'apparitional' tales and those which make use of James's particular 'psychological' ghosts, his interest in clairvoyance, the extrasensory, and the occult." Dr. Edel omitted the tale, "A Problem," first published in Galaxy, V (June), 1868, which is included in this study bringing the total number of tales considered to nineteen.
In the Preface to *The Alter of the Dead*, he stresses the importance of this faculty of wonder in fiction:

...since the question has ever been for me but of wondering and, with all achievable adroitness, of causing to wonder, so the whole fairy tale side of life has used, for its tug at my sensibility, a cord all its own. When we want to wonder there's no such good ground for it as the wonderful...

And he goes on to explain his penchant for ghostly, fairy tales:

...I am prepared with the confession that the "ghost-story", as we for convenience call it, has ever been for me the most possible form of the fairy-tale. It enjoys, to my eyes, this honour by being so much the neatness-neat with that neatness without which representation, and therefore with beauty, drops.

For James, this necessary neatness depended on the intensity of the supernatural images themselves. He evokes this intensity in the same way in which he creates all his images, by

...showing almost exclusively the way they are felt, by recognizing as their main interest some impression, strongly made by them and intensely received.

Their reality, which James calls their "thickness", depends, then, on the "thickness" of the human consciousness which perceives them. Thus, James's supernatural characters and figures are most often experienced psychologically rather than extrinsically. They are phenomena lurking in a reality which is not always immediately within our grasp; apparent reality seems to open to something beyond itself.

---

7 *Art of the Novel*, p. 254.
But there is at the same time a close connection between these two levels of experience. And this connection is essential to James's "neatness" and "thickness". He rejects Poe's use of the supernatural for its lack of intrinsic values, and his use of horror for its own sake. He maintains that for images to be really "prodigious" (James's own term) they must

...keep all their character ... by looming through some other history—the indispensable history of somebody's normal relation to something.\(^{10}\)

His insistence on this connection between ordinary and extra-physical reality suggests one aspect of his own understanding of human experience:

The extraordinary is most extraordinary in that it happens to you and me, and it's of value (of value for others) but so far as visibly brought home to us.\(^{11}\)

In the Preface to Volume 12 of the New York Edition, called The Aspern Papers, James maintains that unusual images should be vividly conveyed with the necessary "thickness" so that they loom through normal relations:

Only make the reader's general vision of evil intense enough, ... - and his own experience, his own imagination, his own sympathy ... and horror ... will supply him quite sufficiently with all the particulars. Make him think the evil, make him think it for himself, and you are released from weak specifications.\(^{12}\)

Paradoxically, the "thickness" comes not from detailing the images themselves. Instead, it results from conveying the thoughts and feelings of the receiver. James's main interest in the supernatural, then, was in the psychological possibilities of the unusual, the effect of the extraordinary on the minds of ordinary people.

---

10 Ibid., p.256.

11 Ibid., p.257.

12 Ibid., p.176. James is referring specifically to The Turn of the Screw, the preface to which appears in The Aspern Papers.
James was, as he observes in another part of the Preface to The Altar of the Dead, always "beguiled" by the love of a story as a story. It is from a similar affection for these tales that I intend to concentrate only on their literary aspect. I do not propose to offer either biographical or historical interpretations. I have divided the nineteen tales into three chronological groups: the first five tales (those written from 1868 to 1876); the second nine (those written from 1891 to 1899); and the last five (those written after 1900). The first five are more traditional ghost stories, work of James's apprentice years. The span of fifteen years between the publication of the fifth and sixth stories marks 1891 as the beginning of a new phase. Nearly all of the tales of the second and third phases illustrate James's mature vision of the supernatural experience. I have chosen the year 1900 as the starting point of the third chapter merely because the turn of the century is a convenient dividing line. Naturally, the first chapter will be shorter than the others, as the simpler tales require less discussion.

13 Ibid., p. 252.
CHAPTER I

It is not surprising that Henry James should have been interested in the supernatural. The James household was dominated by Henry James Senior, who believed in both the positive power of evil, and in a level of reality above and beyond immediate empirical experience. James Sr. had apparently experienced a state of such fearful anxiety during his youth that he was left convinced of the real existence of evil.¹ For him there were few boundaries between the natural and the spiritual. The young James, though claiming to have understood his father's ideas only "indirectly,"² through listening to the talk rather than participating in it, absorbed a great deal of his parent's beliefs, especially his thoughts on the nature of evil.

¹"Henry James was put in possession from the first, of a sense of extra-human evil, the idea that a man could be haunted — as his father had been — by daylight ghosts." Supernatural Stories, p. vi.

²"... Henry James retained the memory of an absorbing character (Henry James Sr.) whose essence he wanted to suggest. Like William James, he had responded to his father's immense humanity. He also respected the firmness of his idealism and its grounding in solid intelligence .... But he frankly admits that he had to apprehend all his father's ideas 'indirectly'. He speaks of 'assisting' at 'intellectual scenes' between Father and William just as though he had been watching a play." F.O. Matthiessen, The James Family. (N.Y: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p.190.
Unlike his father, Henry James Jr. was no philosopher, but he quite naturally assimilated his father's spiritualism, which created in him a habit of mind, as seen partially in the supernatural tales. Although it is difficult and dangerous to trace James's interest in the supernatural to any one source, James Senior's influence must have been one of the earliest impressions.

James's interest in the supernatural was further fostered by his regard for the novelist, Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864). As a young man, James read and admired the works of his countryman. Later, during his early creative years, James became a regular reviewer of current American and European fiction for various periodicals of the day. This broad exposure to much bad writing convinced him of Hawthorne's eminence as a novelist. His attraction to Hawthorne is easily understood. They were sons of Puritan New England, both with a Calvinist sense of morality and an awareness of all pervading evil. Furthermore, James considered Hawthorne to be the only serious writer of fiction in America. His biography of Hawthorne clearly shows his admiration as well as his criticism of the older man's work:

3T.S. Eliot notes about James that his "... critical genius comes out tellingly in his mastery over, his baffling escape from, Ideas; a mastery and escape which are perhaps the last test of a superior intelligence. He had a mind so fine that no idea could violate it." T.S. Eliot, "On Henry James", in The Question of Henry James, A Collection of Critical Essays, F.W. Dupee ed. (N.Y: Henry Holt and Company, 1945), p.110.

4Those interested in this aspect of James's development will find that Mathiessen's study, The James Family, provides a clear examination of Henry James Sr.'s philosophy, and its effect on the various members of the James family.
The fine thing in Hawthorne is that he cared for the deeper psychology, and that in his way, he tried to become familiar with it. This natural yet fanciful, familiarity with it; this air, on the author's part, of being a confirmed habitué of a region of mysteries and subtleties, constitutes the originality of his tales.\(^5\)

Yet, James found Hawthorne's supernatural fiction too prone to allegory and thus lacking in what he believed to be necessary reality.\(^6\) Hawthorne's influence on the younger men is best seen in James's early tales, especially in the romances. But as it is not my purpose to examine the relation between Hawthorne and Henry James, this brief reference should suffice. There are at least two excellent studies of this subject already.\(^7\) I wish to consider the development of James's attitude to the supernatural and the ways in which this attitude is portrayed in the tales. Only where I think it particularly significant will I make passing reference to possible background sources.

One of James's greatest assets as a young writer was the desire and ability to experiment. All the members of the James family had been encouraged to try new methods and ideas.\(^8\) James's early tales clearly demonstrate this legacy. In each of the five tales discussed in this

---


\(^8\) Matthiessen notes that the children were sent to numerous experimental schools and encouraged to visit all forms of religious institutions. New ideas were things to be grasped at eagerly. *The James Family*, p. 19.
chapter, James works with a new idea or method of expression, sometimes even looking back to Gothic romances and folklore. As Dupee points out, many of these tentative beginnings are to reappear in his later more characteristic works.\(^9\)

The two most important tales from this period are "The Last of the Valerii" (1874) and "The Ghostly Rental" (1876), for they most thoroughly anticipate James's mature attitude and manner in the supernatural mode. The problem of the relation between past and present, seen in "The Last of the Valerii", appears in many of the later tales, like "The Altar of the Dead" and "The Jolly Corner". The internal narrator who draws the reader into the tale, in both early stories cited here, James later perfected to admirable subtlety, most notably in "The Turn of the Screw". Even in these youthful experiments, James was beginning to understand the importance of allowing the natural to act as a foil for the supernatural so that the latter is perceived as a level of reality and not merely a level of imagination. As James's own attitudes more clearly emerge through his tales, we see his conviction that it is the way in which unusual events are perceived by ordinary people that gives the events significance. The narrators of "The Last of the Valerii" and "The Ghostly Rental" are two of the earliest of these ordinary people.

\(^9\) "... one group of his early tales is peopled with ghosts, alter egos, and vampires in human form. Not very remarkable stories, they do nevertheless sound some of his characteristic themes; and he was to return to the Gothic note in the more sophisticated wonder tales of his later maturity. Something, too, of the popular impulse survived even in the more realistic of his later novels, where the sudden windfalls of fortune, the initiations, the prohibitions, and transformations are often reminiscent of the magical medium of The Brother's Grimm."

By themselves, the other three tales of this phase, "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes", "A Problem" and "De Grey: A Romance", all dating from 1868, would not be particularly important if compared to James's mature supernatural stories. But as examples of experiment and development, they require consideration.

James's first supernatural tale is "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes", published in 1868. Both the title and the opening sentence clearly place the tale in the romantic mode.

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. One could readily imagine this sentence preceded by "once upon a time", and, indeed, the sudden appearance of a vengeful ghost at the end of the story makes it very much akin to a fairy story, recalling James's own view of a connection between fairy tales and ghost stories. The romantic character of the tale is developed further in James's choice of names for the two sisters, Rosalind and Perdita - the latter, appropriately enough, loses her life though, ironically, she defeats Rosalind in the end.

---

10 "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" was first published in the Atlantic Monthly, February 1868. The story concerns two sisters' jealousy in love with the same man who marries the younger sister. She dies in childbirth and then he marries the older sister who has clearly shown herself indispensable to her little niece. She is, however, still jealous of her dead sister's memory and covets her gowns, locked away in keeping for the little girl. Upon persuading her husband to let her have the gowns, rather than keeping them as he vowed to do, she is struck down by a dreadful avenging spirit.

11 Supernatural Stories, p.4.

Basically the tale reflects the author's youthful reading. The "ten hideous wounds from the two vengeful ghostly hands" suggest tales of gothic horror, like those of Edgar Allan Poe. James appropriately constructs the setting and atmosphere to suit the events. The night that Rosalind discovers Perdita's engagement to Mr. Lloyd was "a gray December evening; the landscape was bare and bleak, and the sky heavy with snow clouds". Before Lloyd goes to discover the now dead Rosalind, he pauses apprehensively:

The thought gave him a strange feeling of discomfort, and he bade his servants remain behind, wishing no witness in his quest.

In contrast to this type of romantic contrivance, however, James provides some very realistic details, in keeping with his later insistence, in his biography of Hawthorne, that reality was essential if a supernatural tale were to be taken seriously. The appearance of both Rosalind and Perdita is vividly presented, including a characteristically humorous note on the former being quite unlike Shakespeare's Rosalind, as She would never have put on a man's jacket and hose; and indeed, being a very plump beauty, she may have had reasons apart from her natural dignity.

Another feature that was to become well known to James's readers is the very deliberate and most appropriate choice of word. For example, James describes Rosalind, at her brother-in-law's, as "marching" off to bed; it is as if she were waging war, which is precisely what she is doing.

---

13 Supernatural Stories, pp. 9, 10.
14 Ibid., p. 24.
15 Hawthorne, p. 52.
16 Supernatural Stories, p. 6
- war against the memory of her dead sister. By the time that James wrote "The Altar of the Dead" (1895), his handling of language had developed so that the choice of words and images is a fully integrated part of the theme itself. Here in "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" is an early indication of what is to come.

One of the most important features of the tales is James's use of "tone" to convey an uneasy nuance to what nearly approaches a natural situation. Perdita on her death-bed reflects:

She trusted her husband very nearly as much as she loved him; but now that she was called away forever she felt a cold horror of her sister. She felt in her soul that Rosalind had never ceased to be jealous of her good fortune; and a year of happy security had not effaced the young girl's image, dressed in her wedding-garments, and smiling with simulated triumph.17

There has been no suggestion in the narrative that the Lloyds have been anything but happily married. Nor has attention been drawn to continued rivalry between the sisters after Perdita's marriage. Suddenly, this slight suggestion of Perdita's fear of her sister raises new doubts. It is this careful play of tone which James eventually exploits to its disturbing best.

"The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" is plainly a work of James's apprenticeship. It reflects his early reading of Hawthorne's romances and gothic novels. The supernatural element is a ghostly spirit - pure and simple - a very rare form of ghost for James. But the tone and irony in the tale anticipate the manner he would develop in later works.

17 Ibid., p. 17.
In his next two supernatural stories, "A Problem" and "De Grey: A Romance", both published in 1868, James employs a similar device, the resolution of a prophecy or curse. "A Problem" is the less interesting of the two as it has a very contrived plot, depending solely on coincidence and the gullible characters of Emma and David. It is difficult to imagine two people being estranged by the words of fortune-tellers. However, their behaviour may be merely a reflection of James's own immaturity as a story-teller. This is, after all, only his tenth published tale.

In the story, he moves from the position of omniscient to first-person narrator, a position which gives greater credibility to the narrative and enables the author to more carefully direct the reader's vision. The reader will see that Emma was a simple unsophisticated person, and that her married life was likely to be made up of small joys and vexations. Here the reader is consciously aware that he is being directed to see Emma in a certain way. In his later works, James becomes much more subtle, placing his narrators within the plot itself so that the reader is drawn in to view the actions and feelings from within, rather than from without. Naturally the unusual seems much more believable if it relates more intimately to us.

18 "A Problem" first appeared in the Galaxy, June 1868. It deals with a newly married couple to whom an old Indian prophesies that their daughter will die young. In addition, they each have had separate prophecies that they both will marry twice. Their daughter does die and in a sense they do both marry twice since jealousy over their respective destinies temporarily separates them until they are reunited after the death of their daughter.

"A Problem" is of interest mainly as a minor step forward in James's technical development. He himself considered it of little consequence and excluded it from later collections of his tales.

"De Grey: A Romance" is, however, a much subtler treatment of the curse theme. Here James develops the reader's understanding of the nature of the family curse by insinuation rather than by the very obvious fortune "telling" of the old Indian woman in "A Problem".

The earliest implication that something is amiss is deliberately left very vague:

But it is certain that there hung over Mrs. De Grey's history and circumstances a film, as it were, a shadow of mystery, which struck a chill upon imaginations which might easily have been kindled into envy of her good fortune. 'She lives in the dark,' ...

This is quickly followed by a contradictory impression of Mrs. De Grey:

"She was troubled with no fears ...", insuring both confusion and curiosity in the reader. Another hint of mystery and possible danger is sounded by Father Herbert when Mrs. De Grey discusses with him the possibility of acquiring a young female companion, in spite of her son's

20 "De Grey: A Romance" first appeared in the Atlantic Monthly, July 1868. Margaret, young companion to widow De Grey whose son Paul is abroad, falls in love with Paul on his return to America. They plan to marry in spite of the family priest's warning to Margaret that the De Grey curse, cast upon all the first loves of the De Grey men, will kill her. She ignores the curse and indeed lives, though Paul dies instead.

21 Suprernatural Stories, p. 29.

22 Ibid., p. 30.
eventual return. That Mrs. De Grey evidently does not believe the
danger felt by Father Herbert, merely heightens the mystery. That she
should continue in her disbelief even after her son's death, acting as
if the whole affair had a normal explanation, makes Paul's very abnormal
death all the more appalling. James seems to have discovered the eerie
effectiveness of employing the usual as a foil for the unusual.

It is in "De Grey," that we got the first indication of what
were to become James's mature beliefs about the supernatural, that be-
hind normal appearances there might be something menacing. Rarely
again is there as obvious a ghost as the one in "The Romance of Certain
Old Clothes". Henceforth, his extra reality is most often depicted so
subtly that the reader is conscious of something fearful without
necessarily being able to isolate the source of his fear.

And so hints about the family curse follow one another in quick
succession, perhaps too quickly, and are often heavily ironic, as in the
following instance. Margaret, on seeing a painting of a young woman in
Paul's room, prior to his homecoming, jealously asks about its subject.

---

23"You want a young girl then?"
'Yes some nice, fresh young girl, who would laugh once in a
while, and make a little music - a little sound in the house.'
'Well,' said Herbert, after reflecting a moment, 'You had
better suit yourself before Paul comes home. You have
only a year.'
'Dear me,' said Mrs. De Grey, 'I shouldn't feel myself
obliged to turn her out on Paul's account.'
Father Herbert looked at his companion with a penetrating
glance. 'Nevertheless, my dear lady,' he said, 'you know
what I mean.'
'O yes, I know what you mean - and you, Father Herbert, know
what I think.' "
Ibid., p. 34.
Mrs. De Grey casually replies that it was painted by her husband before she knew him. The young woman in question was someone he had known in Europe. Then James draws attention to an inscription in the corner of the painting, "obiit 1786". As Margaret is still unaware of the curse, she also cannot understand the Latin. The final twist is added when Mrs. De Grey translates the Latin, without, of course, believing the curse. Previous explanations about Father Herbert's background are suddenly illuminated in the light of this picture. Perhaps, this is the same woman over whom the priest and Paul's late father had originally quarrelled. She also seems to be connected with the family curse - but the connection is still very tenuous and the reader continues to "wonder" just as James intended that he should.

In the best dramatic manner, James provides misleading relief to the sinister fear and insinuations of Father Herbert. Paul becomes engaged to a European girl, subsequently breaks the engagement, and then writes saying that the girl has died. The priest's injunction to Mrs. De Grey to "thank God that we have been spared that hideous sight" suggests that they may indeed be able to forget the past, a past which is still very unclear to the reader. Thus, a seemingly normal existence is re-established, the final foil for the highly abnormal events at the end of the tale.

"De Grey: A Romance" is significant to James's development for two reasons. Firstly, it embodies the germs of his future beliefs about the supernatural, what he was later to call the "strange and sinister being embroidered on the very type of the normal and easy". Secondly, it

21 Art of the Novel, p.261.
indicates what was to become James's supernatural manner, in which he contrasted the usual with the unusual, by manipulating the reader's curiosity and fear through a tone developed by sinister hints and suggestions.25

In "The Last of the Valerii", 26 published in 1873, James makes a major change in his method of narration. By presenting the entire story through the consciousness of a single character within the plot, rather than through an omniscient narrator as in the earlier supernatural tales, he creates a feeling of immediacy, of greater reality.

25 It is interesting to observe the influence of Hawthorne's "Rappaccini's Daughter" (1834) on "De Grey". Paul contemplates Margaret's increasing beauty in a way most suggestive of the deadly plant in Rappaccini's garden. "He had bent to pluck this pallid flower of sunless household growth; he had dipped its slender stem in the living waters of his love, and lo! it had lifted its head, and spread its petals, and brightened into splendid purple and green. This glowing potency of loveliness filled him with a tremor which was almost a foreboding." (Supernatural Stories, p. 58) Just as Rappaccini's daughter, Beatrice, who tends the deadly purple and green plant in her father's garden, is also deadly to her lover Giovanni, so Margaret, who, as she daily thrives in health and beauty, gradually destroys Paul's life. And just as Giovanni eventually feels repulsion for Beatrice, so Paul too ceases to love Margaret as she herself notes. "Worse than all was the suspicion that he had begun to dislike her, and that a dim perception of her noxious influence had already taken possession of his senses." (Supernatural Stories, p. 65.)

26 "The Last of the Valerii" first appeared in the Atlantic Monthly, January 1874. The tale concerns a young American girl who marries the Italian Count Valerio and then proceeds, in spite of her husband's objections, to excavate the Villa Valerio gardens in search of archaeological remains. A statue of the goddess Juno is resurrected and the Count seems not only to become obsessed with the statue but also to revert to pagan Roman worship. The Countess finally has the statue reburied in the hope of bringing her husband back to normal reality. The tale is the first of the supernatural stories to be set outside New England, and could thus, in a sense, be considered as one of the early examples of the international theme which James was to develop more fully in subsequent fiction.
James may have been influenced here by Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* in which the story is told through the mind of Miles Coverdale. However, I think, it unlikely that James, with his persistent desire to experiment, would not have attempted this form of narration without the specific example of another writer. From his earliest apprenticeship as a writer, James was conscious of the need to convince his readers, to draw them into his world of imagination. In this tale, though, we are still very conscious that the narrator, the Countess's godfather, is directing our vision, as he conveys his own impressions of Count Valerio.

He had little of the light, inexpressive urbanity of his countrymen, and there was a kind of stupid sincerity in his gaze; it seemed to suspend response until he was sure he understood you. He was certainly a little dense, and I fancied that to a political or aesthetic question the response would be particularly slow.27

In his later tales, such as "The Private Life", James would use his internal narrators more skillfully, to manipulate his reader without the latter being so aware of the process. The important point is that such a narrator can draw the reader into all the events, both the natural and the unnatural ones.

The most important feature of "The Last of the Valerii" as a supernatural tale, however, is James's attitude to the past which first appears during the course of this story. In his discussion of the tale, Edel claims that James is saying "that it is dangerous to exhume dormant primeval things - and that civilized man does well to keep the primitive side of his nature properly interred".28 It seems that the

27 *Supernatural Stories*, p. 71.
past is a possible source of evil - as was the De Grey curse. In "The Last of the Valerii", the legacy of the past is not the deadly evil that it was in "De Grey:"; but it is nevertheless extraordinary, and seems to lurk just behind what is assumed to be normal reality. The Count Valerio, for example, appears to be a handsome, fairly simple son of old Rome. But there are other aspects of his character which are curious and disturbing. He tells Martha and her godfather that: My poor old confesser long ago gave me up; he told me I was a good boy but a pagan.29

Later he is described as looking like a "statue of decadence". Strangely too, Martha's godfather wonders whether the count could have "anything that could properly be termed a soul". After the count becomes obsessed with his statue of Juno, and begins to disregard all demands of normal living, the godfather makes another suggestive observation:

The poor count became, to my imagination, a dark efflorescence of the evil germs which history had implanted in his line.30

And finally, the count himself warns the old man:

... don't set a priest at me, if you value his sanity! My confession would frighten the poor man out of his wits.31

---

29 Ibid., p. 74.
30 Ibid., p. 83.
31 Ibid., p. 90.
The relation between the past and the present was something to which James returned in later supernatural stories, most notably in "The Altar of the Dead" and "The Jolly Corner", which will be discussed in the second and third chapters respectively. But, I think, James's feeling about the past is perhaps suggested in Count Valerio's own initial reluctance to resurrect the old marble gods and goddesses.

"Yes, by Bacchus, I am superstitious! he [Count Valerio] cried. "Too much so, perhaps! But I'm an old Italian, and you must take me as you find me. There have been things seen and done here which leave strange influences behind! ... I can't bear to look the statues in the face. I seem to see other strange eyes in the empty sockets, and I hardly know what they say to me. I call the poor old statues ghosts." 32

The Count's rather tenuous peace of mind is restored only when his wife removes the marble Juno. Unlike George Stransom in "The Altar of the Dead", or Spencer Brydon in "The Jolly Corner", Count Valerio is unable to come to terms with his sense of the past and has to be forcibly brought back to the present. But he never becomes, as Martha's godfather notes, "a thoroughly modern man". It seems that James feels that the complete man needs to be aware of the past as well as the present, for the past is often that extra reality which is beyond and behind normal existence.

---

32Supernatural Stories, pp. 79-80.
"The Ghostly Rental" appearing in 1876, assembles the various aspects of James's development to this point. It is very different from the first supernatural story, "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes". The latter is simply a ghost story, with a spirit, appearing at the end, who wrecks vengeance on the characters. "The Ghostly Rental", however, is both a story about a "haunted" house and a study of Captain Diamond's responsibility for his own haunted state. Even "The Last of the Valerius" does not approach "The Ghostly Rental" in psychological depth. Though we watch with wonder at the strange behaviour of the characters at Villa Valerio, we are never taken into their minds as we are into the thoughts and feelings of the people in the later tale. Here we see for the first time, James taking a very traditional idea - for what could be more conventional than a haunted house - and using it in a very personal way, to comment on human behaviour.

James may have quite deliberately chosen the well known theme of a haunted house. Edel claims that James wrote the story in order to make money to pay his rent and therefore it had to be a story to which

---

33 "The Ghostly Rental" was published in the Scribner's Monthly, September 1876. It concerns an old sea-captain who has had to abandon his house to the ghost of his daughter, for whose death he was apparently responsible. The ghost pays quarterly rent to the captain, a custom which fascinates a young theology student who becomes the captain's friend and actually collects the final payment for the captain when the latter is dying. The student discovers the ghost is in fact the captain's daughter, still alive. The captain dies and comes himself to haunt both the house and its original ghostly occupant.

34 Supernatural Stories, p. 103.
the buying public would be likely to respond. However, Edel also points out that this is a very Jamesian haunted house when he says:

... in all James's work, the image of the house represents the life within it— and the 'spiritual blight' of this particular house is resolved into human terms of the struggle of a father and daughter. In the end we have a foreshadowing of one of James's most powerful forms of the occult: the haunter becomes the haunted.\(^{35}\)

By representing the inner life of the characters in the tale, the house becomes almost another character in the same way that Ely, in "The Turn of the Screw", is more than simply background for that story. In "The Ghostly Rental", the house and surroundings are described almost as if they were animate, underlining their character roles in the tale. The orchard "wears" an aspect which is "exhausted". The house itself looks "blank" and "vacant" and yet it has an "audible eloquence".\(^{36}\) The student who acts as the narrator, concludes that the house has been "spiritually blighted". Both the captain and the house suffer from the same decay: one could almost say that the man is the house. This "man-house" is obviously very different from the "ghost-houses" of gothic novels.

The "blight" of "The Ghostly Rental" results from the old Captain's unwillingness to accept his daughter's lover. In a sense,

\(^{35}\)Ibid., p. 103.

\(^{36}\)"Behind the house stretched an orchard of apple-trees, more gnarled and fantastic than usual, and wearing, in the deepening dusk, a blighted and exhausted aspect .... There was no sign of life about it; it looked blank, bare and vacant, and yet, as I lingered near it it seemed to have a familiar meaning - an audible eloquence." Supernatural Stories, p. 108.
Captain Diamond, like Count Valerio, has been unable to reconcile his past with his present and therefore has had to leave his house. He has never forgiven his daughter, and so is, like his house, spiritually empty.

Skillfully, James draws in the sceptical reader. The narrator, as most of us would, insists that he does not believe in ghosts. But as he looks at the house he ponders that "... there was nothing on the face of the matter to warrant the very serious induction that I made."

Again, James's developing attitude emerges; behind the apparently natural, there may be something else. Suddenly the student is convinced: "The house is simply haunted." From this point on, the usual theme of the haunted house takes an interesting turn. It no longer is a matter of establishing the existence of the ghost, but rather the nature of, the reasons for, the ghost. This variation is particularly important; the ghost is in fact evoked by Captain Diamond's actions and feelings. This same type of haunter, a reflection of the particular state of the haunted, appears again and again in James's later works - the haunting is intimately, and psychologically, related to the haunted, as for instance, in "The Jolly Corner". James's view of the supernatural becomes clearer.

37 "Half an hour before, if I had been asked, I would have said, as befitted a young man who was explicitly cultivating cheerful views of the supernatural, that there were no such things as haunted houses." Supernatural Stories, p. 108.

38 Ibid., p. 108.
in this respect; the extraordinary, the spiritual side of life, is closely related to ordinary existence.

The appearance of the ghost itself is equally skillfully described to cause "wonder" in the reader. Vague suggestions are left suspended as to whether the apparition is actually a ghost at all, when the student observes a "familiar motion" in the spirit's hands. The situation has been suddenly reversed. From a narrator who refuses to believe in ghosts, we now have the same man convinced of their existence but questioning the authenticity of this particular spirit.

The final twist James gives to the "wonder" of the tale is to be seen in the many unanswered questions that are left with the reader - a device he fully exploits in "The Turn of the Screw". The dying Captain warns the student to be polite and respectful with the ghost when the latter collects the rent: "If not I shall know it", he said very gravely. But the student, while confronting the ghost, realises that it is a woman, and tears off the veil. Suddenly, the Captain's own ghost is in the hallway to pursue the original haunter. How much connection exists between these two events? The answer is never clear, but

---

39 "It looked down at me for an instant, after which one of the hands was raised again, slowly, and waved to and fro before it. There was something very singular, in this gesture; it seemed to denote resentment and dismissal, and yet it had a sort of trivial, familiar motion."

Ibid., pp. 130-131.

And again: "Granted that the apparition was Captain Diamond's daughter; if it was she it certainly was her spirit. But was it not her spirit and something more?"

Ibid., p. 132.

14 Ibid., p. 136.
the suggestions are indeed curious.

'Oh, Heavens, I have seen his ghost!' she cried. She still held my arm; she seemed too terrified to release it. 'His ghost!' I echoed, wondering. 'It's the punishment of my long folly!' she went on. 'Ah,' said I, 'it's the punishment of my indiscretion - of my violence!'

There are many other similar question marks: Was the Captain's daughter ever married? Does she ever know with certainty that her father died that evening?

In its complex view of the spiritual side of life, the use of an internal narrator, lively characterization, and subtle irony and suggestion, "The Ghostly Rental" climaxes the tales of the first phase and anticipates those of the second. James was to repeat all of these features during the second period of his ghostly tales, when he wrote nine stories in as many years. The chief importance of these early tales lies in their differences. The earliest, "A Problem" and "The Romance of Old Clothes", are James's tentative experiments with the traditional supernatural mode; "De Grey: A Romance" illustrates his early attempts at successful ambiguity. In "The Last of the Valerii" and "The Ghostly Rental", James comes closest to what would be his mature treatment of the ordinary as a foil for the extraordinary, reflected in the mind of an intelligent and sensitive person. James was essentially an acute observer and portrayer of people; he was interested in external circumstances only in so far as these affected the minds of his characters. The ghostly event perme came to have little interest for him as the rest of his supernatural tales clearly show.

41 Ibid., p. 138.
CHAPTER II

In Volume Two of his biography of James, Edel makes this observation:

The writer of thirty-one who sat in his large, shabby room in the Piazza Santa Maria Novella during the Florentine spring of 1874, working on his first important novel, was quite different from the troubled Henry James of four years before who had hurriedly written Watch and Ward and hoped it would make his name in American literature. He had passed through a long period of self-searching among his kinsfolk and his fellow-Americans; he had returned to Europe to recover the emotions of his original 'wanderjahre', and he had sharpened his pen by constant exercise and publication not only of tales but of articles based upon personal experience and observations. 1

1874 also saw the publication of "The Last of the Valerii" followed two years later by "The Ghostly Rental"; but it was not until 1891 that James published "Sir Edmund Orme", the next of his supernatural stories.

During the intervening seventeen years he acquired both skill and confidence, publishing eleven novels 2 and thirty-six tales. James had clearly become an established writer of note known to many of the contemporary English and European writers whose approbation provided the encouragement so beneficial to the young author. From Turgenev in particular, James received conviction about his own craft; for, like

---


2 These novels were Watch and Ward (1871), Roderick Hudson (1875), The American (1877), The Europeans (1878), Confidence (1879), Washington Square (1880), The Portrait of a Lady (1881), The Bostonians (1886), The Princess Casamassima (1891), The Re leverator (1893), and The Tragic Muse (1890).
James, Turgenev began with the character and then moved outward to the situation. For James, the lives of his characters became the all important thing - the way in which they thought and felt and reacted to their situations. Quentin Anderson explains James's craft this way:

What has not taken on form as a meaning for somebody, what has not been dealt with by someone's intellect, is not material for James's art because it cannot manifest life. The power of art is simply an exaggeration of the power of life to create form. Or to reverse the emphasis, the power of art is that it strips life of excrement and waste; the pure energies of life cannot manifest themselves except as art.

When in 1891 James returned to the supernatural tale, it was to examine the "meaning" a character derived from something. While the ghostly or supernatural mode is for most writers merely a device for telling a tale, it is for James another way of looking at life; another method of telescoping an additional aspect of reality, of creating art from life. In this sense, then, James's purpose in his supernatural tales is not essentially different from that in his non-

---

3 In his biography of James, Edel points out that:
"As Henry put it, Turgenev was trying to suggest the intensity of suggestion that may reside in the stray figure, the unattached character, the disposable personage, and how, starting with such a figure, he invented and selected and pieced together 'the situations most useful and favorable to the sense of the creatures themselves'. And Henry could say, years later: 'I have not lost the sense of the value for me, at the time, of the admirable Russian's testimony.'

4 C. Anderson, p. 33.
supernatural fictions. It is with this clearly in mind that I intend to examine the supernatural tales of the second and third phases.

These tales all deal with people who are indeed 'haunted' but not in the conventional sense; and here there are no 'vengeful ghostly hands' as there were in "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes". This is not to say that the hauntings are without a sense of evil as in the early romance, but rather that they suggest that the possibility of evil, and its effect on men, seems to lurk within themselves; that behind the calm exterior of a man's appearance there may be another dimension of reality, every bit as real, and possibly much more powerful and frightening, than normal empirical existence.

R.F. Blackmur makes a significant remark when he says:

... ghosts were invariably the hallucinated apparitions of the obsessions that governed or threatened, or as we say haunted the men and women whose stories he told. The ghost was the projected form of either a felt burden or an inner need. If the burden could be lifted or the need satisfied the ghost would be laid. But there are some burdens that, once felt, cannot be lifted, as there are some needs that it would be fatal to satisfy; and from these come familiar spirits, ghosts that are quite unlayable and become virtually our other selves. In one guise or another, they are the meaning that pursues us or is beyond us, drawing their shapes and habits from these parts of our imagination which are not occupied by the consciousness but which rather besiege the consciousness in all its dark environs. Thus where the siege is successful, there is an apparition, and the invaded mind becomes deranged, obsessed, or driven, as the case may be, though sometimes, too, it may be ordered, freed, or guided, which is the case when instead of embodying our apparitions we call them insight, intuition or leading ideas. That there may be combinations of the two kinds, made in the underside of the mind, is a splendid imaginative possibility to the artist bent on expressing all his inarticulable knowledge of life in symbolic form. Whatever the logic of the matter was, such was James's practice.5

For James, the reality behind what seem to be natural or normal appearances contains "knowledge of life" - there is "meaning" and truth in our "other selves". His ghosts can be seen as a way of rendering dramatically very subjective experience. The ghost story then becomes as much a convention for James, as it was for Poe; but in James the convention is being used for a profound moral purpose rather than for a chilling tale.

The important point is that all of James's fictions should be seen in the same framework and that both novels and tales are essentially concerned with the meaning reflected by someone's intellect. Significantly, only the tales and not the novels are peopled by apparitions; only in the shorter works does James use this 'ghostly' convention to objectify experience. The reason for this seems to be a matter of technique. In a short story the writer must focus quickly on his central idea, whereas in the novel, he may slowly accumulate details to create a broad picture from which his central theme will gradually emerge. In order to present in a novel a character obsessed with an idea or feeling, James could dramatize many situations where the character's reactions and emotions would illustrate his haunted emotional state. But the economy of the short tale calls for considerably less detail, and one possible solution is to present the obsession - the "felt burden" - in terms of an actual ghostly presence as in "Sir Edmund Orme", or in terms of an extra real situation where the strange atmosphere will suggest a supernatural existence. Thus James's ghosts are employed to illustrate economically and dramatically his personal vision of reality. He adapted an old literary mode
for his own particular purposes. Men have told ghost stories around
the fire for centuries; it is surely no accident that "The Turn of the
Screw", begins in precisely this manner.

It is equally important to note at this point how James himself
felt about many of his supernatural tales. In the Preface to The Altar
of the Dead, referring to "The Jolly Corner", "The Friends of the
Friends", "Owen Wingrave", "Sir Edmund Orme" and "The Real Right Thing",
he remarks that they:

...would obviously never have existed but for that love of 'a story as
a story' which had from far back beset and beguiled their author.\(^6\)

He continues in the same vein:

He has revelled in the creation of alarm and suspense and surprise and
relief, in all the arts that practise, with a scruple for nothing but
any lapse of application, con the credulous soul of the candid or,
immeasurably better, on the seasoned spirit of the cunning, reader.\(^7\)

and later adds:

The moving accident, the rare conjunction, whatever it be, doesn't make
the story - in the sense that the story is our excitement, our amusement,
our thrill and our suspense; the human emotion and the human attesta-
tion; the clustering human conditions we expect presented, only make
it.\(^8\)

Clearly, James wrote these tales for the delight of approaching the
"clustering human conditions" in a way in which he hoped to catch the
"seasoned spirit of the cunning reader". What better way than by
surprising the reader with something extraordinary when he does not
expect it - causing him to wonder to the end of the tale so that he
cannot put down the book. Surely, this is the essence of a good story.

---

\(^6\) Art of the Novel, p. 252.

\(^7\) Ibid., p. 253.

\(^8\) Ibid., p. 257.
I make this point in opposition to the many psychological interpretations of these tales, which suggest that James was "working out" his own emotional problems as he wrote. I think the Notebooks and the Prefaces make it quite clear that this was not his intention. I hope to show that Henry James was first and foremost a storyteller.

With James's purpose clearly in mind, I propose to discuss the tales of the second and third phases, firstly, as they show James's observations of, in Blackmur's words, "the underside of the mind". Secondly, I wish to examine James's individual technical treatment of the supernatural mode. Naturally, these two considerations are not mutually exclusive and I will necessarily move freely from one to the other. Because of their concentration in the second phase - nine tales published in nine years - I will group some of the tales for discussion rather than follow a strict chronological pattern.

"Sir Edmund Orme", published in 1891, provides an interesting opening for this second period. Although it did not appear until fifteen years after "The Ghostly Rental", there are some suggestive

9 Leon Edel's introduction to The Ghostly Tales of Henry James contains one of several biographical-psychological interpretations of the tales of the second and third phases.

10 "Sir Edmund Orme" first appeared in Black and White, Christmas number, November 25, 1891. A young woman, Charlotte Furden, is haunted without her knowledge by the ghost of her mother's rejected suitor who killed himself in grief over his unrequited love. The ghost is finally dispelled when Charlotte agrees to marry the man who truly loves her. Strangely enough, her mother, the source of all the ghostly anguish, dies as soon as Charlotte has accepted her lover.
similarities between the two which seem to indicate the direction of James's developing attitude to the supernatural mode. In both tales, the apparition is seen by both the main visitant, and by one other person who acts as confidant. In the case of "The Ghostly Rental", of course, the confidant-narrator discovers the identity of the ghost and eventually plays a definite role in the action when he collects the rent for the Captain. Now, a similar process can be seen in "Sir Edmund Orme" where the narrator begins as confidant to the persecuted Mrs. Marden, and then gradually assumes a greater role in the action until, by marrying Charlotte, he literally rescues her from the ghost. It is the effect of this gradual development, from narrator to actor, which makes the point significant. By presenting a "normal" young man as narrator of each of the tales, James establishes credibility in his account; and the situation he describes seems, initially at any rate, to be quite commonplace. The reader is gradually drawn into the setting, and when suddenly the extraordinary is superimposed on the ordinary, the impact is quite naturally intensified; just as the brilliance of contrasting colours is sharpened by their opposition. This effect is noticeably stronger in "Sir Edmund Orme" than in "The Ghostly Rental".

11 In "The Ghostly Rental", the theology student is confident to Captain Diamond to whom the ghost, actually his living daughter, appears. In "Sir Edmund Orme", the nameless narrator becomes confidant to Mrs. Marden and also sees the ghost which haunts her daughter.
Though James claimed to remember nothing about the origin of this tale, he did say that the treatment of such a theme against a Brighton background owed its leading interest to "the strange and sinister" being "embroidered on the very type of the normal and easy".\textsuperscript{12} The "normal and easy" atmosphere of "Sir Edmund Orme" is carefully constructed. The tale is prefaced with an explanatory note by an unknown third party which begins:

The statement appears to have been written, though the fragment is undated, long after the death of his wife, whom I take to have been one of the persons referred to.\textsuperscript{13}

Because this opening statement has such an authoritative legal sound, the reader unconsciously settles back to the rest of the tale expecting further, factual, reliable evidence. The setting is Brighton -- as real a place as the characters are believable. In this apparently normal setting the subtle suggestions of something a little unnatural, such as Mrs. Marden's very emotional reaction to the narrator's suggestion that her daughter, Charlotte, is a coquette and her insistence that nice girls are punished for their coquetry, almost passes the reader's notice -- on the initial reading.

The narrator himself comes to accept unusual circumstances in such a matter-of-fact manner, that the reader, who sees the events through the narrator's eyes, is equally acquiescent. For example,

\textsuperscript{12}Art of the Novel, p. 261.
\textsuperscript{13}Supernatural Stories, p. 142.
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., pp. 145-146.
following his initial meeting with Sir Edmund Orme, the narrator thinks of him as 'one of us'. Referring to the spirit's most disdainful manner, he remarks:

Sir Edmund Orme never blushed, and I was sure no embarrassment touched him. One had met people of that sort, but never anyone with such a high indifference.15

The narrator has evidently come to regard Sir Edmund as human rather than ghostly, and it is not until he realizes later that Charlotte didn't see the 'ghost' that he feels a "sudden sharp shake". To him, the visitor had seemed quite natural, so natural in fact, that he becomes more comfortable with Sir Edmund's presence than without it.16 When Charlotte is with him, Sir Edmund actually increases his composure.17

Now one of the narrator's functions is to guide the understanding of the reader. By presenting a single viewpoint on the events of the tale, the author manipulates his readers to interpret the events as the narrator himself does. We are, so to speak, given a single aperture through which to view the proceedings, and our vision is thereby carefully circumscribed. What the narrator thinks and feels is what we will, to a certain extent, think and feel as well.

Thus we almost come to accept Sir Edmund Orme as a natural phenomenon, until the final scene where Mrs. Marden quickly and mysteriously dies at the same moment as Charlotte agrees to marry the narrator.

15 Ibid., p. 156.
16 Ibid., p. 157.
17 Ibid., p. 161.
All this is watched, as if being supervised, by Sir Edmund's ghostly presence and the room echoes with Mrs. Harden's final cry -- like a "wail of one of the lost".\(^{18}\) As the reader is suddenly confronted with this frightening death, it is no longer such a 'natural' matter. We know that something very sinister has clouded the sunshine of Brighton, and we are left pondering the narrator's query about Mrs. Harden's last moments: was it "the despairing cry of the poor lady's death shock or the articulate sob (it was like a waft from a great storm) of the exorcised and pacified spirit"?\(^{19}\) Sir Edmund Orme quickly becomes a menacing spirit after all, and in retrospect all his previous appearances seem much more disquieting.

It is this contrast between the "sinister" and the "normal" that James repeatedly employs. Dramatically, it is very effective; but it has another purpose as well.

In "Sir Edmund Orme", the ghost walks because of Mrs. Harden's youthful cruelty and resulting guilt. Her "other self"\(^{20}\) is obsessed with her past action, just as Captain Diamond was "haunted" by his guilt over his rejection of his daughter. And so what appear at first to be ghost stories become moral comments on the way in which these people see or feel about their own lives. Both the Captain and Mrs. Harden suffer extreme anguish -- he for his past actions and she for her fear that Charlotte will suddenly "see" the ghost who haunts

\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 172.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 173.

\(^{20}\) See Blackmur's passage quoted above.
her steps. In a sense, they both seem to be paying for their past lives. In Blackmur's words, the apparitions are indeed "felt burdens.

It is the remarkable way in which both the "ghostly" and the "psychological" aspects are combined that makes James's tales so significant. There is no doubt that he was deliberate in this intention.

About "Owen Wingrave", he says:

It is a question of a little subject for the Graphic - so I mustn't make it 'psychological' - they understand that no more than a donkey understands a violin.21

Both "Owen Wingrave" and "Sir Edmund Orme" appeared in Christmas issues of two different periodicals. We know that James was commissioned to do the former for this seasonal issue, and possibly was also commissioned for the latter. That they are both tales for Christmas serials, for a wide reading public, might account for the presence of a more traditional "ghost" in both tales. Sir Edmund is vividly described22 appearing and disappearing as a ghost might be expected to do; and the Wingrave haunter seems to be known to, and felt by, everyone in the house. Yet, in spite of the "pot boiling" character of these

---

21. Notebooks, p. 119. "Owen Wingrave" first appeared in the Graphic, November 28, 1892. It concerns a young man, Owen, whose family is determined that he should have a military career, while he wants to be a man of peace. He leaves his military tutor and returns to the Wingrave family seat for a showdown where he is, naturally, considered cowardly; and is dared by his intended fiancée to sleep in a bedroom haunted by a Wingrave ancestor. He does so, and is discovered dead.

22. Supernatural Stories, p. 156.
tales, the sensitive reader clearly sees James's other intentions. The title itself is significant, for Owen is an old Scottish name meaning young soldier. Thus it becomes "a young soldier wins his grave". Owen is indeed a young soldier, but instead of following the family tradition of his grandfather, Sir Philip, who is described as a "merciless old man of blood", he champions, and finally dies for his belief in the right to choose his own way of life. The final sentence clearly makes this point.

Owen Wingrave, dressed as he had last seen him, lay dead on the spot on which his ancestor had been found. He was all the young soldier on the gained field.

Owen's determination and commitment to his cause, ironically, make him very much a Wingrave, a point his tutor perceives as he discusses the boy with the Wingrave aunt. James is characteristically subtle, and at the same time critical, about this same Aunt Jane, thus leading the reader to be equally critical of the woman. The boy's tutor, Spencer

---

23 In the Notebooks James writes of "Owen Wingrave": "Even if one could introduce a supernatural element in it - make it, I mean, a little ghost-story; place it, the scene, in some old country-house in England at the beginning of the present century - the time of the Napoleonic wars. - It seems to me one might make some 'haunting' business that would give it a colour without being ridiculous, and get in that way the sort of pressure to which the young man is subjected." p. 120.

24 Supernatural Stories, p. 322.

25 Ibid., p. 352.

26 Ibid., p. 326.
Coyle, asks Owen's room-mate whether he knows the aunt and the latter replies, "Oh yes. Isn't she awful?"

Spencer's following comment is important.

She's formidable, if you mean that, and it's right she should be; because somehow in her very person, good maiden lady as she is, she represents the might, she represents the traditions and the exploits of the British army. She represents the expansive property of the English name.27

But Lechmere, Owen's room-mate, had said, "Isn't she awful?", and her father has been described as a "merciless old man of blood". Small wonder that Owen rejects his family's bloody tradition. Even Spencer Coyle, his tutor, begins to question a military career ...

... he was made to shudder a little at the profession of which he helped to open the door to otherwise harmless young men.28

The tale quickly becomes a struggle between opposite forces, as the Wingrave family unite against their young kinsman. The Wingraves can be considered collectively as a villain who persecutes Owen for his peaceful ideals. The struggle between good and evil is the essence of melodrama and "Sir Owen Wingrave" is swathed in a melodramatic atmosphere. The Wingrave house is diffused with a "sinister gloom";29 Spencer Coyle feels that strange voices mutter and family portraits seem to glower at him as he passes.30 As with so many other aspects of James's craft, there are two reasons for his use of the melodramatic form. Firstly, it

27 Ibid., p. 320.
28 Ibid., p. 324.
29 Ibid., p. 332.
30 Ibid., p. 336.
is dramatically effective, the contrast between good and evil standing out with a force similar to James's deliberate contrasting of the "sinister" with the "natural". But secondly, and perhaps more importantly, is the focus that such a contrast brings to James's own vision. For him, the forces of good and evil were viable realities; evil was a definite power, within and without the soul of man. This belief, together with his deep interest in drama, naturally led him to use the principle of melodrama.

Folk tales and fairy tales often tend to be melodramatic; it has been noted earlier that James responded to the "wonder" of these genres. It is, therefore, not surprising that melodrama is part also of his own special form of fairy tales. Jacques Barzun, I think, makes an important observation when he says that:

The paradox of James's way, with melodramatic materials, is that he seems to conceive with an exaggeration necessary for 'straight' effects and then to submerge the felt enormity, and illuminations as well, but above

\[31\text{Although unsuccessful as a playwright, James wrote several plays; the two most not able being the dramatized version of his novel, The American and Guy Deaville.}\]

\[32\text{It is interesting that the dramatic possibilities of "Sir Owen Wingrave" are still readily apparent. Benjamin Britten, a noted British composer, has recently produced an operatic version of the tale. Although it was considered to be less successful than his previous score for "The Turn of the Screw", it was nevertheless well received. The Sunday Times, May 16, 1971, p. 31.}\]

\[33\text{See Introduction}\]
all lifelike in their haphazard discovery and disconnected sequence. At times the dimming effect of detail is purposely left incomplete, and soft and harsh are given us side by side, as it were to show us that the beast is not in the jungle but in the drawing room.34

The beast is certainly in the drawing room of Paramore - as it will be at Bly, and in "The Beast In The Jungle". "Owen Wingrave" is significant, I think, for James's use in it of a basically simple idea, and a traditional haunted house to create a tale with a definite moral statement.

There are in this second phase four tales which, I think, should be considered together as they each concern a different aspect of the same theme - that of the other self, the alter ego. These are "Nona Vincent" (1882),35 "The Private Life" (1892),36 "Sir Dominic Ferrand"

34. J. Barzun, "Henry James, Melodramatist", The Question of Henry James, p. 259.

35. Nona Vincent first appeared in the English Illustrated Magazine, February-March, 1832. It concerns a young playwright, Wayworth, whose stage heroine is unable to fully grasp the role of Nona until she is visited by his friend and confidante Mrs. Alsager. At the same time as the latter is with the actress, Wayworth is himself visited by a ghostly female figure who seems to be the role he has created. After these visits the actress portrays Nona to perfection.

36. "The Private Life" was first published in the Atlantic Monthly, April 1892, and deals essentially with the characters of two men; one Lord Nellifont, who is so much the perfect public figure that he has no private life - he literally disappears when removed from the public eye; and the other, Clare Vaudrey, a playwright, whose plays, the result of his private life, suggest an entirely different sort of man than the public sees. He seems to have a ghostly writer as his other self.
(1892),37 and "The Real Right Thing" (1899).38 In addition to their thematic similarities, all these tales have factual, or biographical, connections with James himself. Although I have previously stated my intention to avoid the biographical approach, in the case of these four tales, some reference to the author's own life is, I think, unavoidable. The young dramatist of "Nona Vincent", who longs to have his play produced, is too strongly suggestive of James himself at the time39 to go unnoticed. A notebook entry of August 3, 1891, clearly accounts for a factual source for "The Private Life".

- the idea of rolling into one story the little conceit of the private identity of a personage suggested by P.L., and that of a personage suggested by R.B., is of course a rank fantasy ... It must be very brief - very light - very vivid.40

37"Sir Dominic Ferrand" first appeared under the title "Jersey Villas" in Cosmopolitan Magazine, July-August, 1892; and describes the mental conflict of a penniless young writer who discovers some very personal but incriminating letters of a late notable figure, Sir Dominic Ferrand. If the letters were to be published the young man would undoubtedly grow wealthy, but the late man's reputation would be ruined. The writer's conflict is further complicated by an extremely sensitive young woman who, though she knows nothing about the papers, wants him to destroy them. Very strangely, she turns out to be the illegitimate daughter of the late Sir Dominic.

38"The Real Right Thing" was first published in Collier's Weekly, December 16, 1899. A fairly simple tale, it concerns a young man requested by the widow of a late author to write her husband's biography. At first the young man feels the ghostly presence of his subject as a reassuring positive force; but gradually he feels that the presence does not want him to continue with the task. The question is whether, in all good faith, he is, after all, doing the right thing.

39See Leon Edel's, Henry James The Middle Years, pp. 279-283.

40Notebooks, p. 110.
F.L. is Lord Fredrick Leighton, a noted Victorian painter and personality, whose posthumous reputation died almost as quickly as the man himself. R.B. is obviously Robert Browning whose prosaic personality James found incongruous with his poetry. The moral dilemma and anguish over the publication of letters in "Sir Dominic Ferrand" is strongly suggestive of James's own anxiety over the publication of the private papers of his sister, Alice, who died in 1892. And "The Real Right Thing" relates to this same question, for James was himself requested to write the biography of William Wetmore Story, a sculptor, but was apparently most reluctant to accept the commission. According to Edel, James's own opinion of Story was less laudable than that of the Story family, and he was unsure of how, in consideration of the family, he ought best to present the man.

However, it is not the biographical, factual connections by themselves which have significance, but rather the way in which James weaves a thought-provoking tale from such beginnings. "The Private Life" is, I think, the best of these and I will begin the discussion there.

---

42 Ibid., p. 551.
From his personal observations of Robert Browning\textsuperscript{43} and Lord Leighton,\textsuperscript{44} James created a situation in "The Private Life" where the dramatist, Clare Vavdrey, has another self - a ghostly figure who actually writes his plays. This "ghost-writer" is discovered by Blanche, an actress, to be far more interesting, far less prosaic, than the sociable Vavdrey appears to be. And in the same cast of characters is Lord Mellifont - the man who is socially perfect - with the most correct sentiments and appearance - but who actually seems to

\textsuperscript{43}In the Preface to The Altar of the Dead, James has a long note on the question of the double personality - apparently relating most closely to Robert Browning.

"... light had at last to break under pressure of the whimsical theory of two distinct and alternate presences, the assertion of either of which on any occasion directly involved the entire extinction of the other. This explained to the imagination the mystery: our delightful inconceivable celebrity was double, constructed in two quite distinct and 'water-tight' compartments - one of these figured by the gentleman who sat at a table all alone, silent and unseen, and wrote admirably deep and brave and intricate things; while the gentleman who regularly came forth to sit at a quite different table and substantially and promiscuously dined stood for its companion."\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{45}Art of the Novel, p. 250.

\textsuperscript{44}In the same Preface, he makes this observation which provides the idea for Lord Mellifont.

"For didn't there immensely flourish in those very days and exactly in that society ... that most accomplished of artists and most dazzling of men of the world whose effect on the mind repeatedly invited to appraise him was to begat in it an image or representation and figuration so exclusive of any possible inner self that, so far from there being here a question of an alter ego, a double personality, there seemed scarce a question of a real and single one, scarce foothold or margin for any private and domestic ego at all."\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{46}Ibid., p. 251.
disappear in private; rather than having a ghostly other self, he has no private self at all. The situation is almost comical as James plays the private life of the one against the absence of the other. It is a curious tale. But it too is much more.

Clare Vaudrey's other self is so different - so much better a poet - from his public figure. Similarly, it seems to me, many people aspire to a self-image which is superior to their factual existences. There is an eternal gulf between what one is and what one would like to be. In the case of Clare Vaudrey the presence of the gulf is a sad one - for we, like the narrator of the tale, are disappointed in the social lich who has to make excuses for his inability to produce a script. There is yet another aspect of this same issue - possibly a deeper moral question. How often, in our imagination, are our motives and desired acts so much better than what time and circumstance actually force us to do? How often are people badly misunderstood and perhaps condemned? This gulf between appearance and an inner reality is surely another form of "felt burden".

Lord Pellifont's case raises the same question from a slightly different angle; for here is a man who is all appearance and no reality - no self, let alone another self. Is it perhaps a moral obligation to find and establish the self and then to allow some connection between

45 The comical, rather droll, tone of "The Private Life" is a little reminiscent of James's more immature but nevertheless similar tone in "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes".
the public and private life, so that at least a few, possibly only one person, touch our inner spirits. Not even Lady Bellifont experiences her husband's private life, as it seems that he has either isolated it out of existence, or that he has never allowed it to develop.

Similarly, "The Real Right Thing" raises yet another aspect of the reality of self, as here the young writer comes to feel that the ghostly presence of his late master is actually interfering with his attempts to write the man's biography.46 As he discovers more and more personal facts about his subject, he becomes increasingly aware of the spirit's malaise. And so the question is raised: does anyone have the right to expose the spiritual uniqueness of a man to the censure of a world where the market-place concept of identity may be, and most probably is, different from that same concept when held by an individual. The same problem is at the heart of "Sir Dominic Ferrand", in which the narrator, Peter Baron, decides, like the young writer in "The Real Right Thing", not to publish his new evidence-

46 A notebook entry of May 7, 1398, reads: "The thing suggested by what August Birell mentioned to me the other night, at Rosebery's of Frank Lockwood - that is, of his writing, so soon after his death and amid all his things, F.L.'s Life - feeling as if he might come in." Notebooks, p. 265.

This, combined with James's personal commission to write the biography of William Story, shows how the two factual items germinated into a tale, supporting further my belief that James's supernatural craft is no different, in development and execution, than the rest of his fiction.
not to expose the dead man to public censure – not to bring out the
difference between the appearance and the reality.

"Nona Vincent" is different: it is more in the vein of "Sir
Edmund Orme". The apparitions which visit Wayworth seem to him as
natural47 as Sir Edmund's ghost seemed to the narrator of that tale.
Further, just as Sir Edmund's ghost arose from Mrs. Narden's personal
guilt, so the figure of Nona is evoked by Wayworth's constant concern
to render Nona dramatically. Another similarity exists in the
confidante relationship in both tales; for Wayworth has a confidante
in Mrs. Alsager, very much as the narrator of "Sir Edmund Orme" himself
became confidant to Mrs. Narden.

The presence of a confidante is a characteristic of James's
fiction, first noted in the context of this study in the "The Ghostly
Rental". Significantly, it is an important part of the three other
tales in this group. The narrator of "The Private Life" is confidant
to Blanche Adney, the actress who discovers Clare Vaudrey's other self.
In "Sir Dominic Ferrand", Mrs. Ryves becomes the confidante of the
writer, Peter Baron. And in "The Real Right Thing", Mrs. Doyne, the
late master's widow, confides, though to a lesser degree, in George
Withermore, the young writer. The role of the confidante is a natural
result of James's long fascination with dramatic technique. Sister M.

47Wayworth says of his visitor: "She was as quiet as an
affectionate sister, and there was no surprise in her being there.
Nothing more real had ever befallen him, and nothing, somehow, more
reassuring."

Supernatural Stories, p. 205.
Corona Sharp explains the role this way.

As he approximated the dramatic method in general, moving away from expository to dramatic narrative, he devised and perfected the limited point of view ... The confidante as a ficelle is primarily a device to obtain greater lucidity. The protagonist and centre of consciousness needs another character from whom he can elicit facts and interpretations unknown to himself. Secondly, the ficelle is designed to elicit data, impressions, and feelings from the 'center' for the benefit of the reader.

Mrs. Alsager's role as confidante in "Nona Vincent" is the most developed treatment of the device to this point. The close communion between Wayworth and his confidante is characteristic of such a relationship; and James repeats the same technique in the final tales "The Jolly Corner" and "The Beast in the Jungle". Maria Costrey in The Ambassadors is the most fully developed of James's confidantes. In many ways, she is Mrs. Alsager increased to the proportions of the novel.

Closely akin to the depth of understanding which exists between the confidante and conﬁder is the capacity for intuition of a first person narrator in a Jamesian tale. I have earlier examined the way in which the prologue to "Sir Edward Orme" gives credibility to its narrator. "The Private Life" shows another way in which James employs the first person narrator. As Vaid notes:

It is a device by which James achieves economy in presentation, for the alternative process would be to portray the entire slow process by which the narrator gathers his information. The numerous intuitions of the narrator also lead to carefully manipulated alternatives of mystification and recognition.49


Nearly all the conversations between the narrator of "The Private Life" and his confidante, Blanche, serve to portray dramatically his intuitive thoughts about Clare Vawdrey or Lord Mellifont. Indeed the four tales being considered here, "Nona Vincent", "The Private Life", "Sir Dominic Ferrand" and "The Real Right Thing", are all peopled by characters whose thinking is so highly intuitive, that it approaches the uncanny or unnatural. The narrator of "The Private Life" and his confidante, Blanche, seem at times to almost read each other's thoughts. It is very much the "sixth sense" I mentioned in the Introduction, in reference to The Golden Bowl. This form of perception indicates another aspect of James's attitude to things supernatural. These characters seem to pervade a level of reality where perception and understanding are more highly developed than in "normal" people. Further, the extra-reality in these tales is not always sinister, as it is in the case of "Sir Edmund Orme". Neither "The Private Life" nor "Nona Vincent" suggest fearful experience. For James it seems that the supernatural was always extraordinary, but not always threatening. A similar contrast between good and evil realms of extra-reality is also apparent in the tales of the final period.

It has been previously noted that one of the functions of a narrator is to guide the reader's vision and understanding. But this very process opens up possibilities for mystifying the reader instead of illuminating the situation for him. If the narrator himself is easily understood, then his own explanations of events will be equally comprehensible. However, if the narrator's own personality is complex, then the reader must attempt to distinguish the narrative from its
narrator. We know little about the character of the narrator of "The Private Life" so that his own individuality and idiosyncrasies do not cause us to question his interpretation of the events. But James was not content to leave his readers unmystified for very long. "The Turn of the Screw" shows how completely James could cause his readers to "wonder" by shifting his first-person narrative technique slightly — by bringing the narrator so thoroughly into the tale that our perceptions of what happens must be constantly weighed with our perceptions of the narrator himself.

There have been literally volumes of criticism on "The Turn of the Screw", a great deal of it centred around the question of the actual existence of the ghostly apparitions of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel. James would surely have been delighted and amused at the critical warfare that has been waged over his tales. He states, in the Preface to The Aspern Papers, his intention in writing this nouvelle:

... that it is a piece of ingenuity pure and simple, of cold artistic calculation, an 'amusette' to catch those not easily caught (the "fun" of the capture of the witless being over but small), the jaded, the disillusioned, the fastidious.51

---

50 "The Turn of the Screw" was serialized in Colliers Weekly from January 27 to April 16, 1898. A young rector's daughter accepts her first employment as governess to two children, Miles and Mora, and accepts full responsibility for their well being from their guardian uncle, who refuses to be disturbed by any matter concerning the children. The children appear to be paragons of beauty and virtue, and all goes well, until the governess sees the ghost of the late valet of the house. Later, she sees the ghost of the late governess and becomes convinced that these two haunters are intent on harming the children. The rest of the nouvelle relates her attempts to understand how much the children themselves see and her efforts to protect them from further communion with the spirits.

51 Art of the Novel, p. 172.
"The Turn of the Screw" has so thoroughly caught the "jaded, the disillusioned and the fastidious" that they have been unable, for the most part, to see the tale in its proper perspective; that is, within the framework of the entire James canon. The key to understanding James's intention here is to see that the first-person narrator functions in the same manner as the other first-person narrators in James's fiction. Vaid's study contains a detailed examination of the governess's role as narrator. Vaid maintains that James's narrators are neither autobiographical nor unreliable, and notes that none of the other narrators have aroused critics to question their reliability and asks, rightly so, why the governess should be so questioned. The governess is, as critics have claimed, very intuitive, but so are the other Jamesian first person narrators, for instance, the young man in "Sir Edmund Orme". And, as it has been previously noted, these intuitions are a device to achieve economical presentation. If, Vaid asks, we are to accept the governess as narrator of the tale, which she clearly is, then we must also accept her as a reliable witness.

52 It is not my purpose to examine all the various viewpoints on "The Turn of the Screw", but rather to consider the tale as one of the supernatural stories. Unfortunately, many people who have read and commented on this particular tale, have read little else by James, and therefore see the tale from quite the wrong perspective.

53 Vaid, See Chapter IV.

54 Ibid., p. 92.
... wherever James employs an ironic centre of narration, he is careful to leave the reader in no doubt about his intention. It seems reasonable to expect that he would have done the same for "The Turn of the Screw".55

The question is further illuminated by the first narrator's prologue to the tale. Part of the purpose of this prologue is to create the proper mood, to make the reader receptive for what is to follow - for a tale which, according to the first narrator, Douglas, is "quite too horrible". Obviously, James deliberately created three levels to confuse the reader, to catch those not easily caught. First, there is an anonymous narrator who establishes the setting, the group assembled around the fire on a cold winter's night - an appropriate situation for a ghost story. Then there is Douglas whose tale will be told; but when the tale actually begins it is through the eyes of its own narrator, the young governess, to whom the events happened.

Douglas's impression of this same governess, for he had known her several years before this, is important. It is, indeed, a favorable one:

'She was a most charming person, but she was ten years older than I. She was my sister's governess,' he quietly said. 'She was the most agreeable woman I've ever known in her position; she'd have been worthy of any whatever.'56

There is certainly no suggestion that this governess is the hallucinating madwoman that some critics have suggested. Vaid also notes that:

As a matter of evidence, in no Jamesian prologue-tale is our impression of the second narrator in conflict with the impression given by the first narrator.57

55 Ibid., p. 96.
56 Supernatural Stories, p. 137.
57 Vaid, p. 97.
Therefore there is no basis for disbelieving Douglas; and the governess's authority is established. James further clarifies the point when in the Preface to The Aspern Papers he says:

It was 'déjà très joli' in "The Turn of the Screw", please believe, 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; and I saw no way, I feebly grant, ... to exhibit her in relation other than those; one of which, precisely, would have been her relation to her own nature. We have surely as much of her own nature as we can swallow in watching it reflect her anxieties and inductions. It constitutes no little of character indeed, in such conditions, for a young person, as she says, 'privately bred', that she is able to make her particular credible statements of such strange matters. She has 'authority', which is a good deal to have given her, and I couldn't have arrived at so much had I clumsily tried for more.53

Thus when the governess claims to have seen the ghosts of Quint and Miss Jessel, we must accept her authority, and James is equally clear on the nature of these apparitions.

... I recognize again, that Peter Quint and Miss Jessel are not "ghosts" at all, as we now know the ghost, but goblins, elves, imps, demons, as loosely constructed as those of the old trials of witchcraft; if not, more pleasingly, fairies of the legendary order, wooing their victims forth to see them dance under the moon.59

James calls these spirits "hovering prowling blighting presences", recognizing that "good ghosts, speaking by book, make poor subjects".60

I have already attempted to show James's own feelings or attitudes that germinated into the other supernatural tales in this chapter. His "idea" here, his purpose, was to evoke, in his own words, "portentous evil". His "prowling presences" are devices to do just that - to return for a second round of unspecified badness.

53 Art of the Novel, pp. 173, 174.
59 Ibid., p. 175.
60 Ibid., p. 175.
What, in the last analysis, had I to give the sense of? Of their being, the haunting pair, capable, as the phrase is, of everything - that is of exerting, in respect to the children, the very worst action small victims so conditioned might be conceived as subject to .... There is for such a case no eligible absolute of the wrong; it remains relative to fifty other elements, a matter of appreciation, ... Only make the reader's general vision of evil intense enough, and his own experience, his own imagination, his own sympathy (with the children) and horror (of their false friends) will supply him quite sufficiently with all the particulars. Make him think the evil, make him think it for himself, and you are released from weak specifications. 61

"The Turn of the Screw" is "a tour de force" as a provoker of imagination and, as Dupee has noted, fear and uncertainty are the only constants in the tale. 62 Nowhere are we told what was so deplorable about Quint and Miss Jessel, except that they both died rather strangely. Nor are we ever told why Miles has been sent home from school. We are never sure whether the children actually see their "false friends", though Miles seems to have been watching "something" on the roof, the night he took his midnight walk; and Flora appears to have been watching her brother do so. The governess seems to jump to conclusions from her intuitive feelings, and yet she is most articulate, almost convincing in her own certainty.

61 Ibid., p. 176.
62 "Terror is the one constant. To this James remains faithful throughout even though he gradually shifts the ground of it from animal to metaphysical and moral doubt. Uncertainty, the reader's uncertainty, as to what is real and who is innocent is perhaps the final source of apprehension. And the apprehension is poignant beyond that in the usual mystery story because it plays upon scenes and situations, people and problems, which are themselves vividly human..."
F.W. Dupee, Henry James, p. 159.
'On the spot there came to me the added shock of a certainty that it was not for me he had come. He had come for someone else. The flash of knowledge - for it was knowledge in the midst of dread - produced in me the most extraordinary effect, starting, as I stood there, a sudden vibration of duty and courage.'

To the end of the tale the questions remain unanswered. Why does Miles die? Did he see Quint's ghost? In a letter to F. W. Myers, December 19, 1898, James refers to this tale as a "mechanical matter", a "shameless pot-boiler", and reaffirms that his intention was to communicate the impression of evil. Readers ever since have pondered this evil, just as James intended they should. It seems to be an indefinable evil from the past, a little like that in "The Last of the Valerii". Fearful things are nearly always far worse in the imagination than they are in reality.

"The Turn of the Screw", too, employs a confidante, in the figure of Mrs. Grose, the housekeeper. And just as the chief figure in previous tales has used the confidante to develop intuitive feelings into more concrete ideas, so the governess uses Mrs. Grose. One of the more vivid examples of this process is the governess's description of the figure she saw on the tower at Bly, and Mrs. Grose's conclusion

---

63 Supernatural Stories, p. 461.

64 "The Turn of the Screw", is a very mechanical matter, I honestly think an inferior, a merely pictorial subject and rather a shameless pot-boiler. The thing that, as I recall it, I most wanted not to fail of doing, under penalty of extreme platitude, was to give the impression of the communication to the children of the most infernal imaginable evil and danger - the condition, on their part, of being as exposed as we can humanly conceive children to be. This was my artistic knot to untie, ...

that it is indeed Peter Quint. Hoffman claims that Mrs. Grose's
down-to-earth character and realistic point-of-view, adds further
credibility to the governess's more sensitive intuitions.

There is, however, an interesting variation in James's use of
the confidante relationship in this tale. Whereas the function of
confidante in other tales is to enable the narrator to elaborate on his
own intuitions, in "The Turn of the Screw" the conversations between
the governess and Mrs. Grose actually confound the issue. Mrs. Grose
is certainly down-to-earth; she can neither read nor understand the
governess's vocabulary. Consequently it is difficult to imagine that
either Mrs. Grose or the governess really understand what the other is
thinking. In a confidante relationship, like the one in "Mona Vincent",
the two principal characters are alike in background and temperament.
It is reasonable to expect that they should be able to understand one
another. However, Mrs. Grose and the governess are so unlike that it
remains questionable how much of the governess's implications Mrs. Grose
really understands and whether the governess ever comprehends Mrs.
Grose's feelings about Peter Quint and Miss Jessel. Like so much else
in the tale, these questions are never answered and the reader is left
wondering, knowing only that something quite fearful has happened but
not absolutely sure of the nature of the evil.

65 Supernatural Stories, pp. 463-466.
66 "She represents a realistic point of view that remains in
contact with the everyday world in contrast to the intense awareness of
the governess who becomes more and more entangled in the world of evil.
Because of this realistic viewpoint, her belief in the existence of the
ghosts is important corroborative evidence for the governess and the
reader;"
C.G. Hoffman, The Short Novels of Henry James (N.Y: Bookman
Two tales remain in the second phase, "The Friends of the Friends"\(^67\) and "The Altar of the Dead"\(^68\), both of which, like "The Turn of the Screw", concern the power of the dead. In "The Friends of the Friends", this power takes the form of love for the memory of a dead

\(^67\)"The Friends of the Friends" first appeared under the title "The Way It Came" in Chapman's Magazine, May 1896. The tale concerns a man and a woman whose psychic experiences and personalities are so similar that all their friends think they should meet, but circumstances always prevent their introduction. The man's fiancée is finally able to arrange a meeting but at the last moment she too prevents it because she is afraid of being jealous of the possible friendship between the two. The woman dies very suddenly and the man claims to have received a visit from her just before her death. His fiancée becomes obsessed with jealousy over what she believes is his continued relationship with the woman's spirit, until she breaks the engagement. Not long after the man also dies as if in "response to an irresistible call".  
   Supernatural Stories, p. 424.

\(^68\)"The Altar of the Dead" was unpublished until its appearance in a volume entitled Terminations, 1895, which also included "The Death of the Lion", "The Cother Friend", and "The Middle Years". George Stransom erects an imaginative, and then an actual, altar dedicated to the memory of all his dead friends, especially to his fiancée who died just prior to their intended marriage. He is joined in his worship by a woman who seems also to venerate the memory of the dead - but, in her case, it is the memory of only one man, Acton Hague, who ironically had been also a friend of Stransom's but who was estranged from him over a personal grievance. Stransom's discovery that the object of this woman's devotion is the memory of Hague, drive the two worshippers apart; and it is not until his own death that he is able to forgive Hague and admit him to the altar.
woman; in "The Altar" it is a kind of worship for the memory of many dead.

"The Friends of the Friends" has several interesting similarities to "The Turn of the Screw". Both are narrated in the first person and in both the narrator is an intensely imaginative young woman. Again, in both, the emotional fears of the narrators take control over their rational thoughts. The young woman in "The Friends" becomes so overcome with jealousy that first she believes that her fiancé is in nightly communion with the spirit of her dead friend; and then, on his death, she is convinced that he deliberately died in order to join this spirit. The tale is both a study of, and a comment on, the effect of

---

69 Dorothea Brook has made an interesting observation about this tale, noting a similarity with The Wings of the Dove, and says: "... we have the curious situation of James's treating an almost identical idea, that of a man falling in love with the memory of a dead woman, as a quasi-supernatural phenomenon in the story, as perfectly natural (if not wholly natural) in the novel. Though the novel was published some six years later than the story, the Notebooks show that they were worked out almost contemporaneously; and this is only one instance of the evidence supplied by the Notebooks to support the view that James's stories of this period (as of his earlier periods) often treat on a reduced scale and with a tone and emphasis often interestingly different, a theme or situation or relationship developed on a more ambitious scale in one or more of his novels."


This again supports my view that all James's fiction, natural and supernatural, should be seen in the same framework.
jealousy. The woman’s hatred for a memory separates her irrevocably from the man she claims to love.

A similar single-minded focus on the memory of the dead lies at the heart of "The Altar of the Dead". In spite of the notebook entry in which James dismisses the tale as a "little fantasy", he nevertheless chose it as the title story for one of the volumes of his collected tales. It must therefore have had more significance for him than the notebooks would suggest.

70 "But the thing is a 'conceit'; after all, a little fantasy which doesn’t hold a great deal." Notebooks, p. 165.

71 Several critics, including F.R. Leavis, in The Great Tradition, have summarily dismissed "The Altar of the Dead" as being altogether too morbid to warrant serious consideration. This is to fail to see two important aspects, firstly, its statement of James’s belief about the past and present, and secondly, its language of the tale which makes an excellent example of James’s final "high manner", his major phase. One of the more memorable images is as follows:

"The flames were gathering thick at present, for Stranason had entered that dark defile of our earthly descent in which none one dies every day. It was only yesterday that Kate Creston had flashed out her white fire; yet already there were younger stars ablaze on the tips of the tapers."

Supernatural Stories, p. 336, 337.

Here Kate Creston is described in terms of white fire, and flame seems to represent earthly existence. Later Stranason will light candles at his altar to symbolize and commemorate the lives of all those who were dear to him. The image of the flame comes then to represent both the living and the dead and by bringing the two states together in one image James has integrated his language with his theme in a very unique manner.

The tale concerns the spiritual unity between the living and the dead just as the image also united Kate’s earthly existence, with her place in Stranason’s memory.

The language of "The Altar of the Dead" is equalled in the last phase of supernatural tales only by that of "The Beast in The Jungle" and "The Jolly Corner".
James wrote this tale in 1894, during his fiftieth year, a time when many old friends begin to die rather suddenly.\(^{72}\) Naturally James would have found himself facing the fact of death as never before. Thus we find here, not the dead seeking out the living as in "Sir Edmund Orme" or "The Real Right Thing", but the living seeking out the dead. Strasson reaches so intensely toward his dead that:

There were hours at which he [Strasson] almost caught himself wishing that certain of his friends would now die, that he might establish with them in this manner a connexion more charming than, as it happened, it was possible to enjoy with them in life.\(^{73}\)

The underside of Strasson's mind, his felt burden, is his obsession with his dead, which begins as an internal emotion and becomes an external quasi-religious ritual, complete with altar and candles. But as with the young woman in "The Friends of the Friends", the obsession grows until it takes control of his rational thoughts and feelings. His egotistical concern for his own satisfaction, derived from this strange worship, finally drives him away from living relationship with a woman who chooses to venerate the memory of the one man he wishes to forget.

---

\(^{72}\) "Henry James had reached his fiftieth year, the time of life when old familiar figures begin to drop away with ever greater rapidity. During the months he had been busy with his playwriting his sister had died, and shortly before, young Woodrow Wilson, and his old friend of many years James Russell Lowell, and the aged Mrs. Procter, and Emma Kemble and Constance Fenimore Woolson; and there was to be at the end of 1894, the sudden death of Robert Louis Stevenson. One year he was riding with Browning in a coach at Mrs. Procter's funeral; and the next he was attending services at the Abbey for Browning. Life had become a succession of funerals."


\(^{73}\) Supernatural Stories, p. 367.
"The Altar of the Dead" is particularly important as it looks both backward and forward in James's supernatural canon. On one hand it recalls "The Last of the Valerii", a tale in which the young James tentatively embodied his feelings about the past. Like the Count Valerii, Stransea must come to terms with his past: but unlike the Count, who has to be managed by his wife, Stransea comes to realize, on his own, that his egoism impedes the worth of his reverence for his dead friends. Unfortunately, he discovers this only when he himself is about to die. The tale also anticipates "The Jolly Corner" in which Spencer Brydon must face his past, as it might have been. Further, Stransea, like John Marcher in "The Beast in the Jungle", fails to find the answer to his dilemma until it is "too late". It is almost as if James were perhaps reminding himself that as long as one lives, one should not ignore the living, regardless of the strength of the memory of the dead. The fact of death is indeed a reality, but the existence of the living deserves the greater attention.

Altogether, the nine tales of the second phase clearly show James's mature attitude to what we call the "supernatural". The other selves, the "felt burdens", and the extraordinary obsessions of his characters are all part of their individual realities. Though they may seem strange and unnatural to the readers, James's point is that behind external appearances, behind what we consider to be normal, there can be a level, a depth of experience, which though extraordinary, is equally real and significant - perhaps more so; for what is more important than the soul of man.
CHAPTER III

The final phase of James's supernatural tales seems to be dominated by one particular theme, the spectre of the unlived life—the way a person might have lived under slightly different circumstances. In 1900, now fifty-seven years of age, James had arrived at a time in life when it is quite natural for one to be doubly sensitive to what other experiences one might have known, had one lived life differently. For James, who had always been deeply conscious of life's hidden realities, this awareness of the "what-might-have-been" aspect, was particularly acute. The tales of the second period are often concerned with the influences of the dead on the living; those of the third phase more often question the way in which another image of life can affect people.

As I have suggested earlier, James's vision of the supernatural was not always threatening; the extra reality of "Nona Vincent" and "The Private Life" is not a sinister one. In three of the tales of the final phase, James presents a similar vision. Both "The Third Person", and "The Great Good Place" convey an almost happy extra reality, as the burdens felt by the characters are finally laid aside and they cease to be haunted. "Naud Evelyn", though centering around a character who remains haunted until his own death, is such a whimsical, fanciful tale, that it too might be considered as one of few supernatural stories written in a lighter mood. It is significant that these
three tales, together with "The Real Right Thing", were all collected in 1900 in a single volume under the title, The Soft Side.\(^1\) This title would suggest that James considered all four to be part of the gentler side of his supernatural vision.

The remaining two tales, "The Beast in the Jungle", and "The Jolly Corner", are the climax of James's treatment of his belief in an extra-reality. The two should be seen as companion pieces, and so will be discussed together, following the lighter tales of 1900.

"Maud Evelyn"\(^2\) is the story of a man caught up in the imagined experiences of the Dedricks for their dead daughter. They live their lives for what might have been the life of Maud Evelyn had she lived past fourteen years. It is in this sense that the tale is part of the "unlived-life" theme of the third phase. In its obsession with death, it vividly recalls "The Altar of the Dead"; as in the latter, the central character is mainly preoccupied with perpetuating the memory of Maud Evelyn. The chief difference between it and "The Altar" is in the way in which this memory is fostered. In "The Altar", the

---

\(^1\)H. James, The Soft Side. (London: Methuen and Co., 1900).

\(^2\)"Maud Evelyn" first appeared in the Atlantic Monthly, April 1900. It concerns a young man, Marmaduke, who is "picked up" by a middle aged couple whose only daughter has died at the age of fourteen. Marmaduke becomes for them the ideal young man for their daughter, had she lived. They gradually draw him into their own fanciful yet slightly macabre ritual of living for her memory, of carrying on their lives as if she were still alive, so that they can create for her all the experiences she ought to have lived. Marmaduke becomes so involved in this death-in-life fantasy that he seems to believe that he actually met and became engaged to Maud Evelyn. Like Count Valerio in "The Last of the Valerii", he ignores all his living friends and activities, but unlike Valerio, he remains faithful to the memory of someone he never knew, until he himself dies.
ritual of remembering, with its similarities to the Christian custom of lighting candles to symbolize the soul of the departed, seems almost to be a natural one.

In "Maud Evelyn", however, the act of remembering is a developing ritual resulting from the Dedricks' total commitment to the memory of their dead daughter.

The child... had evidently been passionately loved, and in the absence from their lives... of such other elements, either new pleasures or new pains, as abound for most people, their feeling had drawn to itself their whole consciousness: it had become mildly maniacal. The idea was fixed, and it kept others out.3

The Dedricks, unable to exist without their daughter, have immersed themselves in the process of living for her; not only does her memory give them a reason for living, but they also create experiences for Maud Evelyn, in an attempt to provide all the experiences she should have enjoyed, would have enjoyed, had she lived. This involves keeping her rooms in their house, her clothes and personal treasures, but more importantly, providing additional things appropriate to the new situations and events they have imagined for her. It is truly a case where the world of the imagination has entirely replaced the world of reality. It is the extent of the ritual in "Maud Evelyn" which distinguishes it from "The Altar of the Dead". "The Altar" has a grand tone which recalls the feeling evoked in a requiem mass. Stransom recognizes that the fact of death establishes a border between the living and the dead, a border which memory can cross but never abolish. But in "Maud Evelyn", the border has, at least in the minds of the Dedricks, been eliminated.

3Supernatural Stories, p. 615.
In their consciousness Maud Evelyn still lives, so completely have they imagined her un-lived life.

The narrator of the tale is nearly always critical of the way Marmaduke joins the Dedricks in their ritual of remembering, as in this passage:

Should I, taking him unaware, flash at him a plain "I say, just settle it for me once and for all. Are you the boldest and basest of fortune-hunters, or have you only, more innocently, and perhaps more pleasantly, suffered your brain slightly to soften?"

She never understands how or why Marmaduke has become so involved in Maud Evelyn's imaginary reality. But Lavinia, one of Marmaduke's few friends in his factual rather than fanciful world, seems to perceive that although the fantasy may indeed be a strange one, it is not one to be dismissed as sheer foolishness. She tells the narrator at one point:

It isn't so common, as the world goes, for any one - let alone for two or three - to feel and to care for the dead as much as that. It's self deception, no doubt, but it comes from something that... well... is beautiful when one does hear of it. They make her out older, so as to imagine they had her longer; and they make out that certain things really happened to her so that she shall have had more life. They've invented a whole experience for her, and Marmaduke has become a part of it.

The narrator's sceptical amusement at Marmaduke's part in it is characteristic of the way in which many people would react to the Dedricks' fantasy. Lavinia on the other hand is more compassionate and sees the beauty and the possible comfort in such an extraordinary practice. Lavinia's own "soft side" enables her to understand.

---

4 Ibid., p. 622.
5 Ibid., p. 618.
The contrast between the way in which the world views a particular way of life and the way in which it is understood by someone living it is also central to "The Great Good Place". Here the conflict is between the private and public lives of the artist. For George Dane, the vision of the "other life", too thoroughly unlived, is simply to be allowed to do the things important and essential to the artistic life; rather than being swamped and buried under all the trivial trappings of success. His description of his own eminence clearly illustrates how completely he is overwhelmed.

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? What could a man want more?

An artist must be removed, separate from the world of the market place if he is to create anything worthwhile, worthy of himself. But the people of the market place rarely understand that contemplative isolation is an essential part of the creative process. Undoubtedly, James himself must have felt this way at times, especially while he was living in London and was so highly sought after as a guest for innumerable dinner parties.

6 "The Great Good Place" was first published in Scribner's Magazine, January, 1900. It describes the dream fantasy of a highly successful and overworked writer, George Dane, who offers his day's activities to a hopeful young writer and then himself promptly falls asleep. The fantasy is of his utopia, a place where he has the time to do the most important, the most creative things in his life, rather than being plagued by invitations, letters and all manner of interruptions. Then he awakes from the dream, he is refreshed enough to once again face his success.

7 Supernatural Stories, p. 574.
George Dane's dream-utopia seems to be a grand mixture of
cloister, library and luxurious resort, inhabited entirely by under-
standing and sympathetic people who are equally in search of a pause
in which to re-establish peace of mind. For James, the final solution
was to move from London to Lamb House, in Rye, Sussex, to escape from
the social demands of living in London. For Dane, his dream provides
temporary escape, whereby he can lay down his "felt burden" and
vanquish his haunted state of mind. Even the younger writer who fills
Dane's obligations for the day fails to see the price the world puts on
success, that the very life for which he envies Dane, is fatal to the
working artist. He, like the narrator in "Maud Evelyn", is without a
compassionate "soft side". "The Great Good Place" should be seen as
part of the body of James's tales about artists, in which he develops
his own feelings about the role of the artist in society and the
importance of his separation from it.

"The Third Person" is a tale about which it is difficult to say
much. James himself makes no mention of it in either the Notebooks or
the Preface to the New York edition. The two cousins are quaintly
amusing, touching in fact, in the way they jealously compete for the
attentions of the ghost. The unlived lives of their respective
imagination would almost certainly include the love of a man. Thus

8 "The Third Person" appeared as one of the tales in The Soft Side,
1900. It concerns two elderly spinster cousins who settle together in
an old ancestral house in a sea-coast town. They discover the house to
be haunted by the ghost of one of their ancestors who was hanged for
smuggling. The rest of the tale describes their attempts to placate
the ghost, first with 'conscience money' paid to the Chancellor of the
Exchequer, and then by another deed of smuggling. After the second
attempt, the ghost ceases to appear.
they each pursue, and finally sacrifice for, the ghost of a man.

One might consider Miss Amy's solution of smuggling to appease a smuggler, to be a whimsical treatment of the "what-might-have-been" aspect of life. Perhaps, if Miss Amy had been a contemporary of her notorious ancestor, she too would have been a successful smuggler.

It is a pleasant, fanciful story to read, but in comparison to the other supernatural tales, it has little significance. I have mentioned it here merely because it is part of James's supernatural canon.

The most important stories from this period are, of course, "The Beast in the Jungle" and "The Jolly Corner". John Marcher in "The

9"The Beast in the Jungle" was first published in a volume of tales entitled The Better Sort, (London: Methuen & Co., 1905). After ten years, John Marcher meets again a past acquaintance, May Bartram. Apparently, on their first meeting he had told her that he was obsessed by the feeling that something extraordinary was to befall him. He has lived with this feeling always but has never disclosed it to anyone else. May agrees to watch with him, for his fate, and so they live for many years until just before her death she tells him that what was to have happened, did occur without his knowledge. After her death Marcher roams the world, searching for his fate which finally overtakes him when he returns, visits May's grave, and sees another mourner whose stricken face shows that here was a man who had deeply loved and that Marcher's fate was to have never experienced real passion, to have known life from the outside only.

10"The Jolly Corner" was first published in the English Review, December 1903. Spencer Brydon returns to New York after thirty-three years in Europe and meets again his old friend, Alice Steaverton. Together they watch his New York property be converted to apartments, the process of which he supervises, and in so doing discovers that he has a flare for that sort of enterprise. He becomes obsessed with the idea of what he might have become had he never left New York, and prowls regularly in his one house on the "jolly corner" searching for the image of his other self. He stalks this apparition until he finally sees it, but refuses to accept it as his other self. Alice has also seen it, twice in dreams, the second time at precisely the moment that it overcomes Spencer himself. Pearing for him she comes to the house and finds him, seemingly rescues him from himself, and thus helps him to restore his equilibrium.
Beast" and Spencer Brydon in "The Jolly Corner" are James's most vividly drawn characters who search for the un-lived life. But for both these men, this search becomes a spectre of their fear of being, in Dupee's words, "defrauded, not simply of recognition, like the artists, but of life itself, of significant experience."\(^{11}\) And as Thorberg has observed, it is the isolation effects of their obsession which make the vision so frightening. The relationship between guilt and terror is exploited to emphasize the greater terror of the depths of consciousness.\(^{12}\)

Both Marcher and Brydon are haunted men; their obsessions make them comparable to Count Valeric, Captain Diamond, and George Stransom, for all these are men for whom the felt burdens from the underside of their minds have become the most important aspects of existence. Marcher and Brydon differ from these others, however, in the degree to which their respective inner lives have completely taken over their outer lives. For Marcher and Brydon, the sinister has not merely been superimposed on the normal; it has virtually come to overshadow their ordinary existence.

Brydon is haunted by the past like Valeric, Diamond and Stransom; but Marcher is driven by his fixed idea about his future. Their chief difference lies in the outcome of their obsessions. Marcher continues steadfastly in his belief until suddenly, horribly, he sees

\(^{11}\)Dupee, p. 154.

himself for what he is; but it is entirely too late for his self-discovery to affect the one person to whom it would have mattered most. Brydon, on the other hand, is brought out of his isolation and, with the help of Alice Staverton, seems to be able to reconcile his two selves. James wrote "The Jolly Corner" some five years after "The Beast in the Jungle", and it would be comforting to think that his final vision was not the tragedy of Marcher's fearful, futile existence.

Both tales are gradually developed, to considerable length, so that the reader watches with increasing wonder as each man continues in his obsession. In "The Beast in the Jungle", the wonder is accompanied by horror as Marcher relentlessly pursues his idea, isolating himself more and more, climbing higher and higher on his pillar of self seeking. Then he finally collapses onto May's grave, it is as if he has fallen, like a tragic hero, from a great height.

James is merciless in showing Marcher's self centered behaviour and his insensitivity to everything but himself. Marcher deliberately remembers May's birthday with a little token "always fine of its kind, and he was regularly careful to pay for it more than he thought he could afford." But the very tone of the sentence clearly contradicts Marcher's own claim to unselfishness. When listening to other people complain of feeling unsettled, he is literally proud of his haunted state and praises himself for not burdening others with his secret. He becomes so blind to other people that he cannot see that May Bartram is offering him her love. He fails so utterly to recognize her

---

affection that she realizes, but never discloses, the nature of his fate - that he will experience life only as an observer, an outsider. Compassionately, she tells him that his destiny has overtaken him but that she hopes that he will never know it.

Kay's compassion at this point, just before her death, initiates a new response in the reader, to Marcher's single-minded, self-centered behaviour. Suddenly, we too begin to see how terrible the knowledge will be for him, if indeed he ever understood. And when Marcher reflects that

He didn't care what awful crash might overtake him, with what ignominy or what monstrosity he might yet be associated - since he wasn't after all too utterly old to suffer - if it would only be decently proportionate to the posture he had kept, all his life, in the threatened presence of it. He had but one desire left - that he shouldn't have been "sold".14

He assumes the proportions of a tragic hero on the terrifying road to self discovery. On Kay's death he is absolutely alone, and Booth claims that

By seeing the whole thing through the isolated sufferer's vision, we are forced to feel it through his heart. And it is this sense of his isolation, of vulnerability in a world, where no one can set him straight, that contributes most to this sympathy.15

Kay's understanding is described in terms of mingling her vision with Marcher's:

It was only Kay Bartram who had...the feet of at once...meeting the eyes from in front and mingling her own vision, as from over his shoulder, with their peep through apertures.16

14 Ibid., pp. 697-698.
16 Supernatural Stories, p. 686.
It is because we too are led to "peep through the apertures" along with her, that we can view Marcher sympathetically, can feel, in Booth's words, "his sense of isolation, his vulnerability".

Even after May's insistence that what was to have happened to him actually did happen, he continues his search away from England. On his return he visits her grave and it is there that the beast finally springs. He sees another man, whose ravaged face shows too clearly the effects of real passion. Marcher now realizes that what he had feared the most was true: he had been "sold", he was the man to whom nothing was to have happened. He had not only wasted his life - left it un-lived, but worse still, he had prevented May from living hers. His self-discovery is so fearful, his guilt as great as his obsession had been, that we become thoroughly united with May's plea that he should never know. But it is too late: he does know, and it seems more than anyone should have to bear. His tragedy, as he flings himself down on May's tomb, is complete.17

17. There have been several parallels drawn between "The Beast in the Jungle" and other tales. Many critics (Dupee, Allen Tate, Hoffman, and Thorberg) have commented on the similarity between John Marcher and Hawthorne's Ethan Brand. Certainly, both these figures are awesome in their self-centered behaviour. Both D. Krock and Sister Sharp see "The Beast in the Jungle" as a tragic version of James's novel The Ambassadors. Of this Sister Sharp says: "The hidden love of the confidence for her friend and the sympathy with his fate are constant in both May Bartram and Maris. The recognition on the part of the men is also similar; only the intensity of Marcher's discovery proves tragic, while Strether's quiet rejection of Maris's offer is only pathetic."

Sister Sharp, p. 332.
To a large extent, the fearful atmosphere and tragic tone of "The Beast in the Jungle" depends upon the language. The title itself raises a frightening picture - it is not just any animal but a beast. And the animal imagery is sustained from this point on. The guests at Weatherend, where the story opens, are described as sitting with "heads nodding quite as with an excited sense of smell". Dreams of acquisition at this celebrated home are "wild", and Marcher sees himself so overwhelmed by the history and poetry of the place, that, like a dog, "he needs some straying apart to feel in proper relation with them". Once this note has been clearly sounded, it gathers force as it is intended to convey rather more wild than domestic feelings. Marcher's personal conviction about his fate is a case in point:

Something or other lay in wait for him, amid the twists and the turns of the months and the years, like a crouching beast in the jungle. It signified little whether the crouching beast were destined to slay him or to be slain. The definite point was the inevitable spring of the creature; and the definite lesson from that was that a man of feeling didn't cause himself to be accompanied by a lady on a tiger hunt.

As he becomes more and more afraid, the imagery becomes increasingly more frightening. At times the various forms his fate takes seem to glare at him like the "very eyes of the very Beast", and he seeks reassurance from May that, as if he were indeed a big game hunter, he is after all, "a man of courage". Once Marcher finds himself on his

18 Supernatural Stories, p. 671.
19 Ibid., p. 671.
20 Ibid., p. 661.
21 Ibid., p. 690.
22 Ibid., p. 691.
own, and still without knowledge of his fate, it is as if a horrible stillness has overtaken him: "the Jungle had been threshed to vacancy and... the Beast had stolen away".  

What it presently came to in truth was that poor Marcher waded through his beaten grass, where no life stirred, where no breath sounded, where an evil eye seemed to gleam from a possible lair, very much as if vaguely looking for the Beast and still more as if acutely missing it.

And so, he becomes tormented by the new vision of never knowing what his destiny is to be, until the final scene at May's grave when he realizes that his fate is to be without strong feelings.

He saw the Jungle of his life and saw the lurking Beast; then, while he looked, perceived it, as by a stir of the air, rise, huge and hideous, for the leap that was to settle him.

Marcher beginning as a hunter, ends by being himself hunted and tragically overwhelmed.

This image of the hunt is also central to "The Jolly Corner", for Spencer Brydon, on his return to New York, seems compelled to hunt down the image of himself as he might have been, had he never left America thirty-three years earlier. Within the walls of his house on the "jolly corner", he stalks his alter-ego. He "had been introduced to no sport that demanded at once the patience and nerve of this stalking of a creature more subtle, yet at bay perhaps more formidable than any beast of the forest".

23 Ibid., p. 711.
24 Ibid., p. 711.
25 Ibid., p. 719.
26 Ibid., p. 741.
Unlike John Marcher, Spencer Brydon has lived a very full life, but he recognizes within himself unused potential and wonders, naturally enough, what the effect of exploiting this potential might have been. As Blackmur puts it:

...James saw that there are within us those partly living other selves, those unused possibilities out of the past, those unfollowed temptations of character, which if not struck down will overwhelm and engulf the living self. The psychiatrist usually deals with such struggles in our day under his own abstracting terms just as the church formerly dealt with them in the guise of exorcism, the casting out of devils. Yet as the adventures themselves are imaginative, and constitute the chief romance of desperation as they make up also the tragedy of vain hope, the artist has a right to practice his own form of exorcism, which is exorcism through the objective representation of some normal person's perception of the peculiar horror concerned. "The Jolly Corner" is an attempt at such an imaginative exorcism.27

For Spencer Brydon, to exorcize, to banish his alter-ego, he must first of all see it clearly for what it is. So he becomes obsessed with seeing himself as he might have been. His own feelings create an objective image for his mind, just as in "Sir Rámund Orme" Mrs. Marden's guilt evoked the image of the dead lover she had so cruelly wronged. When James's characters raise images in this way, they seem nearly always to result from strong feelings of guilt - as in the case of Mrs. Marden. The reader, therefore, is left wondering whether Spencer Brydon feels guilty about rejecting, abandoning, a part of himself when he adopted his European way of life.

Like a "monstrous stealthy cat"23 he stalks his prey which seems to back away from him to the rear of the house. Suddenly, Brydon

27 Blackmur, pp. 340-341.
28 Supernatural Stories, p. 74.2.
realizes that the spirit is no longer retreating and he is relieved as
"it would have shamed him that a character so associated with his own
should triumphantly succeed in just skulking, should to the end not
risk the open..."29 At the last moment, when Brydon believes he has
backed his prey into a corner, and all that remains for him to "see"
is to open the door, he suddenly understands that he must not do so.
Discretion demands that he should leave the creature unmolested and so
Brydon himself retreats.

Somewhat like George Stranson in "The Altar of the Dead", Brydon
realizes that he must come to terms with the present - live for what is,
not what might have been. In this pursuit of, and then retreat from
the past, "The Jolly Corner" is also like James's much earlier tale,
"The Last of the Valerii". But the chief difference is that Brydon,
at least at this point, is able on his own to relate the role of the
past to that of the present, unlike Valerio who had to be forcibly
recalled from his imaginative to his actual existence.

However, "The Jolly Corner" takes a strange twist. Brydon
retreats from his pursuit of the spectre of his alter-ego only to find
that very spectre awaiting him at the bottom of the stairs. The image
is indeed a fearful one, for Brydon, "... the feared identity was too
hideous as his, ..."30 He refuses to accept the apparition as his
other self and faints away in protest.

29 Ibid., p. 745.
30 Ibid., p. 756.
I think, that James is saying that to pursue our inner selves, which have been submerged for various reasons, is a harrowing activity; in fact, yields little but anguish. This same idea is also suggested, though less strongly, in "The Last of the Valerii". One cannot relive one's life - one must carry on from the point at which one finds oneself. It is as if, after several artistic variations on the same theme, James has realized that the un-lived life of the past must remain un-lived; that to pursue it relentlessly, as Brydon does, is to create only torment and fear - and that way madness lies.

Unlike John Karcher, Spencer Brydon recovers his own equilibrium in time to recognize the love which Alice Staverton has kept for him. For Brydon it is not too late. She has also "seen" Brydon's alter-ego and has accepted it and indeed loved it, as it too is a part of Brydon. Alice's compassion seems to be a healing balm for his scared soul. Although I would not go as far as Dorothea Krock, who maintains that in this tale James is advocating the power of love as the ultimate redemptive force in human life,\(^{31}\) I do think that in "The Jolly Corner", James is less pessimistic about man's ability to come to terms with himself. Here his vision is not the utterly tragic one of "The Beast in the Jungle". As this is the last of the supernatural tales, one might conclude that in the final analysis, James's understanding of the extra reality is, after all, not the predominantly fearful one of the second phase.

\(^{31}\)Krock, p. 335.
What is wonderful in one set of conditions may quite fail of its spell in another set; and, for that matter, the peril of the unmeasured strange, in fiction, being the silly, just as its strength, when it saves itself, is the charming, the wind of interest blows where it lists, the surrender of attention persists where it can.... It may seem odd, in a search for the amusing, to try to steer wide of the silly by hugging close the "supernatural"; but one man’s amusement is at the best...another’s desolation....

(The Art of the Novel).

In this study, I have tried to demonstrate that for James what was wonderful about the supernatural mode was not what has interested most writers of that genre. James’s supernatural tales must be regarded, like the stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne, as having a profound moral purpose. By themselves, supernatural events and apparitions had no significance for James. They are cause for wonder only in so far as they are reflected by a character’s consciousness. And it is the way in which the extraordinary is perceived that provides scope for James’s "wind of interest".

Henry James has often been called a writer of manners. Indeed, some of his novels, like The American or The Portrait of a Lady, do present detailed studies of the social mores of the characters. But James was also, and, I believe, more importantly, a writer with a philosophical-mystical turn of mind. His understanding and presentation of the deeper levels of human awareness and feelings clearly show his concern with man’s soul, not merely his social conduct. The way

??
in which his characters cherish, use, or abuse one another leads to almost infinite speculation about the nature of human psyche, man's moral responsibility and the strange and varied ways of man's relation to man.

Because of the focus possible through objective representation of thoughts and feelings in the forms of ghosts, apparitions or strange obsessions, James was in these tales able to present vividly and dramatically his vision of the nature of man. That he should have insisted on a scenic presentation, rather than an expository and didactic one, supports my belief that, above all, Henry James was a story teller - one of the finest, and most profound.

LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED


ARTICLES


Firebaugh, J.J. "Inadequacy in Eden: Knowledge and 'The Turn of the Screw' ". *Modern Fiction Studies*, XIII (Spring, 1957), 57-63.


Ives, C.B. "James's Ghosts in 'The Turn of the Screw' ". *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, XVIII (September, 1963), 133-139.


West, K. "The Death of Miles in 'The Turn of the Screw' ". *E.M.I.*, LXXIX (June, 1964), 233-238.