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THESE STRANGE RELATIONS: HENRY JAMES'S "THE TURN OF THE SCREW"

by
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ABSTRACT

These Strange Relations: Henry James's
"The Turn of the Screw"

This dissertation is a critical and historical study of Henry James's novel, The Turn of the Screw. It is a close critical analysis, correcting some earlier psychological interpretations, extending others, and refuting traditional interpretations of the novel as a ghost story. The method of analysis is an examination of the relationships of the four main characters--the governess, Mrs. Grose, Miles, and Flora--to demonstrate how these relationships influence the governess' actions and thereby determine the course of events. Particular attention is paid to the emotional fluctuations of the governess and to the ambiguous conversations and commentary she reports, to demonstrate that she is an unreliable narrator, that the characters consistently misunderstand each other, and that she is experiencing something almost obscured by her testimony: hysteria caused by her repression of her awareness that social inequities will frustrate her love for her employer. Emphasis on that awareness as the cause of her hysteria sets this study apart from those--the majority of the psychological interpretations--that assume that her hysteria derives primarily from the repression of sexual love. The governess is

not suppressing erotic feeling, but despair at being too low in the social hierarchy to hope for the master's attention.

In addition I offer a new outline of the critical history of Turn of the Screw, more descriptive of changing critical trends than any yet published. Finally, I offer a new source for Turn of the Screw, Joseph Sheridan LeFanu's Uncle Silas, as well as a full discussion of the borrowing in Turn of the Screw from Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre.

I

Sex and Situation

"I remember the whole beginning as a succession of flights and drops," the governess begins her narrative of The Turn of the Screw, and so goes the whole book.[1] This dissertation will demonstrate how the rhythm of her emotional fluctuations causes the tone of "sacred terror" that makes this nouvelle such a masterful puzzle of fear and pain, and how her hallucinations of the ghosts distract from the true subject Henry James is developing: her story of her relations with the housekeeper, Mrs. Grose, and the children, Miles and Flora, relations which, distorted by her hysteria, break down in misunderstanding, malice, alienation, and death. My assumptions are that the governess is an unreliable narrator, that James's psychology is "Freudian," just as it often was from his first novel, Watch and Ward (even though, as Leon Edel says, "there is no evidence that James ever heard of Freud"),[2] and that Turn of the Screw is a classic of dramatic realism because in it James so harrowingly understates the mystery derivable from the trivia, lacunae, and error of everyday life.[3] My concept of the governess as an unreliable narrator does not conflict with my view that the book is functionally realistic. As John Enck says, James provides different strata of reliability from which a reasonable interpretation of the story may be

made.[4]

Edel, who has written more perceptive criticism of Turn of the Screw than anyone else, tells what the book is about in Volume IV of his biography of James: "... the essential data ... [are] not the identification of the ghosts, but the history of the governess and her way of relating to the children and to the housekeeper."[5] This history is told obliquely by the governess, who concentrates on the ghosts and their supposed evil influence, but unconsciously reveals that they are projections of her problems of personal relations, which grew from her infatuation with the master of Bly and her subsequent insecurity regarding her position as governess. She is not afraid so much of the ghosts as she is of Mrs. Grose and the children. Much of the peculiar frantic horror of her story is the result of the flights and drops of her emotions between courage and fright, hubris and panic, excitement and depression, shrewdness and ignorance, and between the endurance and the imposition of suffering. Proceeding through Turn of the Screw is like trying to find solid footing during an earthquake: everywhere there are mysterious tremors from the faults of the governess.

The structure of the book -- that is, the linear progress of the governess' emotional instability -- is so distinct that it could be plotted on the "vital-signs sheet" of a hospital patient proceeding irregularly through a

series of peaks and depressions. Or, conceived in another linear sense, the story follows a screwing motion, up and over, up and over, up and over, until the governess is in "a tighter place still than I had yet turned round in" (293), complementing the "turn" metaphor that Hans-Joachim Lang and Hildegard Domaniecki have studied.[6]

Turn of the Screw is not "merely" the case history of an hysteric, because it deals with not only the governess, but with her effect on the housekeeper and the children. Besides her emotional fluctuations, there is a tension that rises and falls between the relationships she thinks she creates and those that really exist. It is necessary to understand her hysteria to understand the power of the book. I will outline the erratic course her hysteria compels her to follow -- "the strange steps of my obsession," she calls it (244) -- her ups and downs and their causes, and the substantive content of her relations with the housekeeper and the children. Then I will proceed to a chronological explication of the book which brings together all these elements, and conclude with a discussion of aspects of the critical history and sources of Turn of the Screw not previously noted.

Edmund Wilson liberated Turn of the Screw from the purgatory of inadequate appreciation and showed it to be one hell of a book when he pointed out its Freudian nature.[7] Unfortunately, he has since been under attack by a number of

critics who show a bias against such interpretations, and a lack of understanding of -- if not a resistance to understanding -- what he meant by sex repression. And, of course, his work was incomplete: he was a pioneer. A fuller comparison is needed between the details of Turn of the Screw and the principles Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer put down in the "Preliminary Communication" (1893) and case studies of their Studies on Hysteria (1895),[8] and I will add to that comparison in this paper. I am not concerned with exploring whether James read either of those works, although the details of their publication in London and their review by James's friend F. W. H. Myers make it clear that the works were available and popular among psychical researchers with whom James closely associated.[9] My interest is that Freud provides a method for explaining the governess' weird story that I find evidentially appropriate.

The "ghosts" -- the governess' hallucinations -- reveal she is suffering from a complex of social disappointments (Freud's and Breuer's "group of provoking causes"[10]), comprising her frustrated passion for the master, her frustrated desire to possess the children, her guilty awe at the splendor of Bly (which so contrasts to her humble home), her lack of confidence in running the country place (intensified by her knowledge that the previous governess and valet were very confident, very much in charge, and very intimately sharing an experience -- complete with children --

equivalent to what she wants), and her basically unstable personality. She wishes, in her unwordly adolescent idealism, to marry the master, mother the children, and have Bly for her own. She openly refers to the infatuation, constantly refers to "my" children, and in her walking daydreams experiences "a sense of property that amused and flattered me" (174).

Those are her frustrations and daydreams, and the hallucinations she projects from them reveal the intensity with which she feels them. The ideas incompatible with her ego, in Freud's terms,[11] are that social barriers will prevent the realization of her sexual and maternal fantasies and that her own inadequacy for teaching the two exceptional children will prevent her from succeeding in the basic assignment she accepted under romantic pressure from the master: to run Bly without bothering him at all (156, 240). This is why the letter of expulsion from Miles's school is so frightening to her; she does not know how to cope with it, and its arrival her second day there -- under a covering letter from the master -- shakes her from the start. In her projections, the two ghosts become the opposite of her concept of the two people who concern her most, herself and the master -- Freud's "antagonistic inversion."[12] The master, socially unattainable, becomes in her projections his servant, Peter Quint, who would be her social inferior in "the scale" (207) which is so

important to the governess. Quint retains the sexual appeal of the master and wears his clothes. The governess herself, in her own mind proper and good, becomes the previous governess, the infamous Miss Jessel. Miss Jessel and Quint are sexual partners whose experiences arouse and puzzle the governess; they seek as ghosts to kill and completely possess the children, while the governess, as the agent of the master, tries to keep them alive and possess them.

Other Freudian principles of hysteria are exhibited in Turn of the Screw. His underlying concept of "constancy" -- that the mind cannot too long sustain high or irregular excitation -- is expressed by the governess in regard to herself,[13] and, as Breuer says, "The sexual instinct is undoubtedly the most powerful source of persisting increases of excitation (and consequently of neuroses)."[14] Freud's discovery of the anxiety of virgins who suspect that others are experiencing sexual intercourse is perceivable throughout Turn of the Screw, and I shall demonstrate how the governess' hysteria is "psychically acquired," the result of "laborious suppression of sexual affect." Freud says an hysteric cannot consciously recall the cause of her problem, and that traumas go unresolved either because of social circumstances -- especially in continent women -- or because they are first experienced in daydreams. These principles also apply to the governess, who only rarely doubts her interpretation of events, who is unable to resolve her

futile infatuation, and who first received both Quint and Miss Jessel in the "hypnoid" state of daydreams -- Quint during a lover's reverie, Miss Jessel during needlework, two susceptible times according to Freud and Breuer.[15]

James also dramatizes Freud's contentions that (1) all hysteric attacks are related to the original trauma -- in this case, the governess' awareness that the master is out of reach (a social fact which she never mentions in her narration, a glaring omission when compared to its thematic status in Jane Eyre, which is a general source for Turn of the Screw[16]); (2) that subsequent attacks are distorted, often beyond obvious recognition; and (3) that hysteria develops because of too much excitement and too low resistance in the victim.[17] The governess testifies that she was in a most fluid and expansive time in her life: "It was the first time ... that I had known space and air and freedom" (173). Freud's concept of hysterical "splitting of consciousness," which he says is intentional, is twice described by the governess (183-184, 303), and Freud's and Breuer's idea that stimulation of the hysterogenic zone can induce hysteria[18] seems deductive from the governess' actions after reading Amelia, just the kind of salacious novel she had longed for at home (221).

I do not give this outline of Freudian analogues in Turn of the Screw with the intention of developing fully or exclusively a psychoanalytical interpretation, but rather

because it is important to show that the book is powered by a sexual dynamic. It is necessary to understand that the nature of the evil the governess fears is sexual, although she only hints at this. Hers is the narration of a highly sexed young virgin whose main hope is thwarted, and who gradually awakens from an initial escapist euphoria experienced with two lovely children and no superiors in a gracious country home, to realize that she cannot even do the job she took ("as a favor," 153) in hopes of attaining her dream. Naturally in this isolation her most fearful concept of evil would involve what touches her most deeply: sexual infatuation. Cultural factors also would influence her, of course, and as Mark Spilka observes, "evil, in the Victorian age, tended to be largely identified with sex."[19] This is revealed in her extravagant condemnations of Miss Jessel. From a character by Mrs. Grose that suggests that Miss Jessel's only sin was a tragic affair with Quint, the governess concludes that Miss Jessel ruined the children and is a "horror of horrors" (205). The ghosts "can" destroy the children, but this is only instrumental to their regaining full possession of them, "For the love of all the evil that, in those dreadful days, the pair put into them. And to ply them with that evil still, to keep up the work of demons, is what brings the others back" (237).

That evil was sexual. The governess' tendency to suspect sexual evil is great,[20] and she confesses her hunger

for the novels I mentioned above. But even more revealing is her intuition when she looks into Mrs. Grose's eyes, where her own image is reflected, thinks she sees Miss Jessel there and says of the affair with Quint, "It must have been also what she wished" (208). Keeping this in mind we can understand her envious high excitement as she convinces herself that the children are privy to the evil about which she is so curious. She furiously condemns Miss Jessel to obscure that interest, but like a censored Cleopatra, she constantly speaks in sentimental Victorian sexual terms, of a charming story (175), of the horrid, unclean school world with its sordid headmasters (182), of a house of ill fame and the perturbation of scullions (196), of man's tribute to woman (247), of the rights of Miles's sex (248), of a maid writing to her sweetheart (257), and - most revealingly - of her and Miles as honeymooners, when they finally are alone together (297). There also are increasingly bitter remarks about the master as her hysteria mounts,[21] and her speech and hallucinations are rich with unconscious sexual symbolism.[22]

Awareness of the strong sexual nature of the governess, which of course is in constant conflict with her rural religious upbringing, clarifies the ambivalent intensity of her drive to save the children, who she claims are under threat of c[illegible]uption rather than admit that the real threat is their superiority to her teaching ability -- which makes

them threats to her success as a governess, which in turn threatens her sexual fantasy, which in turn leaves the children susceptible to attack from her.

From those premises, I will outline the sequence of her ups and downs, which sets the tone and forms the structure of Turn of the Screw: Chapters I-V show the governess depressed or scared by a series of adjustments to her love-labor and then by a strange visitor, but lifted up each time by Mrs. Grose or the children. At the end of Chapter V, the governess is "prostrate" (193) on learning the identity of her visitor, but she rises from this in a "flight of heroism" in Chapter VI (199) when she conceives of the threat of Quint as a way to prove herself to the master by saving the children. She is downed again by Miss Jessel and the thought that the children already are lost communicants with the dead (208), but learns of Mrs. Grose's history of Bly and decides to wait for proof. Days pass and the governess exists "in a cloud" with the "blameless and foredoomed" children and gradually rises to one of her peaks, her "magnificent" facing-down of Quint on the stairs at the end of Chapter IX.

She thinks now she may be done with ghosts, and she is thrilled even more when she returns to her room and thinks she has caught Flora in flagrante delicto, but she drops suddenly from the heights when Flora innocently outwits her. She stays down, sleepless, for eleven nights, then hits one

of her depths when she sees Miles on the lawn at 1 a. m. She instantly rebounds with the thought that now she has caught him in the act of meeting Quint, but plummets again when she decides she cannot risk raising the question of evil and ghosts with a child. When Miles kisses her, "it was practically the end of everything" (234), but back she comes in Chapter XII, extravagant rhetorician, to feel "justified" by a sense of Mrs. Grose's "support" -- which suddenly dissolves at the end of the chapter into fear of what Mrs. Grose might do about contacting the master for help with whatever the problem is.

Chapter XIII, the middle of the book and a counterpoint to Chapter IX, is a condensation of weeks of agony as tension and hostility toward the children mount in the governess. In Chapter IX she was being "just," waiting for more evidence of their guilt, ostensibly accepting as genuine their professed love and scholastic achievement, and building up to her victory over Quint on the stairs. In Chapter XIII she is sure the children are guilty, and her righteousness and torment make their continued sparkling performances and loving gestures seem to her like unbearable hypocrisies. This leads to her mad break with Miles on the way to church in Chapter XIV, when once again she is downed by his aggressiveness, with which she simply cannot cope (251). She plans to leave, but when she realizes that she physically cannot (no conveyance) and senses that if she did,

Miss Jessel would reclaim her office unchallenged, the governess stays. She makes a rallying bid for Mrs. Grose's support -- a promise to write the master, and thereby to grant the request Mrs. Grose had asked when the governess last felt sure of her.

Chapter XVII is a drop from this discovery, as Miles restates in his bedroom the demand for freedom he made on the churchroad. In Chapter XVIII he knocks her down again with his diverting concert, but she rises with the prospect of triumph over the easier opponent, Flora, which the governess thinks she has attained by the evocation of Miss Jessel at the pond in Chapter XX, which climaxes several encouraging lifts in tracking Flora there. But the governess falls even more rapidly than she rose, fainting after Mrs. Grose and Flora say they do not see Miss Jessel. The evening with Miles is even more depressing ("portentous," the governess says), but she rallies next morning in hostility to Flora's reprobation. The governess reasserts control over Mrs. Grose, forms a plan to break Miles, is amazed at "the spirit I had still in reserve," and soars even higher when Mrs. Grose finally "believes." The governess thinks she has "mastered" the situation at the end of Chapter XXI, but her courage drops when Mrs. Grose leaves her alone to take Flora to the uncle in London. The governess builds herself up for the afternoon confrontation with Miles (Chapters XXII - XXIV), in which, after rising

and falling rapidly between gloating and guilt, she ends her story in murderous ecstasy.

Thus there is an opening pattern of intensifying ups and downs (Chapters I - XII), followed by an extended series of defeats (Chapters XIII - XVII) which require the painful but rising resolution of Chapters XVIII - XXIV, which again is effected in rapid ups and downs, but at a higher pitch than in the beginning.

These ups and downs are the results of her changing relations with Mrs. Grose and the children, which she ruins in her experience and distorts in her recounting. Her distortion is underscored by the unbelievable intuition, wrong assumptions, unrealistic expectations, extravagant assessments, and poor judgements with which she fills her story. She does not understand children, she does not realize how much Mrs. Grose perceives her contempt -- which may be unconscious -- and she does not realize how desperate is her passion for the master. The nature of her relations with the children and Mrs. Grose can be summarized as fear, and the form the fear takes is determined from one episode to the next by the amount of resistance or surprise they offer her. It seems that her hysteria would subside if ever she could believe they were in her power. She never can, and conversely the most drastic ups and downs occur when they seek to act other than as media for the fancies of the governess. Relations with Mrs. Grose are of course

influenced by relations with the children -- there even are two crucial scenes which suggest that Mrs. Grose may have a relationship with the children of which the governess is unaware[23] -- and the governess' worst time at Bly (Chapters XIII - XVI) comes when she is alienated from Mrs. Grose because of the letter-writing disagreement and concurrently is suffering from the delusion that her own eyes are sealed to the frequent visits of the ghosts to the children. But although the two relationships are interrelated, each can be separately traced.

It has been well-documented how the governess bullies, presses, misleads, and frightens Mrs. Grose,[24] but these are not the most significant aspects of their relationship. Of primary importance is the fact that the governess needs Mrs. Grose to boost her ego and to confirm her spiritual perceptions, but she is afraid of Mrs. Grose because she cannot trust, control, or convince her, because Mrs. Grose has what the governess calls an enviable relationship with the children (276), and in the beginning simply because Mrs. Grose is part of Bly. Although the governess repeatedly says she and Mrs. Grose are "at one" or "shoulder to shoulder," it is clear from her suspicious comments about Mrs. Grose that the governess does not believe this. Throughout, the governess associates Mrs. Grose with the children, either tacitly or explicitly opposed to herself.[25]

The first thing that unsettles the governess on

reaching Bly is her perception that Mrs. Grose is too glad to see her. The hint of an existing problem is obviously intended, but it is never shown in the story why Mrs. Grose should have been so relieved. Mrs. Grose is not haunted or unhappy, and there is nothing from which to infer that she felt a vacuum existed after Quint and Miss Jessel died. And even if -- to indulge in an extreme interpretation to make a point -- Mrs. Grose somehow were the villain of Turn of the Screw, as some critics contend,[26] there would be no reason she should be overly eager for a new governess to arrive.

Therefore this first response of the governess to Mrs. Grose reveals more about the governess than about Mrs. Grose: it reveals that the governess is apprehensive toward her and yet needs her. The governess wants Mrs. Grose to be glad she has arrived, because the governess desperately needs to feel accepted; she reads this feeling into Mrs. Grose just as she imposes other attitudes on the woman and the children. The governess is further moved to win over Mrs. Grose when the old woman idly dismisses the infatuation that is so important to the governess. "I could laugh" about it, the governess says, suggesting the effort involved. The governess' next strong response to Mrs. Grose also is in Chapter I and the pattern is set for the book: she "somehow" -- and I will try to explain the motivational significance of her many "somehow's" and "instinctively's" and other inexpressibles -- induces from Mrs. Grose's hearty acceptance of a routine

suggestion that "we should on every question be quite at one. Oh, she was glad I was there!" (162). The excessive response and the repetition of the "Oh, she was glad" confirm the governess' insecurity.

She is upset in Chapter II when Mrs. Grose rejects her interpretation of Miles's expulsion, but "fortified" when Mrs. Grose agrees to "see it out" -- the repercussions of the expulsion -- with her. After the first appearance of the ghost, the governess says her "real beginning of fear was one ... with the instinct of sparing my companion" (180), but after the second ghost she says she need no longer respect Mrs. Grose's "innocence" -- having just had it "confusedly present" to her that she should represent her shock to Mrs. Grose (185). She guides Mrs. Grose to identify the vision, but is stunned by the identification because she had not emotionally accepted the implications of her perceptions.

She then, with "portentous clearness" (from the recollection of Mrs. Grose's responses when the children were mentioned during the identification scene), sees that she must connect the ghost to the children to get Mrs. Grose on her side: this is "the common ground we must have found in the one idea that, by good fortune, could steady us" (194). Thus a pattern is revealed in Chapters IV-VI: the governess is first afraid to mention the ghost, not because of a protectiveness for Mrs. Grose, but because on one

viewing there is not enough tangible evidence -- the governess is madly empirical in her intuitiveness -- to make her story convincing. So she evokes the ghost again, substitutes for him to meet Mrs. Grose's perception, and then involves her more through the children. Critics have argued that the ghosts exist only in the governess' perceptions, but they exist also in her relationship with Mrs. Grose and are the main energizing force in that relationship. Mrs. Grose is the only person to whom the governess talks, and, as the governess says, many of her inductions come even as she is describing her experiences to the housekeeper.

The governess needs Mrs. Grose not only as a witness to prove her sanity, but as the particular kind of witness she is: an intellectual and social inferior, a mechanism the governess can control and mold and use to change Bly into her own sphere of influence, not that of Quint and Miss Jessel. The governess' condescension toward Mrs. Grose is constant, and this too is defensive.

However, despite her periodic assertions of Mrs. Grose's support,[27] moments of stress reveal that the governess is not sure of Mrs. Grose until their last scene together. This is true even though the governess does not comprehend the hostility or defensiveness of many of Mrs. Grose's "odd" or "inconsequential" remarks. The governess needs this support -- which to her is proof of conquest --

so much that she makes her only interruption of a narrative episode (the beginning of Chapter XI) to insist upon it. But when she finishes describing that episode -- the important one of Miles on the lawn -- and is lifted from its crushing implications by Mrs. Grose's "justifying" exclamation, "Laws!", she suddenly is dashed down again by her panicky fear that Mrs. Grose may take the initiative of contacting the master. This apparently leaves the governess without support through her autumn of agony (Chapter XIII), and after Miles threatens to contact the master at the end of Chapter XIV, and the governess first imagines Miss Jessel to be a housemaid attempting "the considerable effort of a letter to her sweetheart," the governess effects a reconciliation with Mrs. Grose by making up her mind to "everything" and deciding to write the uncle.

Then, by convincing Mrs. Grose of Flora's escape to the pond, the governess rises to her peak projection of Miss Jessel. But because Mrs. Grose is "exempt" from seeing the ghost and sides with Flora "in shocked opposition to me," the governess again is prostrated. Mrs. Grose's conversion lifts the governess again and makes possible her aggressive assault on Miles at the end.

However, to the end she misunderstands Mrs. Grose, who ironically is won over to the governess, not by the long, intuitive arguments, but by an influence the governess had not anticipated, but unwittingly had encouraged on the way

to the pond (274). The influence is language. The governess asks, "You mean that, since yesterday, you have seen -- ?" Mrs. Grose replies, "I've heard -- !" and the governess echoes, "Heard?" (289)

Mrs. Grose explains that since hearing Flora's "really shocking" language, she believes ("as she had never done before") that the governess is right, presumably about ghosts ("such doings") -- or, is she referring to the shared sexual experiences the governess charges to Quint, Miss Jessel, and the children? Whatever Mrs. Grose meant, the governess took it as personal justification, which suggests how little the governess would have needed to do to win this ally she wanted so much that she said: "Yes, it was a joy, and we were still shoulder to shoulder: if I might continue sure of that I should care but little what else happened" (291). At the same time that the statement shows the governess' need of Mrs. Grose, it shows how the governess has given up on the children -- "I should care but little what else happened" -- and is preparation for the mad cruelty finally unmasked in the closing scene. The parting kiss and promise of Mrs. Grose ("I'll save you without [Miles]") is the final irony: the governess and housekeeper are together at the cost of the health of one child and the life of the other. The governess' homely understatement is ironic testimony: "Things have got so bad"(288).

As long as the governess thinks she can control Mrs.

Grose, her tension eases and her confidence increases, but whenever Mrs. Grose tries to assert herself, the governess panics or at least is hostile and unappreciative. There is no evidence that she can accept Mrs. Grose other than as a property for her inner drama.

The reader can imagine a Mrs. Grose from the governess' description and unconscious revelations. And, as James said of the governess in his preface: "We have surely as much of her own nature as we can swallow" (xix). But the children, particularly Flora, are not so much people as idealizations by the governess. They are "almost impersonal," she says (182),[28] and so is her presentation of them: the story is half over before one of them is allowed an extended speaking appearance (Miles in Chapter XI). Miles is onstage more, and therefore more susceptible to interpretation, and one of the painful impressions from his conversations with the governess is that his responses are not extraordinary but normal and inevitable under the circumstances, and yet she takes them as hints of supernatural evil.

The relationship of the governess and the children develops in this manner: she comes to Bly apprehensive, but the children make her worse. She is an inexperienced and irregularly educated governess, and, from what we must consider objective evidence -- such as games and feats of memory and Miles's piano-playing -- they are exceptional children. She says her influence on them is minimal: they

amuse themselves without her, and have "no occasion whatever" to draw on her imagination (200). They are too much for her, and it scares her. Her "primary undertaking" is "to give [the master] no worry," and she says any appeal for help will be construed by him as an attempt "to attract his attention to my slighted charms" (240) -- which shows the nature of her motivation and of her commitment to the uncle, and why she is so anxious to control the children.

Miles really is the problem she cannot handle, for two sexually related reasons. The first is partly intellectual. She confesses at the outset that it was "perhaps my conceit, to assume that I could deal with a boy whose education for the world was all on the point of beginning" (173) -- the suggestion of sexual awakening is here -- and she confesses at the end to a "queer relief ... in the renouncement of one pretension ... the fiction that I had anything more to teach him .... for my dignity, I had had to appeal to him to let me off straining to meet him on the ground of his true capacity" (294). This is why the governess seizes upon a detail of Mrs. Grose's memory (213, 215) and links Miles and Quint, Flora and Miss Jessel. The governess would prefer to have the responsibilities so divided, at that level of awareness at which she associates herself with Miss Jessel and the master with Quint.[29]

The second part of her problem with Miles is, in a sense, disciplinary, although in the special frame of

reference of Turn of the Screw, the discipline is complex and unnatural. Not only is Miles "beyond" her intellectually, not only can she not consciously control him, but because of him she cannot unconsciously control supernatural events at Bly. She cannot face the implications she attaches to his expulsion from school, and his aggressiveness on the lawn, on the way to church, and at the piano undoes her. That first audacious prank and his threat to do more -- "half a dozen words ... that really settle the matter. 'Think, you know, what I might do!'" (236) -- disrupt the governess' control of circumstances, increase the children's threat to her security, bring to the surface her considerable bitterness toward them (247, 255-256), lead her to her "actual conclusions" (245), and initiate the weeks of pain which require some sort of drastic resolution. Had Miles really been as good and docile as the governess claimed (212, 268), she might have survived her hysteria without harm. Before the lawn episode it appeared that she had endured the strain as long as she could, and was working out a resolution, beginning when she defied Quint on the stairs with the fierce confidence that "if I stood my ground a minute I should cease -- for the time at least -- to have him to reckon with" (222). Quint had changed in her mind from "erect" and "impudent" to a "low wretch" with a back disfigured from sycophancy. (He has declined to a "coward horror" at the end.)

But if she had in mind a resolution, Miles upset it, and her relationship with the children thereafter steadily degenerated; she began to conceive of them as adversaries, referring to "advantages" or "triumphs" she or they gained over each other.[30] She earlier had said that the children could soothe and fascinate her even when she suspected them: they still were charming, and the ghosts made them "more interesting" (217). But she began to look for signs of "queerness" in their actions (218), and suspected they were plotting to help each other slip away from her (220). Eventually, she says, both her anticipations are realized, but this is questionable, because her anticipations are highly untrustworthy, as I shall demonstrate.

Relations become so strained that the governess says in Chapter XIII that she now has difficulty even speaking to the children, and thinks that they know that she knows that they know, and "this strange relation made ... the air in which we moved" (241). Their situation has become "as rare a little case of instinctive delicacy as any schoolroom probably had ever known" (245), and it hardens in her view to a ghastly ritual of avoidance of supernatural topics, indulgence in wildly irrelevant and deceptive kissing, and repetition of futile speculation about the possibility of a visit from the uncle. Her analysis is debatable, because of, for one factual example, her great overestimation of the frequency with which children normally would discuss the

dead (242). It seems sure that while relations were frantic, they were not so for the reasons she gives. The children probably kissed her to calm her, and wanted their uncle out of fear. It is difficult to say to what extent they were aware of her unbalanced condition, and whether they tried to be kind to her. Their general good behavior would suggest kindness, but Miles's tricks were not kind; however, who knows just how she was treating them, and what sort of hostile or defensive behavior her treatment may have aroused for which the children could not be blamed? At any rate, she feels it is "extraordinary" that she did not lose patience with the adorable little devils and hate them. She did, of course.

Their "actual relation" becomes "fabulous" (263), and Miles's asking to play the piano for her is as appropriate, she says, as "David playing to Saul" (269), which is a strangely confessional assessment in view of Saul's mad jealousy and the fact that while "David was playing the lyre ... Saul sought to pin David to the wall with his spear," and so broke up their relationship (I Samuel 19:9 ff). The roles are analogous: Saul is a supreme authority like the governess, and David is a soldier like Miles. The confrontation at the pond leaves her alienated from Flora, and she speaks of the little girl almost as if she were a mature sexual rival (285). The disjointed conversation on the road to church Sunday gives Miles his "freedom" Monday (283), which is clearly signalled Tuesday by his taking a walk

instead of coming to the classroom (294).

The governess decides to save him by appealing to the intelligence which she envies in him, and that decision proves to be as dangerous as it sounds. When she begins her inquisition, she finds him afraid of her, encourages his fear, thinks they both fear for each other, is surprised to find that his "surrender" of the confession regarding the letter only further separates them, and finally in anger, pride, and sexual frustration drives him to a fatal rage she deliriously interprets as "his tribute to my devotion" (309). It is a malicious scene highly charged with overtones of sexual assault, and its meaning to the governess is revealed in her mad reaction to Miles's "divination" that Miss Jessel, not Quint, is present: "I seized, stupefied, his supposition -- some sequel to what we had done to Flora, but this made me only want to show him that it was better still than that." This "we" is as critically disquieting as Mrs. Grose's "him" was to the governess, for it may signify either the governess and Mrs. Grose (and thereby constitute a lie), or the governess and Miss Jessel. If it is the latter, it signifies the fulfillment of a murderous wish and identification the governess made when her evolving condemnation of the children entered its final deadly stage: the ghosts meant to lure the children to their deaths, she told Mrs. Grose, and "scrupulously [my italics] added: 'Unless, of course, we

can prevent!'" (239).

With those basic relationships, rhythms of movement, tones, and psychological premises established, I will now undertake a chronological explication of the text, to demonstrate how James amplified these elements with supporting themes and motifs into an organic work of horror.

II

A Victim of the Hierarchy

The prologue is one of the first puzzles of Turn of the Screw to people who do not read the novel simplistically. Although there have been some "fantasy interpretations," as Edel calls them, which say that Douglas is Miles,[1] the critical tendency has been to believe Douglas about his own past and to accept his character of the governess.[2] The latter practice causes problems.

Many of the factual details Douglas gives are repeated in the governess' narrative. Others, such as her "fluttered anxious" nature and her being "young, untried, nervous" (153, 155), are dramatized. All such data could be given by the governess, at no artistic cost, and there is no reason not to believe them. But Douglas's opinions of her are not always supported by her narrative, and his method of introducing her narrative is misleading. James takes pains to establish that Douglas's audience is superficial, if not vulgar (151, 152).[3] Douglas himself teases -- about the "respectability" of Bly (155), about "anticipating" himself (155), about the cause of Miss Jessel's death -- it does not "come out" (155) -- and about the object of the governess' love. "The story won't tell" whom she loves, Douglas says, "not in any literal vulgar way" (151), which means either that she does not love the uncle -- a reading that would

conflict with the clear signals in the story -- or that she does love him and that Douglas's statement is not true.[4] Further, he insists that the governess never saw the master again (156), which is unbelievable in view of the death of Miles. Finally, Douglas's memory of her as a charming, agreeable, clever, and nice person (150) proves to be most misleading. The governess may well have been all those things -- despite Mrs. Grose's insulting remark, "A friend -- you?" (258) -- but what we need is some hint as to whether she is a reliable narrator, whether after his reading of her manuscript he had doubts of its accuracy. As Freud and Breuer observed, "among hysterics may be found people of the clearest intellect, strongest will, greatest character and highest critical power. ... After all, the patron saint of hysteria, St. Theresa, was a woman of genius with great practical capacity."[5] Douglas's comment that her story is incomparable for "dreadfulness ... general uncanny ugliness and horror and pain" could apply to either the events as the governess perceives them, or events as they seem really to have occurred from her record.[6]

I conclude that the prologue does not merely introduce the story, but stores the final horror: the realization that hits the reader at the end that not only did the governess perpetrate that summer of horror and pain and innocent destruction, but she got away with it. Douglas apparently does not suspect her, nor did the master, for

she continued her career without loss, if she was serving a family with a son like Douglas at Trinity College (149).

Chapter I covers the governess' first two days at Bly. At the most superficial level of plot, she meets Mrs. Grose and Flora the first day, has a restless night, and spends the second day touring Bly under Flora's guidance. A number of elements are introduced which will function throughout the story and be the media for the governess' distress. The up-and-down pattern begins: she rises to meet the master's appeal, she is doubtful again on the coach, her fortitude mounts on seeing the lovely scenery, but she drops again when overwhelmed by Bly's magnificence. She begins to conceive of Bly as a storybook house with strange noises. She is awed by the "liberality" of Bly and her being the benefactress of it. She is sleepless the first night. Her expectations begin to fail her: Bly, the housekeeper, and the child all are different from what she envisioned. The distance between her expectations and her real experiences remains great throughout the story, and the surprises that result from her wrong anticipations rarely are "good" or settling. The errors of her expectations not only reveal her many wrong assessments, but also contribute to her extreme ups and downs. This motif builds to a dramatic effect in the last scene of the book, when she wrongly anticipates almost all of Miles's responses (except the "exemption," which she unconvincingly imposes on him),

all of which calls in doubt her understanding of Miles and her thesis that he has been haunted.

On this first day she also begins to "know" and act on uncertain or intuitive motivation, making a confession to Mrs. Grose on "impulse" and "somehow" perceiving that Mrs. Grose will be her ally. She impulsively tells Mrs. Grose of her infatuation with the master, after having offered an equally important reason for her being at Bly: "I came ... to be carried away" (162), the meaning of which will be understandable with her second ghost.

In terms of relationships, she "already" likes Mrs. Grose for being deferential, and she is sure they will be "quite at one" on every question, but she immediately suspects the old woman of trying to hide a secret relief at the arrival of the governess, and she apparently is a bit offended by Mrs. Grose's light response to her infatuation: "Well, Miss, you're not the first -- and you won't be the last." The governess comments, "I could laugh," suggesting that it took an effort (162).

She says that "to watch, teach, 'form' little Flora would too evidently be the making of a happy and useful life" (160), but she is so taken by Flora's beauty that it contributes primarily to keeping her awake all night. Her "first duty" is to "win the child into the sense of knowing me," and she says that within half an hour they are "immense friends." Lessons "suffered some delay," however, because

the governess is overwhelmed by "my new circumstances," which have "an extent and mass for which I had not been prepared and in the presence of which I found myself, freshly, a little scared not less than a little proud" (163).

Her sleeplessness that first night exposes her, she says, to the faint, far cry of a child and possibly to a light footstep outside her door. She says she does not think much about these sounds, but they will come up again (unstated) as part of a "portentous clearness" when she tries to explain the second appearance of her male spirit.

Chapter II begins with an annoying and unusual little inconsistency of dating.[7] After having specifically described her activities and emotions of the first two days, the governess now says she received notice of Miles's expulsion from school in the mail at the end of the first day and that it gave her a "second sleepless night." Why did it not keep her up the first night? Had she reserved that to worry about Flora's beauty? I do not know what to make of this inconsistency, except to say that it does not seem to influence the story.

There is, however, a particular symbolic significance to the form in which she receives the news. The expulsion torments her throughout the book, and dread of its meaning is the catalyst of her fears. She receives this highly emotional document sealed firmly inside a covering letter

from the master, so that she has in her hands at once tangible symbols both of her mystery and of the love-bond that defines the terms on which she must face it.

This is the first of the "Mrs. Grose" chapters -- others are Chapters V - VIII, XII, XVI, and XXI -- which relate the disjointed conversations between these two socially and intellectually separated women, who talk past each other, fear each other, never really understand each other, yet rely on each other out of desperation. In these chapters James masterfully displays the pitfalls of communication, which in these circumstances cause disorder and death. These passages are highly dramatic and, like all conversations in Turn of the Screw, oblige the reader to amplify the sparse stage diections or miss much of what is happening, as Muriel West and Jean Frantz Blackall have shown.[8]

Chapter II comprises the governess' two brief conversations with Mrs. Grose as she seeks clues as to what might have caused Miles's expulsion. These two conversations extend some of the patterns begun in Chapter I and begin new ones that will continue through the book. Notably, the governess begins to reveal her suspicious nature, with its particular prurient quality, which causes her to stew over items from Mrs. Grose's memory of past events at Bly.

For her part, Mrs. Grose first flashes the hostility that recurs whenever the governess intimidates her or insensitively addresses her, or threatens the children. Mrs.

Grose divulges three data that become important parts of the governess' hallucinations: that Miles was indeed occasionally, and desirably, "bad"; that there may have been someone else with the master's sexual preferences connected to Bly -- the "him" who "liked [past tense] everyone" young and pretty; and that Miss Jessel was not "careful -- particular" about all things.

But the most significant development of Chapter II is the emergence of the governess' fundamental disposition to sexual guilt and suspicion, an attitude without which she would not have interpreted and directed events as she does. To fully appreciate that disposition it is necessary to understand a generally held assumption about Victorian schools, which comes out in the governess' first stated suspicions about Miles's expulsion. The headmaster gives no reason for the expulsion, but the governess does not need one. "That can have only one meaning," she says, explaining after Mrs. Grose refuses to ask what it is: "That he's an injury to the others." Her own judgment frightens and insults the governess, and she adds sarcastically, "To his poor little innocent mates" (167). The meaning of these terms to her is shown by the guesses and associations she makes in the rest of the chapter toward a definition of Miles's wickedness. Why she would have been so quick to think in these terms will be elucidated by a pamphlet, The Science of Life, presented to the Oxbridge faculties in 1877

and purporting to tell the sad moral -- that is, sexual -- condition of British boys schools in the era in which the events of Turn of the Screw took place.[9]

We have broad enough hints that the governess knows the moral reputation of the schools, because, besides the sarcastic reference to the innocence of Miles's schoolmates, she later says Miles "was only too fine and fair for the little horrid unclean school-world" with its "stupid sordid head-masters" (182). The Science of Life describes just such a world and a boy's typical moral decline in it:

> ... At the age of ten or twelve perhaps, he is sent to a private school, and before his departure his father and mother give him advice and warning. He is exhorted always to speak the whole truth; ... and the first lesson that he will learn at school is, that as his parents have been guilty of an evasion before him, so he must practice a life-long deception before them.... For at school he learns after a time, from stray hints and mysterious whisperings, something of what his parents would fain have hidden from him, and more besides, which it had been better for him if he had never known....
>
> It is hardly possible to exaggerate the extent of this frightful evil of self-abuse. In some of our private schools, where boys are not kept beyond fifteen or sixteen years old, the practice is almost universal. It forms the subject of ordinary talk, and is carried on

> almost without a thought of shame. The bigger boys practice it openly, often ostentatiously, very often without any attempt at concealment, except from the eyes of the masters, and the younger ones soon learn it from them. . . .
>
> . . . The retired, delicate, studious boy, who has neither the energy nor the bodily strength required for playing cricket, football, or racquets is in terrible danger. [Cf. the governess' lament about Miles: "He sat down at the old piano and played as he had never played; and if there are those who think he had better have been kicking a football I can only say that I wholly agree with them" (269).] He feels but little enthusiasm for sports in which he can take no part. . . . He lives comparatively solitary and unfriended, without any strong interests to rouse his mind into healthy outward activity, and to divert it from preying on itself. And so he becomes the slave of the loathsome thoughts which continually thrust themselves upon him.[10]

Besides being a summary of an age-old anti-intellectual bias, this section of The Science of Life is both almost a summary of Miles's case as the governess sees it, and a description of the symptons and advance of the diseases of self-indulgence that gossip held the lewd (but non-U) Peter Quint suffered (198):

> If persevered in, the habit [of masturbation] leads to

> epilepsy, consumption, impotence, most frequently to insanity, and finally to a premature death. . . . The man who has at any period of life abused himself has in that act sacrificed something of his vigour and energy, and enfeebled in some degree his powers of life and mind. It is not in any special disease that the evil appears, but in an increased liability to all diseases.[11]

Of course, the governess does not say this directly; and although she is preoccupied with sex, she only indirectly refers to it, for, as The Science of Life points out about people of that time: "They . . . have never been taught -- scarcely even allowed -- to think on these subjects. From childhood upwards they learn to look upon the relation of the sexes as something mysterious, incomprehensible -- almost disgraceful. These topics are universally tabooed in ordinary society."[12]

That summarizes a great moral dilemma for the Victorians, and helps define the social boundaries of the conduct of the governess. There are many clues to her unstated prurience. She spends an enormous amount of time in the "roomful of old books at Bly," feasting on suggestive and salacious eighteenth-century fiction (such as Amelia) that she had quietly craved during the "unavowed curiosity of my youth" (221). Just as telling is the barely shielded meaning of her discussion in Chapter II with Mrs. Grose of Miles's "wickedness."[13] Feeling that Mrs. Grose has betrayed that

Miles has faults that made his expulsion from school predictable, and that the old woman has been avoiding her all day, the governess finally confronts Mrs. Grose that evening with the leading question: "'I take what you said to me at noon as a declaration that you've never known him to be bad.'" Mrs. Grose discourages that interpretation, and the governess gets rather oddly excited over Mrs. Grose's championing of badness in boys: "I held her tighter. 'You like them with the spirit to be naughty?' Then, keeping pace with her answer, 'So do I!' I eagerly brought out. 'But not to the degree to contaminate --'" Mrs. Grose has to have "contaminate" simplified to "corrupt," and then, comprehending, gives an "odd laugh" and asks "with a fine bold humour": "Are you afraid he'll corrupt you?" (168). It sounds very much as if, despite her disclaimer against contaminators, the governess is equating naughtiness with sex, or are we to understand that she would be so titillated over such boyhood naughtiness as filching cookies or speaking out of turn? My suspicion is reinforced by her leap of association in the next exchange with Mrs. Grose, over the previous governess.

"Did she see anything in the boy -- ?" the governess asks. Mrs. Grose replies, "That wasn't right? She never told me," and the governess relates without explanation that "I had a scruple, but I overcame it. 'Was she careful -- particular?'" Even taken out of context, the governess'

actions and questions legitimately could be interpreted as prurient. But given the close order of the introduction of these elements -- the boy's expulsion, the governess' firm conclusion regarding the nature of the cause, her sarcastic use of "innocent" to describe the schoolboys (all against a background of school notoriety), her excitement over naughtiness, and her quick association of the previous governess' awareness of Miles's naughtiness with that woman's reputation -- they cumulatively leave the strong impression that the governess thinks Miles's problem is sexual. And this suspicion is part of the curiosity about the boy that has deepened "almost to pain" (167).

In the first two chapters the mental instability of the governess is established and her sexual morbidity strongly suggested. In Chapter III -- an "up" chapter after the "downs" of Chapter II -- the three other decisive elements of her sad case are revealed. Miles comes home, she loves him, and all seems well as Mrs. Grose swears her support in suppressing the news of the expulsion. But the governess now is shown to be, as Douglas had said in the prologue, insecure and uncertain of herself: this insecurity about her job is sex-related, for she is shaken by the prospect of teaching a boy, particularly one as bright as Miles (173). Further, she is inhibited by a class-consciousness probably not unusual for her time, but serving in this case to cause her great

stress because it makes her feel that her passion for the master never can be realized. She knows this intellectually, but cannot accept it emotionally. Hence her problems. In her fantasies and testimony she tries for several chapters to keep alive her dreams of success and love -- as late as the end of Chapter XII they still arouse her deepest fears -- but the characteristics of the ghosts betray that she is being haunted by challenges to her authority and by what she conceives to be the audacity of her passion. At the end she is forced to confess that she long since was outdistanced intellectually by Miles (294). Earlier she had said that the master rightfully could conclude from a summation of the summer's agonies at Bly that it all was the result of the governess' attempts to "attract his attention to my slighted charms" (240). Actually no reasonable man would come to that conclusion from the prima facie evidence, but the governess knows it to be true and admits it because she safely can ascribe such suspicion to him whereas she cannot confess her own obscure plotting.

Finally, all these psychotic tendencies in the governess are intensified by the circumstances of this first big job of her life: "It was the first time, in a manner, that I had known space and air and freedom, all the music of summer and all the mystery of nature" (173). The "mystery of nature" seems to be erotic love, and for an unstable, insecure, sexually confused young woman, this expansion of horizons is

too much. Released into this volatile environment from the earlier pressures at home, she flies apart. "And then there was consideration," she says, presumably meaning the deference and affection due her office, "and consideration was sweet. Oh it was a trap -- not designed but deep -- to my imagination, to my delicacy, perhaps to my vanity; to whatever in me was most excitable" (173). That at least largely includes, and may comprehensively be, her sexual nature. "The best way to picture it all," she says, picturing more than she knows, "is to say that I was off my guard" (173).

Then the ghosts begin to come to her. It is revealing that on the one hand these apparitions are supposed to be so cunning and all-powerful as to visit the children in the presence of the governess without her seeing them (244), while on the other hand they are apparently so random and undisciplined that they persistently appear to the governess at times and places well removed from the children -- and that they progressively come when and where it is to the governess' best perverted interests that they come. A question of rationale is involved in interpreting these ghosts: there must be a pattern to the behavior of super-natural forces, to give coherence and meaning to a narrative based on their appearances, because otherwise Darrel Abel's position will prevail, that, "Since reports of ghosts in historical fact have never been conclusively explained,

there is no established understanding of such phenomena to turn upon the story for its interpretation."[14] In Turn of the Screw the most validly interpretable pattern is that the ghosts come when the governess needs them emotionally. Her insistence before one of Quint's appearances that there was "nothing to lead up or prepare it" (220), is in itself suggestive: why did she have to make the point? She protests too much.[15] The disparity between the actual appearances of the ghosts on the one hand and her assumptions of the ghosts' power and motives versus her power on the other is just another clue that events are not occurring as she thinks they are.

Enough evidence is presented as to what really inspires the first ghost. As is her habit at twilight, the governess has been walking the grounds and fantasizing about her two inseparable dreams: of success as a governess and of the subsequent reward of her master's attentions, ideally to be conferred on one of these walks during the hour which was "the thing in the day I liked most" (174). She comes out of the woods and perceives a figure on top of the tower of Bly that Flora had shown her two weeks before (163, 175). She first thinks it is "the figure I had so often invoked," but then, in "a violent perception" of that "mistake," perceives that it is no one she knows. The figure stares at her, even as it moves across the platform of the tower and turns away.

Of course, the first question of the reader is what to make of this. Do we take the governess literally? Or -- even allowing for a willing suspension of disbelief -- are there obstacles to believing the governess? There are obstacles: first, physical impossibilities, and second, the fact that some motivational probabilities are too strong to be ignored. The details she supplies go together too well in constructs other than the one she makes. Again, she protests too much. My opinion is stronger than Robert Slabey's:[16] I believe it would be physically impossible for the governess to see the face of the figure so clearly and distincly as she says "through the fading light" and at a distance "too far apart to call to each other" (177). Yet the governess insists on this, feels "intimately concerned" with the figure (180), and reasserts the clarity of her vision as supporting evidence the next time the figure appears to her: "He appeared thus again with I won't say greater distinctness, for that was impossible, but with a nearness that represented a forward stride in our intercourse" (184). She even says of the first apparition that they exchanged meaningful looks, each "asking" the other what business he or she had in being there.

If she could not have seen what she said she saw, what then could she have experienced? And why does she say that she and her subject questioned each other's presence? Details strongly suggest that the figure was a projection of her

fantasies and fears. She was daydreaming of the master. She sees a figure on a tower. Why there? First, because of the many examples I have pointed out in this story -- following the lead of Edmund Wilson and others -- it is evident that a pattern of Freudian sexual associations is present. Further, the two towers of Bly had been part of the governess' earlier "fancies," "especially when they loomed through the dusk." The governess had been up on this particular tower and gotten dizzy, which I think is one reason why she notices the way the figure's "hand, as he went, moved from one of the crenelations to the next" (178). Details such as this would not be put into the story without meaning, and another level of meaning is that the governess is imagining her breasts being fondled.[17] Also, the figure appears on the tower, high above her, because that is the social position of the master relative to hers. He is staring hard at her to rebuke her for indiscreet passion. He is an authority figure, and it is easy for her to shift his identity from the master to the unknown "him"; in that regard, the stare may represent a critical judgment being passed on her by her employer, discrediting the boasting she had done in her daydream, because she later will confess to her poor performance.

The "second surprise," which cancels her initial apprehension of the figure as the master, is, of course, a censoring process. She is a deeply troubled girl, as she has

suggested, and she is becoming hysterical, projecting distorted manifestations of thoughts she cannot face and resolve. She has taken this job because of an infatuation and feels herself under great pressure to succeed. She cannot bring herself to face the man she has so much wished for, because (a) her rigidly hierarchical view of society makes her feel he is unattainable, and (b) she knows that even the basis on which she hopes to see him -- her success as governess -- is not being established. She does not believe her "discretion, quiet good sense, and high propriety" are enough. So she blots out the master's image and substitutes a figure created from Mrs. Grose's ambiguous pronoun and from the governess' fear that something happened to her predecessor -- a figure in a position and mood symbolizing and consolidating her fears.

Her analysis of her vision begins with a detail indicating the problem of status that bothers this girl, who is "amused and flattered" by the "sense of property" that these walks give her: "An unknown man in a lonely place is a permitted object of fear to a young woman privately bred." The first thing she has stated in an attempt to explain her experience is a reference to her social status; she is using it to defend herself, and in the context is defending it; what she is not saying (yet) is that it occurs to her first because it is basic to the problem with which she is struggling -- that she resents her status

because it discourages her passion.

The next detail of her response to the figure is more revealing. Unable to identify the figure, she "bridled a little with the sense of how my office seemed to require that there should be no such ignorance and no such person" (177). The vision is a threat to her authority. Even more instructive is her feeling that he seems to be questioning what she is doing there: he "seemed to fix me, from his position, with just the question, just the scrutiny through the fading light, that his own presence provoked" (177). Later, Miss Jessel will signal the same sort of message when she appears at the desk of the governess (257).

The governess has encountered a figure on the tower she associates with the day Flora told her the secrets of Bly, a figure in a position that suggests control or power, a figure that inspires her to think of a rather informed "dozen possibilities" who it might be, but it is none of them. She can see its face, she says, but she hears nothing, for an "intense hush" has fallen, quieting even the rooks in the sky. Two details such as this are the touchstones of realism in Turn of the Screw: the two instances in which the apparitions seem to be exerting control over external nature.[18] The other occurs when little Flora, supposedly under the demonic influence of Miss Jessel, is able to maneuver the big boat across the pond (276). Context suggests, however, that in reality there is no supernatural

activity, but rather in the first case a distorted sense-perception by the governess, who suffers the same distortion so often she comes to call it "the kind of ministering moment" when ghosts should appear (243). As for Flora's rowing, it may be a misconception based on ignorance of the child's physical capability to maneuver the boat across the narrow pond, or it may be inexplicable. The view that the first case is one of distorted sense-perception -- the governess is in a trance, shutting out the sounds around her to more intensely project the visual hallucination, which is an hysteric symptom -- is supported by her comment that "there was no other change in nature, unless indeed it were a change that I saw with a stranger sharpness" (176).

This figure on the tower has one other distinguishing characteristic: he does not wear a hat, an omission which the governess thinks so important she mentions it first when asking Mrs. Grose to identify the second apparition -- apparently thinking that that detail will touch Mrs. Grose, as it does. To the governess, "there was a touch of the strange freedom [of this figure] . . . in the sign of familiarity of his wearing no hat" (177), an observation she inserts in the middle of her comment about the ghost's appearing to question her presence. The sense of freedom and familiarty, associated with authority at Bly, pertains both to the master and to a quality of his surrogate divulged in Mrs. Grose's remark that "it [being young and pretty] was

the way he liked everyone! . . . I mean that's his way -- the master's" (169). The significance is clearer when we recall that the governess associates sexual freedom, or nakedness (see p.168) with a hat. She notices that Miss Jessel is bareheaded, and suggests it as a clue to Flora's depravity when she tells Mrs. Grose before they go to the pond in Chapter XVIII: "I had made up my mind. 'She has gone out.' Mrs. Grose stared. 'Without a hat?' I naturally also looked volumes. 'Isn't that woman always without one?'" (271). And when Miles stands twirling his hat in the last scene, his manner gives her "a perverse horror of what I was doing" (301), for it reminds her fully of the sexual nature of her inquisition.[19]

A problem in interpreting Turn of the Screw is that one's doubts of the governess' reliability increase as the story progresses, but some of her early narrative, while suspect, is more difficult to expose as misconception and distortion. As the story goes on, she becomes more compulsive and seems to call up the ghosts when she needs them, either to build her ego or to avoid embarrassing confrontations. The first figure is the most mysterious, but I believe I have clarified him without detracting from his mystery. My attempt is to help see through to the reality obscured by the governess' vision. I do not intend to be one of those critics Leon Howard described as having been "seduced into rational expositions."[20] This is an

occult story, but obviously not in the way the governess believes.

III

The Identification Scene

The ghosts come so quickly in this part of the book -- the man twice (the first time within two weeks of the arrival of the governess [see p. 177]) and the woman once in short order -- that it is easy to be disconcerted by them and to overlook the emphases the governess puts on the elements of her first frightening experiences.

"The most singular part of it," she says of her reaction to the man on the tower, "was the part I became, in the hall, aware of in meeting Mrs. Grose" (179). And, "what, essentially, made nothing else much signify was simply my charming work . . . my life with Miles and Flora, and through nothing could I so like it as through feeling that to throw myself into it was to throw myself out of my trouble" (181).

She returns after dark from her agitated circling of Bly, ready to tell Mrs. Grose what she has seen, but she changes her mind: "I had not suspected in advance that her comfortable face would pull me up, and I somehow measured the importance of what I had seen by my thus finding myself hesitate to mention it. Scarce anything in the whole history seems to me so odd as this fact that my real beginning of fear was one, as I may say, with the instinct of sparing my companion" (179-180).

The governess says she has "an inward revolution" -- a

turn of the screw, and a parallel to Miles's outward "revolution," which initiates the third and final phase of action in Chapter XIV -- and enters into a new relationship with Mrs. Grose. Her revolution is not, despite what she says, out of consideration for Mrs. Grose, but out of consideration for herself, for she has been struck by the feeling that she must "justify" herself, as she repeatedly says -- she must give Mrs. Grose a more convincing initiation than she now can do on the strength of one vision. Her "instinctive" actions during the next vision -- the man at the dining-room window -- and her attitude after it reveal this. The next vision is in fact brought on partly by a mixture of guilt over her being able to lose herself in the children, and partly by her need to assure herself that Mrs. Grose will be her ally in this new crisis as well. One effect of these associations of the ghosts with Mrs. Grose and the children is, of course, to put her visions yet another remove from their source -- the frustrated passion for the master.

"I came [here] to be carried away," the governess told Mrs. Grose that first day at Bly, and the pain from which she is trying to escape surfaces at this point in her narrative: trouble at home. She states her conscious effort to be "carried away": "Of course I was under the spell [of the children], and the wonderful part is that, even at the time, I perfectly knew I was. But I gave myself up to it; it was an antidote to any pain, and I had more pains than one. I

was in receipt in these days of disturbing letters from home, where things were not going well" (183). She tries to rationalize her action -- "But with my children, what things in the world mattered?" -- but the details of her second hallucination betray a deep-set resentment of her origins, and yet a guilt over being able to ease the suffering she would have to endure at home.

She sees the second ghost on a Sunday evening at the dining-room window as she is preparing to go to church: the time and event would be strongly reminiscent of home. She sees the ghost as she returns to get the gloves she "dropped there" in the dining room, which, as Herbert Feinstein explains, would be a sensitive place for a girl of the governess' background.[1] Since gloves are phallic symbols and the governess pointedly relates them to her status problem, her having "dropped" them is a way of saying, "And so, my poverty costs me my hopes for the master." The careful timing of the forgetfulness communicates another meaning. She says the gloves "had required three stitches and . . . had received them -- with a publicity perhaps not edifying -- while I sat with the children at their tea, served on Sundays, by exception, in that cold, clean temple of mahogany and brass, the 'grown-up' dining-room" (183). If she did not wish to publicize her poverty to the children (whom she already has enviously romanticized as "grandees," after transparently wishing "rough" futures for them), she

certainly did not have to, especially not on the occasion of Sunday tea in surroundings she calls "high state" and "ponderous pomp" (295). But this was a way to identify with her despised home and thereby to ease her guilt at being able to avoid some of the pain of home by luxuriating with the children. Her resentment of her status remains, however. Her paranoid statement about being most suspicious of "being watched from under cover" because the children wish to talk of "my life, my past and my friends alone" (242) is an indirect way of saying she does not like to discuss -- to be associated with -- her home.

The involvement of Mrs. Grose and the children in the hallucinations is as important as is the fact that the visions express a reaction against the origins of the governess. That is why the second ghost is looking for "someone else" —Miles, in whom the governess is generating an erotic interest — and why in the next chapter, without explanation, "it was quite settled that she [Mrs. Grose] must share!" (187). Only three people at Bly are admissible to the confidence of the governess. As Miles says at the end, the servants don't count for much (298). Since the governess faces the classic problem of the hysteric -- how to express and thereby relieve the pressure of unutterable thoughts[2] -- she must have someone to whom to communicate her defensive distortions of reality. Mrs. Grose is her only possibility.

The unconscious task of the governess is to maneuver the

ghost to where Mrs. Grose can see it, so it can be discussed. Since she cannot literally do that, she must let Mrs. Grose see her as the ghost, which explains why after running outside and seeing to her "relief" that the man is not there, "not there if I didn't see him," the governess "got hold of this; then, instinctively, instead of returning as I had come, went to the window. It was confusedly present to me that I ought to place myself where he had stood." Just then, Mrs. Grose, "as I had done for himself just before, came in from the hall. With this I had the full image of a repetition of what had already occurred. She saw me as I had seen my own visitant; . . . I gave her something of the shock that I had received" (185).

Now that she has exposed Mrs. Grose, and with almost amusing paranoid consistency, she is immediately suspicious of her: "I wondered why she should be scared." But the governess "thought of more things than one" when this occurred to her, and one of the other things she thought of but did not state was that Mrs. Grose earlier had tried to deny a reference to a man at Bly whom the governess did not know about. And this memory directs the governess' questioning in the controversial "identification scene," Chapter V.

Is the governess, with typical adolescent ambivalence, dangerously teasing with what she expects the truth of her

visions to be, daring herself to face this "horror"? The identification scene does not so much reveal the governess to be a conscious liar as it confirms that the "him" slip of the tongue by Mrs. Grose provided part of the inspiration for the man on the tower.[3] She almost immediately assumes that Mrs. Grose has "guessed" who he is. The man on the tower was seen by the governess in the same manner that she had heard the comment from which she suddenly realized that Mrs. Grose's reference was not to the master but to some other man threatening enough to be denied. The tower experience, that is, was the visual analogue to the aural shock of perception of Mrs. Grose's slip of the tongue. In the identification scene, then, the governess is fishing with only a pronoun and an intuition for bait, but she catches more than she can handle. She really is frightened at the end, but, strikingly, she accepts Mrs. Grose's description without checking further. She wanted a description from Mrs. Grose, wanted a thrill — but not horror.[4]

The only elements of Chapter V that inhibit this interpretation are that, before Mrs. Grose has shown any awareness of who the man might be, the governess suggests the man is a "horror" and that he threatens the children. However, Mrs. Grose's response to the first of these suggestions is ambiguous -- the governess says it is one of "full inconsequence," but it rather is one that could

hint at either general fear or a suspicion of the governess' sanity. There is no way to know how Mrs. Grose would have responded to the governess' fear for the children, because the governess follows it immediately with: "I spoke boldly. 'I'm afraid of him,'" and it is "at this" that Mrs. Grose begins to show an awareness. This particular line seems to overbalance the problems raised by the governess' speculations about a horror threatening the children. For while it would seem that those speculations would be the ones to which Mrs. Grose should respond, they apparently do not touch her. Instead, Mrs. Grose responds to "I'm afraid of him," as the governess apparently expected in conceiving of that innocuous remark as "bold." The governess already had established the fact of her fear, but it is "bold" to the governess now because it echoes the slip of the tongue Mrs. Grose made at the earlier crucial time, and she thinks Mrs. Grose will hear the echo. Significantly, Mrs. Grose's first reference to Quint in the next conversation with the governess is, "Do you mean aware of him?" (203)

James often uses this technique in Turn of the Screw of having characters apparently ignore what seems to be key information and respond to subsequent statements of apparent secondary importance. The effect of the technique is to suggest obsession or prejudice (people waiting for cues to say what is on their minds, not what would be primarily

pertinent to the points others are making at the moment), and to add to the confusion and poor communication that complicate and intensify most of the conversations between the governess and Mrs. Grose, and thereby to create mystery in the commonplace.[5]

It would be tempting merely to tie in these observations to those of Harold Goddard,[6] and use Goddard to dispose of the troublesome fact that the governess gave Mrs. Grose a specific description of Peter Quint. But I cannot do so without a few qualifying observations. Goddard argues that Mrs. Grose bases her identification of Quint on the details of hatlessness and stolen waistcoats, after being prompted by the notion of the horror threatening the children. I suggest that the pronoun turned her on, that the governess' boasting -- "I came to meet him" -- increased Mrs. Grose's certainty, and the hatlessness confirmed it. The facial description was superfluous, but puzzling nonetheless. Goddard suggests -- and admits it is conjecture -- that Mrs. Grose may not even be listening to the governess as she describes the face of her visitor. Mrs. Grose's question, "But he <u>is</u> handsome?" encourages that interpretation, but we slide around those facial characteristics at our peril. To me, they represent both a puzzle and a revelation, but I think the opposites can be reconciled. The puzzle is how the governess knows these details. Many critics have tried to reason it out: that she learned from Flora, from villagers,

from the master, from the traditional image of the devil or a serpent.[7] If Flora is the source, the governess is a liar, which I do not accept for reasons just stated (pp. 56, 182). If the vision is archetypal (i. e., the devil or a serpent), that would not interfere with my interpretation, for the governess still would not know it was Quint. But none of the theories acknowledge the improbability of the governess' having received such a minute description from the master during their two interviews, or from the servants or villagers, who likely would be closer to Mrs. Grose than to the governess in their manner of describing people. And Mrs. Grose, of course, is not a precise person, but describes impressionistically: Quint is "handsome," "deep," "infamous," as she evaluated him, not as she physically saw him. This same impressionistic manner of seeing is demonstrated again in regard to Miss Jessel's first appearance, when Mrs. Grose asks for confirmation that the visitor "was in black" and then responds to the governess' impossible clue that Miss Jessel looked "infamous" (206).

Mrs. Grose probably could not give nearly so good a physical description of Quint as the governess did, which leads to the revelation of the scene: the governess does not realize she is wasting her specific description on poor generalizing Mrs. Grose. What we see in one of the crucial episodes in Turn of the Screw is another instance -- like the governess' overestimating Mrs. Grose with her vocabulary

in Chapter II -- of the governess' being insensitive to the nature of the old woman. This lack of sensitivity is one of the major themes of the book, and causes the governess much consternation. She cannot, for example, see that if her description of Quint really did convince Mrs. Grose, she would not have to keep throwing it up to her (209). James has skillfully disguised this insensitivity, but it comes through bitterly in Mrs. Grose's "odd" and "inconsequential" responses to the governess, as I shall demonstrate.

There is more to be said about the governess' ability to give that description of Quint's face. To me it is one of the few resistant mysteries of the book, mysteries that will keep the book alive in criticism. The persistence of these mysteries does not nullify the truth of the psychological interpretations, as some simple-minded critics have argued. It provides for different levels of interpretation, which James would have liked.[8] There is a deluge of details to prove that the story of the governess is distorted and imperceptive. The existence of the mysteries no more changes that than a few resistant rocks at midstream change the course of a mighty river. The narrative is not believable, but if we say she is consciously lying, it becomes impossible to determine what is truth because of her strange mixture of explicitness and avoidance. The important point is that her description of Quint, with all its specification, is meaningful only to her, not to Mrs.

Grose or the children -- just as all the events of Turn of the Screw gain their meaning almost exclusively from her perspective. It is a very selfish story.

Chapters V - VIII are a unit, in which the governess in a series of conversations pulls from Mrs. Grose the details of the Quint-Jessel affair -- about which she had heard nothing specific -- and imagines its effect on the children. She learns everything on which she bases her subsequent beliefs and actions. Chapters IX - XXIV are "confirmation" and resolution.

The form of her relationship with Mrs. Grose is established in Chapter V, as they begin their endless private agonizing over the governess' visitors. The pattern of these conversations is consistent: the governess wheedling or coercing Mrs. Grose for data, and assuming Mrs. Grose's acceptance of the intuitive conclusions the governess draws from what she is told. Mrs. Grose reluctantly answers the governess once she perceives in Chapter VI that what she says is being used against the children, and resists the governess by looks and questioning and silence as much as her lower social status and her awe of the governess' intellect and imagination will allow; at the same time she is shocked or made sympathetic for the governess by many things the young woman says.

Miles and Flora are not active in these chapters, but

the governess' relationship with them changes from her early idolizing to a hideous messianic over-protectiveness and then to a keenly nervous fear that they are in the power of Quint and Miss Jessel. The knowledge that influences the evolution of this relationship is her enlightenment on the infamous affair, which the children supposedly knew about. Despite her claim at the end of Chapter VIII that she will wait for more evidence, she obviously already believes her own "deadly view" that the children knew too much. She thought so as soon as she made her "awful conception": "Something within me said that . . . I should serve as an expiatory victim and guard the tranquillity of the rest of the household" (195). She believes from the first that the children have something that must be expiated.

The governess is "prostrate" after Mrs. Grose identifies her visitor as Peter Quint. But after their long talk that night, she begins to recover mysteriously: "Perfectly can I recall now the particular way strength came to me. . . . A portentous clearness now possessed me" (194). "I know, I know, I know!" she exults, that the ghost "was looking for little Miles," and she informs Mrs. Grose, "And <u>you</u> know, my dear!" This assumption is the clue that the "clearness" of the governess is not a vision, but, like the two ghostly visits, is made up partly of data she got from Mrs. Grose. Those data are what she proceeds to double-check: first she wants reassurance that Quint and Miles "were 'great friends,'"

and later, she wants to know specifically about Mile's "wickedness." Knowing that Miles had done something wrong and that he was close to Quint is enough for the governess to add to her first-night jitters -- when she "heard" the child's cry and the light footstep -- and to manufacture a supernatural relationship between Quint and Miles, which also accommodates her transference to Miles of her passion for the master. That relation is quickly widened to include Flora (203), because such an "awful conception" also meets the governess' sexual needs and her need to gain a control over the children she later admits she does not have (200). "The children in especial I should thus fence about and absolutely save," she says (195).

Her sense of being an "expiatory victim" increases when Mrs. Grose says Quint was "free with everyone" and repeats that he was in charge of Bly; the latter detail makes the governess almost "howl" and seems to shock her as news, but Mrs. Grose had told her this -- even "from a deeper depth" -- during the identification scene (192). Now, however, is the time it suits the governess to hear.

The governess mulls over this new information, reviews Quint's awful life -- which unaccountably caused "no discomfortable legend" at Bly (196) despite the "boundless chatter" (198) after his death and inquest[9] -- and she is "literally able to find a joy in the extraordinary flight of heroism the occasion demanded of me" (198-199). She

plans to let the master know of her heroism, which accounts for the eagerness with which she pursues pain. "There would be a greatness in letting it be seen -- oh in the right quarter! -- that I could succeed where many another girl might have failed. It was an immense help to me -- I confess I rather applaud myself as I look back! -- that I saw my response so strongly and so simply" (199). Help -- confidence -- is just what she needs now. The crisis means that she and the children are "united in our danger," which is just what she wants. But she cannot stand this "stifled suspense" of wondering about the children. "What saved me" was proof of the ghosts "from the moment I really took hold" (199). That moment came during the vision of Miss Jessel at the pond, and "took hold" is an apt way to describe what the governess did, for her description shows this ghost to be the most obviously pre-conceived and controlled of the lot.[10]

The vision "gathered in me" so that the governess knew "with certitude and yet without direct vision" and with "confirmed conviction" that she and Flora were being watched at the pond. There were sources for her certitude. The basic sexual motivation earlier described predisposes her to project spirits in relationships comparable to the ones she wishes for herself: a pretty governess and a dashing master in charge of two lovely children at scrumptious old Bly. The tidbits she relishes about the first governess' "indiscretion" and about Quint's having been "too free with

everyone" are fuel for her fantasy, and when Mrs. Grose later tells her about the Quint-Jessel affair, the governess says, "I found absolutely a degree of help in seeing it now so straight" (206). Physical factors also influence her vision. She and Flora stroll for "half an hour, seeking the shade, for the sun was still high and the day exceptionally warm," before reaching the pond (200). The governess sits for a time absorbed in her stitching -- which must remind her of Quint's second appearance, and which she also does in the final scene -- a highly susceptible time for "dispositional hypnoid states" in which hallucinations can occur.[11] Finally, her eye movements seem relevant, although I am not sure how. She has a "spasm of . . . effort not to move them [her eyes] till I should so have steadied myself as to be able to make up my mind what to do," she "transferred my eyes straight to little Flora," and she again "shifted my eyes -- I faced what I had to face" (202).

But as in her responses to Quint's two appearances, it is not the vision itself that most disturbs the governess, but the connection she makes between it and her associates -- in the first two cases, Mrs. Grose, and in this case, Flora: "There is something more dire in this, I feel, that in anything I have to relate -- I was determined by a sense that within a minute all spontaneous sounds from [Flora] had dropped; and . . . by the circumstance that also within the minute she had, in her play, turned her back to the water"

(202). This is what the governess says she saw when she turned toward Flora for confirmation of the vision; she interprets Flora's actions as an attempt to divert her attention from the ghost, and this idea strengthens the governess: "My apprehension of what she was doing sustained me so that after some seconds I felt I was ready for more" (202), because it fits the fantasy she is concocting. She wants Flora to be related to the ghost.

Just as Miss Jessel is the most obviously invented vision, so is the governess' defense of this vision the most frantic and transparent and baldly coercive of Mrs. Grose. The housekeeper is portrayed in these sessions as a sentimental old gossip who doggedly defends the children against every charge the governess makes, but who eagerly spills out whatever defamation she can regarding Quint and Miss Jessel. Fittingly for a gossip, she is the toy of language. She resists the governess' physically aggressive opening attack and her flimsy arguments, but, as she will be on the way to the pond (274) and with Flora at the end (289), she is swayed by a mouthful of impressionistic, emotional words.

The governess hurries back to Mrs. Grose from the pond, throws herself into the housekeepers's arms and, as she did before and will do again,[12] makes up her story as she goes: "I made it out to her, made it out perhaps only now with full coherency even to myself" (203). She shocks Mrs. Grose like

"a blow in the stomach": "Flora saw!" She tries insistence, impatience, pressure, more shock -- springing Miss Jessel on the unsuspecting Mrs. Grose, charging that Flora will lie and say she did not see -- but, just as she had given the governess a "hard" look and evasive answers when the governess indicted the children in the previous chapter (195), Mrs. Grose now offers one objection after another: "She has told you? . . . Then how do you know? . . . How can you be sure? . . . Ah how can you [say Flora will lie]? . . . It's only then to spare you [if she does lie]. . . . Perhaps she likes it [seeing ghosts]. . . . Is n't it just a proof of her blest innocence? . . . Tell me how you know. . . . Tell me how you know." Then the governess stops her:

> " . . . She gave me never a glance. She only fixed the child."
>
> Mrs. Grose tried to see it. "Fixed her?"
>
> "Ah with such awful eyes!"
>
> She stared at mine as if they might really have resembled them. "Do you mean of dislike?"
>
> "God help us, no. Of something much worse."
>
> "Worse than dislike?" -- this left her indeed at a loss.
>
> "With a determination -- indescribable. With a kind of fury of intention."
>
> I made her turn pale. "Intention?" (206)

This dazzling interpretation sends Mrs. Grose to the window,

as do many of the governess' stronger speeches (170, 189, 288), and she begins an impressionistic response to the governess' description of Miss Jessel. "The person was in black, you say?" Yes, and beautiful and infamous, the governess says, in the "stroke by stroke" manner she uses in gaining the identification of Quint (190,209) and in ratifying Miss Jessel's damnation (206). How one can visually perceive infamy is questionable, but not to Mrs. Grose. She quits resisting, and blathers out her impressions of the Quint-Jessel affair, so dreadful to her and the governess apparently because it involved a woman in a class above her lover.[13] The governess suppresses her observation, "in such company" as Mrs. Grose, "on the place of a servant in the scale," believes with one of her after-thought apologies that she has a "full vision -- on the evidence" of Quint, and calls him a hound. Mrs. Grose "considered [and punned] as if it were perhaps a little a case for a sense of shades,"[14] and brings out to the governess what evidently she had not yet concluded: that Miss Jessel had become pregnant by Quint and left, and then died, it would seem, Mrs. Grose imagines, in pregnancy. At this suggestion, the governess cries, "I don't do it! . . . I don't save or shield them [Miles and Flora]! It's far worse than I dreamed. They're lost!" (208)

It is too much for the governess, she says. When she and Mrs. Grose go over events again that night, she first

traps the housekeeper with the reminder that she should not doubt the ghosts because it was she who identified them from the governess' descriptions -- which of course is not true in regard to Miss Jessel (204). Then when Mrs. Grose wants to "sink the whole subject," the governess assures her "that my own interest in it had now violently taken the form of a search for the way to escape from it" (209). Her immediate plunge "into Flora's special society" for relief and her attitude in facing down Quint in the next chapter indicate she is looking for a quick resolution. The suspicion that the children are lost is "intolerable" (210). She just cannot believe evil of them when she is with them, she says, but "somehow, to settle this once for all," she has to "re-enumerate the signs of subtlety" that convinced her of Flora's guilty knowledge at the pond — suspiciously adding some she had not mentioned before: "the perceptible increase of movement, the greater intensity of play, the singing, the gabbling of nonsense and the invitation to romp" (211). Then she pushes Mrs. Grose to the wall to find out what she earlier hinted was proof that Miles had been "bad."

It turns out "immensely to the purpose" that Miles and Quint for "several months . . . had been perpetually together," despite Mrs. Grose's admonitions that such a relationship was not proper. It does not occur to the governess or Mrs. Grose that the boy would have wanted a man's company, and it does not occur to the governess to

restrain her snobbishness as she had in the last talk she had with the housekeeper. "You reminded him," she asks, "that Quint was only a base menial?" to which Mrs. Grose replies indignantly, "As you might say!" Then Mrs. Grose perceives that the governess is pressing to implicate Miles in the affair and begins to resist her: "Oh, he could n't prevent -- . . . Ah, [they made of him] nothing that's not nice <u>now</u>! . . . I doubt if I looked as queer as you [when the governess first mentioned the letter of expulsion (which could explain Mrs. Grose's queer expression then: she was only reflecting the governess' expression)]! . . . And if he was so bad then as that comes to, how is he such an angel now?" (214)

The governess is undeterred. She repeats the reference to the "base menial," guessing that Miles threw it back at Mrs. Grose, and asks if she forgave him. "Would n't <u>you</u>?" Mrs. Grose retorts, and after the governess excitedly concurs, they exchange "a sound of the oddest amusement," which I take to mean they both perceive that Mrs. Grose has just reminded the governess -- "<u>you</u>" -- with some hostility that she is susceptible to a similar affront for her interest in the master.

The governess confesses that she had expected more "engaging" examples of Miles's wickedness, but that these "must do." Lying and impudence would seem to be serious transgressions for a boy like Miles, but, as her excitement over the subject in Chapter II showed, she wanted more

specific sexual implications. Something "engaging." To answer Mrs. Grose's final objection of the night, "Surely you don't accuse him --" the governess says flippantly that "I must just wait" for proof.

IV

The Governess Isolates Herself

Chapters V - VIII establish the relationship of Mrs. Grose and the governess: unrelenting light and reluctant reflector. For her own ego, the governess needs Mrs. Grose's assent and witness, but wants none of her backtalk. Mrs. Grose is conditioned to accommodate her betters, but this young woman is the ultimate challenge to her docility. Despite what the governess says, they are not "at one" on every question. Mrs. Grose is as eager as the governess to discuss the history of Quint and Miss Jessel, and she is sympathetic with the suffering of the governess, but she resists attempts to implicate the children with all the evil of the dead lovers. In her fervor, the governess does not appreciate this resistance by Mrs. Grose.

Chapter IX begins with a summary of the relationship of the governess and the children at this point in the story. I gave the essentials of the summary in my introduction. The points to remember are that days pass "without a fresh incident," that she keeps the children "in constant sight," and continues to seek and find consolation in their charm, even though she suspects it is "studied." She wonders that her "struggle against my new lights" -- which occasionally breaks out in "irresistible impulses" to hug the children -- does not betray her suspicions. But the ghosts only "made them [Miles and Flora] more interesting," and their brilliant

schoolroom performances pleased and dazzled her. This must be, she says, why she did not worry about another school for Miles. Actually, she is afraid to bring up the question, as she later admits (254); and also, she wants him to stay with her(see265, and p. 98, below). She looks for signs of "queerness" in their behavior and suspects they plot to help each other slip off.

Now the governess comes to the "heart" of her story, "an hour after which . . . the business seems to me to have been all pure suffering" (220). She begins then to tell of Quint's third appearance -- with the misleading protest that her intuition of his presence came "with nothing to lead up or prepare it" -- as if this began the suffering. Her narrative reveals that it did not; that, to the contrary, it was an induced delusion of grandeur, probably climaxing the search she began earlier for the way to escape from her ghosts (209). Her inspiration from Amelia, the "bold flourish" with which she put out her candle, the strange silence that surrounds her when the ghosts appear, all have been discussed by other commentators.[1] I will note only that she expected "that if I stood my ground a minute I should cease -- for the time at least -- to have him to reckon with" (222). Her escape does not work, however: the children, particularly Miles, foil it in Chapter X. That is when she comes to "an hour after which the affair was all pure suffering."

Facing down Quint on the stairs was the height of her stay at Bly, except for her "devoted exorcism" of Miles's demon at the end. But her triumph on the stairs was short, and "suddenly," as she says (220), the suffering began. As soon as she got back to their room, she found Flora out of bed, and began a long drop to her nadir, where she struggles, rising a little only to fall again, for the next three chapters, until she "gets hold" -- as she "took hold" of Miss Jessel's first appearance -- of "the very things that have delighted, fascinated and yet, at bottom, as I now so strangely see, mystified and troubled me. Their more than earthly beauty, their absolutely unnatural goodness. It's a game; it's a policy and a fraud!" (237) She has confirmed her truth, and will act on it.

In the process, her relations with the children and Mrs. Grose change, but not as she understands the change. She thinks she has found out the children, but she does not acknowledge that she has progressively alienated herself from them by having begun to conceive of them as adversaries. She speaks consistently of "advantages" or "triumphs" she imagines that she or the children score over each other (see above, p.25,n.30). At the same time, she says Mrs. Grose has come to believe her "absolutely" (230), to show "an odd recognition of my superiority -- my accomplishments and my function -- in her patience under my pain. She offered her mind to my disclosures as, had I wished to mix

a witch's broth and proposed it with assurance, she would have held out a large clean saucepan" (231). Yet, just before, the governess had said that Mrs. Grose agreed to listen to her story of Miles on the lawn only "under pressure." Mrs. Grose's "acceptance" of the story is only the polite deference she almost always shows to her superiors. She continues to resist as much as ever the governess' attempts to blacken the children, and the humoring of the governess that came through occasionally in such responses as the "grim joke" that Flora might enjoy seeing ghosts (205) now is the housekeeper's standard, though muted, response. The governess gives the hint unwittingly when she says that Mrs. Grose has decided that Miles and Flora are capable of "looking out for themselves" and she will address "her greatest solicitude to the sad case presented by their deputy-guardian" (231).[2] This remark followed the true alignment of allies the governess had made when she indicated how Mrs. Grose identified with the children: "If they had been at all visibly blighted or battered she would doubtless have grown . . . haggard enough to match them."

The break with the children comes, as I said in the introduction, because they surprise her by taking the initiative, just when the governess appears ready to phase out her ghosts. She begins to refer to the children in antagonistic terms when she comes back from routing Quint

and is prodigiously thrilled to have the advantage of catching Flora out of bed (224). But Flora arraigns her instead, and the governess, defeated, must resist the strong temptation to ask Flora directly about her ghostly intercourse (225). She resists by squeezing Flora. This act — which she calls a "spasm" — is an expression of her hostility to the child — hostility inhibited by her fear of confrontations.

A few sleepless and hall-walking nights later (during which she gets a glimpse of Miss Jessel), the governess is similarly -- and "indescribably" -- tempted to challenge Miles, but does not. Both temptations are the last strong outbreaks of her desire to end the experiences now, but her guilt at knowing subconsciously that the children are innocent -- "he may be innocent," she says of Miles -- prevents her from confronting him.

The shock of seeing Miles on the lawn -- "from the particular quality of its unexpectedness . . . quite my sharpest shock" (227) -- shatters whatever sense of authority she was accumulating, regenerates her fears, and prevents her modifying her hysteria to some less upsetting form of expression than ghosts. She had begun to shy away from the "intolerable" idea that the children were lost, because this, of course, was self-defeating to her hopes of saving them. She let several days pass in peace, reduced the stature of Quint, and gained an "unnatural composure on the

subject of another school for Miles." But the children disarmed her and gained her enmity.

The governess' description of her discovery of Miles on the lawn is highly suspect. She stresses how she unbolted "in all quietness" the shutter of a window of an unused room and uncovered the glass "without a sound," but, given her characteristic exaggeration and the fact that Miles later tells her when she thinks she has quietly approached his door, "Why of course I heard you. Did you fancy you made no noise? You're like a troop of cavalry!" (262), her assessment of her silence in this instance cannot go unquestioned. The fact that when she opens the window Miles is "looking up to where I had appeared" suggests he heard her open it. She quickly corrects herself to say he is looking above her to the tower, where "there was clearly another person." Of course, there was not "clearly" another person unless she saw him, which she did not. And her eyesight, just as in the case of the first figure on the tower, is unbelievable. I do not believe she can look down in the moonlight at a small boy "diminished by distance" (229) and see on him a "lovely upward look" (245), since moonlight blurs white objects. We cannot be asked to believe that her intuition can overthrow the laws of optics.

Chapter XI begins with the only interruption of a narrative episode in Turn of the Screw. She stops telling

about Miles on the lawn to make the point that "I don't know what would have become of me" if Mrs. Grose were not supporting her in these discoveries. Beside its effect of building suspense, the reason for this singular break must be to stress the need of the governess for this support, which, while most important to her, ironically is not what she thinks it is.[3]

When she returns to her narrative, she has a "curious thrill of triumph" at having caught Miles on the lawn -- and also at having quickly eased her shock of surprise by imagining Quint on the tower above her, and thus regaining some measure of control over this episode. But, once again, she cannot raise the question of ghosts with Miles, and takes refuge in an old tradition against it. She drops on the bed: "He 'had' me indeed, and in a cleft stick" (233). A snake is caught in a cleft stick, and a snake so caught is a symbol of sexual intercourse, which, coupled with the suggestive verb "had," provides a strikingly appropriate sexual image which reveals again that the governess is transferring her feelings from the master to Miles. And this revelation shows how she would have resolved her frustration in an alternate way to avoid the ghosts. But now she is left with the torturous ambivalence of an inclination to both the projection of ghosts and a passion for Miles, which she resolves simultaneously at the end of the tale. She confirms the transference with her observation

(which is inadequate, as she says) of how "in our short stiff brush there in the dark, he fairly shook me with admiration" (233); she is shaken consciously because she thinks he knows he will outdo her, and unconsciously because she wants to be submissive to him.

She asks him for an explanation of his being on the lawn, and when he agrees to give one, a subconscious awareness inspires her to ask a question which would be inexplicable if it did not show that she knows he has nothing to reveal that will support her view: "Would it be so great if he were really going to tell me?" He says he went outside so the governess would "think me -- for a change -- bad!"[4] Since she has not told us that she told the children how good she thought they were -- and since one of her first dicta of child-care was, "One would n't . . . too grossly flatter a child" (161) -- one wonders if Mrs. Grose has told the boy of the governess' great curiosity over his wickedness. One also wonders why the governess does not realize that it is perfectly normal for a boy to try to show how "bad" he is.

In Chapter XII the governess gives the horribly strained conclusions she draws from the shock of the lawn and its aftermath. She begins the intensifying of the "words" theme so important to the end of the book — an extension of the failure of communication that already has caused so much

agony: "It all lies in half a dozen words," I said to her, "words that really settle the matter. 'Think, you know, what I might do!' He threw that off to show me how good he is. He knows down to the ground what he 'might do.' That's what he gave them a taste of at school." (236)[5]

"Lord, you do change!" Mrs. Grose charges. "I don't change -- I simply make it out, "the governess retorts, and in a remarkable speech delivers one of her insulated arguments ("The more I've watched and waited the more I've felt that if there were nothing else to make it sure it would be made so by the systematic silence of each"), attributes an adult conception of the supernatural to the children ("they're steeped in their vision of the dead restored"), and closes with another contemptible blast at Mrs. Grose ("I go on, I know, as if I were crazy; and it's a wonder I'm not. What I've seen would have made you so; but it has only made me more lucid, made me get hold of still other things").

She follows that with her charge that the children's goodness is "a policy and a fraud," and then, as in the case of describing Miss Jessel at the pond, concocts her story as she tells it to Mrs. Grose: "The very act of bringing it out really helped me to trace it -- follow it all up and piece it all together." The children have not been good, only "absent." They belong to Quint and Jessel, and the ghosts want to get to them "for the love of all the evil that, in those dreadful days, the pair put into them. And

to ply them with that evil still, to keep up the work of demons, is what brings the others back."

"Laws!" Mrs. Grose says under her breath, and the governess takes it as proof of the housekeeper's acceptance of that wild analysis, and follows it with yet another of her self-serving analyses of the ghosts' powers -- analyses which curiously limit the ghosts to the range of the governess' perceptions and abilities. The ghosts can destroy the children, the governess says: "They don't know as yet quite how -- but they're trying hard. They're seen only across, as it were, and beyond -- in strange places and on high places, the top of towers, the roof of houses, the outside of windows, the further edge of pools; but there's a deep design, on either side, to shorten the distance and overcome the obstacle: so the success of the tempters is only a question of time. They've only to keep to their suggestions of danger" (238). It would seem that if the ghosts wanted the children, they could get to them without always bumping into the governess. The governess herself seems unsure of how often the unholy communion is held, for she just said they "perpetually meet" (236), but now she limits the meetings to the "across and beyond" settings.

When she tells Mrs. Grose that these settings are to lure the children so they will "perish in the attempt" to reach the ghosts, Mrs. Grose is moved, and the governess adds "scrupulously": "Unless, of course, we can prevent!"

But Mrs. Grose sees from this wild series of outbursts that things have gone too far, and her resistance stiffens to threats against the children. She asks the governess to ask the uncle to come and help, even though Mrs. Grose knows "he do hate worry."

The governess realizes her sanity is being questioned, and then when Mrs. Grose suggests that the governess might make a personal appeal, the young woman, knowing she lacks such influence, has a "sudden fear," makes "a queerer face than ever yet," and, realizing her passion is threatened, restates it and drives a wedge between her and Mrs. Grose that will intensify her own suffering for the next several weeks: "If you should so lose your head as to appeal to him for me -- . . . I would leave, on the spot, both him and you".

It is a breaking point for the governess in more ways than one: her basic weakness has been innocently threatened, and she has broken with Mrs. Grose. Again it is clear that she does not understand Mrs. Grose, but she knows how to handle her: with a "warning," which to a class-humbled old woman like Mrs. Grose is the word from on high. The governess sensed this deference in her from the first day: "It was part of what I already liked Mrs. Grose herself for" (161). The other part was Mrs. Grose's devotion to the children, although this came to cause the governess problems. Mrs. Grose could resist the governess in intramural debates

over the guilt of the children, but, as this showdown proved, the housekeeper is highly fearful of criticism from superiors, and is not likely to go over the governess' head to the master. What the governess does not perceive is that it is the warning itself, not the content of the warning, that stopped Mrs. Grose. The housekeeper was "really frightened" before the governess articulated her threat. Subsequent conversations after the church-road and pond crises show that Mrs. Grose would not have been so upset if the governess had left. But the governess would have been upset to have to leave, she finally decides.

Chapter XIII is, like Chapter IX, a summary chapter dealing with the governess' relation to the children. It also is the transitional chapter which prepares for the last major section of the book. Chapter IX introduced the "pure suffering" that began for the governess with the discovery of Flora out of bed and Miles on the lawn. Chapter XIII prepares for the awful resolution of the book by describing how relations have deteriorated. The overall effect of Chapter XIII is to make one wonder uneasily what manic scenes transpired between the governess and the children that fall at Bly. Given her bizarre viewpoint and her extravagant rhetoric, laced as it is with superlatives, exclusives, and contradictions, we cannot trust her description. But from the mere details she selects, Bly must have been a madhouse

of pain and misunderstanding.

In Chapter IX she could communicate with the children and be soothed and satisfied by them, despite her suspicion that they might be putting on an act. In Chapter XIII she no longer can accept them that way. She begins by saying that for a month it has been "an effort beyond my strength" even to speak to the children. There are "new aggravations and particular notes, the note above all, sharper and sharper, of the small ironic consciousness on the part of my pupils" of her "predicament" (241). "This strange relation made, in a manner, for a long time, the air in which we moved." The two parties practice a "tacit arrangement," the governess says, to avoid discussing the forbidden "question of the return of the dead in general and of whatever, in especial, might survive, for memory, of the friends little children had lost." This is a suspicious point. In the first place, she says later they never have mentioned Quint and Miss Jessel (278), so why should they now? Further, she overestimates the likelihood of the dead being a popular topic of conversation with children; like most of her fears regarding the children, these are groundless unless one accepts her assumption that the children are communing with the dead. The same ignorance about children shows when she thinks it proof of their spying on her that they ask her to repeat details of her life history "with no visible connection" to the conversation of the moment (242) -- as if

children typically did conduct a conversation according to what adults would consider logical sequence and association.

The governess believes that her "sensibility" has "in the most extraordinary fashion, not declined but deepened" (244), so that although her eyes now are sealed to the sight of the ghosts, she can hear, even over other noises, the "stillness" when they pass for review by the children. What bothers her most, with her prurient interest, is "the cruel idea that, whatever I had seen, Miles and Flora saw more" (246). These "passages" are followed by "a chill that we vociferously denied that we felt," and that by a hideous ritual: "We had all three, with repetition, got into such splendid training that we went, each time, to mark the close of the incident, almost automatically through the very same movements." Then the children kiss her with a "wild irrelevance" and someone says the uncle's magic name to ease the tension. They speculate on when he will come, and the governess, knowing he will not come, wonders if the children do not keep it up because they know "how almost more awkward than anything else that might be for me" (247). What is most extraordinary, she says, is "the mere fact that, in spite of my tension and of their triumph, I never lost patience with them. Adorable they must in truth have been, I now feel, since I did n't in these days hate them!"

She acknowledges that seeing Miles on the lawn inspired these conclusions and the outrageous views she expressed in

Chapter XII, which confirmed her earlier suspicions and sanctioned her subsequent actions: "The shock had in truth sunk into me still deeper than I knew on the night when . . . under the stars, I had seen there the boy over whose rest I watched. . . . If it was a question of a scare my discovery on this occasion had scared me more than any other, and it was essentially in the scared state that I drew my actual conclusions" (245).

But despite all those horrible convictions, and despite the "fantastic relief" she gets from "audible rehearsals," she cannot bring herself to talk with the children about the ghosts. Even in the privacy of her room, "I always broke down in the monstrous utterance of names. . . . I said to myself that I should indeed help them to represent something infamous if by pronouncing them I should violate as rare a little case of instinctive delicacy as any schoolroom probably had ever known." Such was her concept of her current relationship with the children. But its validity is immediately brought into question by her next statement, when she blushes in private and covers her face with her hands at the strange thought that the ghosts "have the manners to be silent, and you, trusted as you are, the baseness to speak!" (245). The delicacy, the need to hide the ghosts, is hers. In this chapter more than any other, we have no way to check her opinions against those of Mrs. Grose or the children, so we cannot say what the children may

have been doing in that eerie autumn. But we can tell that the governess' view is too extreme to be believable. And the melodramatic ending of the chapter shows that once again, as in Chapter IX, she is pushing for resolution. She has been depressed since she warned Mrs. Grose on the lawn in the summer and now she wonders: "Would exasperation, however, if relief had longer been postponed, finally have betrayed me? It little matters, for relief arrived . . . with a rush" (247). She is preparing for it as Chapter XIV begins, in one of the strongest examples of her unconscious motivation and influencing of events.

V

The Question of A Conveyance

In only four scenes are we allowed to hear any extended dialogue between the governess and one of the children. All involve Miles (I discount Flora at the pond as too brief a scene in terms of dialogue): in his bedroom after the lawn scene, on the way to church, in his bedroom that Sunday night, and the final scene. Otherwise we have only the interpretations of the governess, which are harshly condemnatory of the children. When Miles speaks for himself, however, he seems innocent. But the governess seems, on the basis of her presumption that his goodness is fraudulent, to be making highly biased interpretations of his words and to be over-reacting inexcusably. Chapter XIV, on the road to church, is the best example of her determination to misunderstand him and to work up the relief she promised herself. Her continuing transferral of sexual interest to Miles also is exposed.

A close examination of their dialogue will reveal the groundlessness of the governess' fears, and the inflation of her evidence. Her tragic error is in making too much of his expulsion. To her it is "the question of the horrors gathered behind" (254). At times in their next three conversations he seems evasive or guilty, but it is to try to hide the fact of his expulsion, not the meaning she

associates with it. As he reveals in the last chapter, he did not know that she knew he had been expelled (305). This is why he never mentions school.

On the way to church that first clear day of autumn, she is unconsciously planning an escape from her agony. "It was an odd accident of thought" that she was wondering why the children do not "resent my inexorable, my perpetual society." "Something or other" told her she was like a gaoler guarding against rebellion. She associates Miles with her problems of sex and status, thinking how "the rights of his sex and situation" are"stamped upon him." She was "by the strangest of chances wondering how I should meet him when the revolution unmistakeably occurred" with "the word he spoke" that precipitated the catastrophe of "my dreadful drama." The "word" -- sustaining the "word theme" (p.) which functions here to allow her to distort Miles's meaning and thereby to create circumstances in which she can escape her dilemma -- is "Look here, my dear, you know, when in the world, please, am I going back to school?"

That innocent question and his voice suggest two sexual images to her: a rose, and, even more remarkably, the impulse to stop as short "as if one of the trees of the park had fallen across the road" -- or, as if Miles had laid before her a penis, the symbol of her torment. "There was something new, on the spot, between us." With an overly restrained writer like James, it is best to consider such

imagery carefully, but it seems unavoidable that at some level of consciousness a most appropriate association has been made.[1] The next association she makes is not so appropriate, however: she sees that Miles notices her being upset -- it should be obvious -- and she thinks he has gained an advantage over her. He has, but for more innocent ends than she assumes: he suggests that a fellow should not be with a lady always, and she twists that to, "And always with the same lady?" When he innocently ignores her double-entendre, she decides "the whole thing was virtually out between us." She is eager that this be so. She is freighting herself with so much gratuitous shock that she says she can't walk. When she finally can, she makes her only accurate reply to one of his remarks. Miles hints at one reason he wishes to return to school, "Of course <u>you</u> know a lot --" and she "risks" the reply, "But you hint that you know almost as much?" (251). Her incompetence is out. This is followed by their most absurd exchange. Miles says, truthfully and normally, that he wants male schoolmates -- "I want my own sort!" -- and this "literally made [her] bound forward." She replies, again with her coyness, "There are n't many of your own sort, Miles! Unless perhaps dear little Flora!"

Naturally he resents being compared to a younger girl, but the governess challenges whether he loves his sister, which goads him into a boyish threat he cannot at first

complete. When he finally does complete it, it is his only ominous-sounding remark, but, as in the conversations presented earlier, it is ignored and the listener instead is activated by what appears to be an innocuous remark. The governess does not respond to "Well, you know what [I'll do] !" even though she says he looks around at the graves in the churchyard as he speaks -- as a boy would look away, to ease the tension of threatening an adult. But she drops "straight down" on a gravestone when he asks, "Does my uncle think what you think?" which seems to mean only, "Does he agree with my staying here instead of going to school?" The magic word was "uncle." She tells him his uncle doesn't care about him, but with "an extraordinary brightness and emphasis," Miles says he will change that, and goes into church. He may at this moment have conceived of the trick he will play tomorrow at the piano, something that will shake her into asking for the uncle's help.

From that conversation, the governess says, "The business was practically settled from the moment I never followed him." She admits she is giving up, but "somehow" this confession does not "restore" her: she wants to give up. "I only sat there on my tomb and read into what our young friend had said to me the fulness of its meaning," which is that "Miles had got something out of me" -- that she is afraid of "something" -- and he will use this information "for his own purpose, more freedom," which is

true, and innocent and right, as she admits: "The boy, to my deep discomposure, was immensely in the right, was in a position to say to me: 'Either you clear up with my guardian the mystery of this interruption of my studies, or you cease to expect me to lead with you a life that's so unnatural for a boy'" (254-255).

But "what really overcame me," she says, is "this sudden revelation of a consciousness and a plan," forgetting that she has confessed he is right in his wish for school, and thinking that his plan is only to be with Quint. Her motivation for her "strange" thoughts this morning now surfaces: "For the first minute since his arrival I wanted to get away from him" (255). She has an "impulse" to "easily put an end to my ordeal by getting away altogether," and follows it when she has an "acute prevision" that "my little pupils would play at innocent wonder about my non-appearance in their train," which she says she could not stand. (As it turns out, this is another of her wrong expectations.)

She goes back to Bly, rising from the depths for the first time in weeks. The "stillness" of Bly "fairly stirred me with a sense of opportunity." But she sinks down again, tormented over "the question of a conveyance." She realizes "with a revulsion" that she has taken Miss Jessel's place on the bottom step,[2] gets up, goes upstairs -- an analogue for sexual intercourse, in the hysterical state she has entered

-- and, of course, sees Miss Jessel at her desk. She had wondered the time she saw her on the steps, "if instead of being above I had been below, I should have had the same nerve for going up that I had lately shown Quint" (227), and now she learns. The governess might have taken her this time "at the first blush for some housemaid who . . . had applied herself to the considerable effort of a letter to her sweetheart" (256-257), which, interestingly enough, was Mrs. Grose's suggestion on which they broke, and which proves to be the governess' solution to her problem in the next chapter. When the ghost seems "to appear to say that her right to sit at my table was as good as mine to sit at hers," the governess, threatened, gives a "wild protest."

"The question of a conveyance" had left her dismayed and forced her into the only solution she could manage: the projection of Miss Jessel to arouse "the sense that I must stay" -- and do what Mrs. Grose suggested, write the sweetheart.[3]

When the children and Mrs. Grose return home, they do not mention her absence from church, and as a result the governess is "freshly upset" (258). When she confirms her suspicion that the children plotted their silence and bribed Mrs. Grose into their conspiracy, the governess is bitter for the rest of Chapter XVI.

"They said you'd like it better," Mrs. Grose says. "Do

you like it better?" The governess snaps back: "No, I like it worse!" and when Mrs. Grose says Flora was sweet as they agreed to silence, the governess snaps again, "You were too sweet too -- I can hear you all," aligning Mrs. Grose with the children, and exhibiting the same feminine nastiness she later uses to attack Flora in Chapter XXI. But "it does n't matter" what you did, she says, "I've made up my mind," not saying to what until she plays her picture-painting game with Mrs. Grose sufficiently to scare her about Miss Jessel's latest visit. Then the governess says, naturally to Mrs. Grose's great relief, that she will send for the uncle. But with her blind devotion to the children, Mrs. Grose objects to the uncle's being told of the letter of expulsion. The governess tries to overcome her objection, but Mrs. Grose points out that "we've never in the least known" why Miles was expelled. The governess says it was for "wickedness," and it is "their uncle's fault," for leaving Quint and Miss Jessel at Bly, a charge which turns Mrs. Grose a guilty pale, because, as she earlier had said (196), she never told the uncle of the sins of those two. It may also be true that she fears exposure, because, as some critics have suggested, she may be exaggerating the Quint-Jessel affair.[4] However, her ultimate surrender to the governess weakens this argument.

"Well, you shan't suffer," the governess assures her, but the old woman characteristically replies, "The children shan't!" Mrs. Grose offers to dictate a letter to the bailiff, and the governess asks, "And should you like him to

write our story?" Confronted by an eccentric governess, threats to the children, and the possible wrath of her employer, Mrs. Grose breaks down -- not "inconsequently," as the governess insensitively believes -- and the governess, still not wishing to give up her romantic pledge, reluctantly agrees to write, "Well -- tonight."

She says she made a beginning on the letter that evening -- as she had imagined for her classroom visitor, it is a "considerable effort" -- and then "sat for a long time before a blank sheet of paper and listened to the lash of rain and the batter of the gusts" (262), a rather mood-inducing experience for such a susceptible person. But even with that, this entire episode (Chapter XVII) is unusual, as Donald Costello points out, in that it is not foretold, is not interpreted, and nothing happens as a result of it.[5]

Evidently the governess was thinking of Miles as she sat, for she says "finally I went out . . . crossed the passage and listened a minute at Miles's door. What, under my endless obsession, I had been impelled to listen for was some betrayal of his not being at rest, and I presently caught one, but" -- again she is jarred by a wrong expectation -- "not in the form I had expected." Miles invites her in. "It was a gaiety in the gloom!" she alliterates sweetly of his voice, disrupting the tone of the moment and making one wonder if James is not using his

female narrator as a device for occasional satiric thrusts at lady novelists.

The governess is hypersensitively seeking self-justification, and Miles is heady with boyish self-righteousness after their morning bout; in the emotionally charged setting of his bedroom at night, another confrontation is inevitable, especially since the governess has something in mind: "I had put my candle, designedly, a short way off" (262). She never says what her design is, but it becomes suspicious when the scene ends with the candle being blown out, the governess feeling "a gust of frozen air," and Miles saying, "It was I who blew it, dear!"

Miles says he has been lying awake thinking about her, and he takes and keeps the offensive, shying off only when she pushes him as to whether he has anything else he wants to confess. "I think also, you know, of this queer business of ours," he tells her as they begin speaking to but not understanding each other. She marks "the coolness of his firm little hand," and asks what queer business. "Why, the way you bring me up," he replies, "and all the rest!" which would seem to refer to her odd behavior, but which she takes breathlessly as a supernatural reference. She asks what he means, and he, as directly as he can impugn his governess' behavior, says, "Oh you know, you know!" This innocence she takes as evil and is speechless until she breaks the momentarily "fabulous" relationship by saying he may go back

to school. But why has he never mentioned his old school?

"Have n't I?" he evades, trying to hide from her the expulsion, but unwittingly making her heart ache "with such a pang as it had never yet known" because she perceives him struggling to seem innocent of a worse evil. "It was extraordinary how my absolute conviction of his secret precocity . . . made him . . . appear as accessible as an older person, forced me to treat him as an intelligent equal."

He says he wants to get away, and she is in her turn evasive: "You want to go to your uncle?" Now his self-assurance bursts out. On the way to church he had been pushy, but primarily in an inquisitive way. Now he has progressed to a bolder criticism of her: "Ah you can't get off with that!" he says. "My dear, I don't want to get off!" she replies. "You can't even if you do. You can't, you can't!" he says. "My uncle must come down and you must completely settle things." (265)

He does not seem to think he has as much to hide as does the governess, but she, with almost amusing pique, based on her wrong-headed assumptions, replies -- "with some spirit" -- "If we do, you may be sure it will be to take you quite away." Once again she is inconsistent in her view of the ghosts, and uncomprehending of the boy's position. Earlier she conceived of the ghosts as peculiar to Bly -- as she will later when she wishes to get Flora away from them --

and said they wished to lure the children to destruction at some dangerous part of the grounds (238). Now she seems to operate as if she cannot understand that Miles wants to leave -- her interest in keeping him blinds her to his interest in leaving -- or as if Quint is helping the boy win this argument with her so that he may leave. There is no way to reconcile her view of the ghosts with Miles's wish to leave Bly, which he forcefully states along with a condemnation of her: "Well, don't you understand that that's exactly what I'm working for? You'll have to tell him -- about the way you've let it all drop: you'll have to tell him a tremendous lot!"

She thinks he exults, and her combativeness is stirred: "And how much will you, Miles, have to tell him? There are things he'll ask you!" Miles agrees generally, but shows his innocence: "Very likely. But what things?"

"The things you've never told me," she says, to help your uncle decide what to do with you. "He can't send you back --" Miles interrupts, as a boy might in trying to hide a secret, "I don't want to go back! I want a new field," and this upsets her again. She kisses him, imagining another expulsion, and does not speculate as to why he takes her passion with "indulgent good-humour," but her description is a good one; after what he has been saying, he presumably is humouring her. He says he has nothing else to tell her -- "I told you this morning" -- and asks her to let him alone

and to finish the letter to his uncle. But she feels she must continue or "lose him," so she asks, "What happened before? . . . Before you came back. And before you went away." He counters, "What happened?" either an honest question or more evasion of the expulsion question. She hears in it "for the very first time a small faint quaver of consenting consciousness," which, even if it is there, is not there in the context she imagines. But for the third time in this scene she grabs him and now says, "I just want you to help me to save you!"

This, she thinks, is going too far, but her assumption only reveals again the irrelevance of her fears. She imagines the children would be aware that communing with ghosts is evil and damning, because that is her view. More likely, the children would see no evil in the return of their old friends, Quint and Miss Jessel, and certainly would not feel they needed to be saved from them. Mrs. Grose was aware of this in what the governess called a "grim joke," when she suggested Flora liked to see Miss Jessel (205). The governess' reply, "Like <u>such</u> things -- a scrap of an infant!" reveals an assumption that ghosts are evil and only an evil person could "like" to see them. Mrs. Grose suggests again that liking to see a ghost might be proof of Flora's "blest innocence," which, the governess admits, "brought me, for the instant, almost round. 'Oh we must clutch at <u>that</u> -- we must cling to it! If it is n't a proof of what you say, it's

a proof of -- God knows what!'"

To nullify the possibility that she could be "brought round," the governess had to associate the children with the sexual-cultural evil she assigns to Quint and Miss Jessel. But even if those associations were accurate, it does not follow that the children would see sex as basic to their relation with their old friends; so it could be true that the children could have known of the affair, and be communing with ghosts, and still not conceive of the whole experience as the governess does -- which still would undercut her assumptions and dilute the justification of the fear that fuels the governess. Even if we had so far been given proof of the ghosts, nowhere have we been given proof that the governess understands the relationship of the children to the ghosts; so what she says and does to interfere with the relationship is not necessarily relevant or accurate, and she is ultimately another destructive Jamesian meddler, primarily concerned with imposing upon others her interpretations of their lives. Hence, she expects remarks such as "I just want you to help me to save you!" which are so general that they would have to be confusing, and probably frightening to someone who did not share her "initiated" view, to touch the children and arouse the ghosts. In this case her remark also causes a kind of air-conditioning magic. Actually it only shows she suffered an hysteric attack like the one recorded as a "phantasm of the

dead" by the Society for Psychical Reasearch.[6] Miles, frightened, snapped her out of it by blowing out the candle.

There is ambiguity in some of Miles's remarks, and it is heightened by the way the governess contextualizes them. But one should resist the temptation to say, as critics have lately begun to, that Turn of the Screw can be read with equal assurance in two opposing ways.[7] For to distrust the children and accept the governess is to accept by far the heavier load of unbelievable evidence and attitude. Even though the children and Mrs. Grose are occasionally murky, the governess proceeds in an almost unbroken series of misapprehensions, exaggerations, distortions, and with an arrogant intuitiveness downright offensive to credulity -- all colored by her rising vindictiveness and final cruelty.

VI

An Unnecessary Ally

Chapters XVIII - XX cover the Monday when Miles beguiled the governess with music so Flora could slip away. The violent scene at the pond followed on that day. Miles's behavior is not difficult to understand, but Flora's is puzzling and that of the governess is even more so. To understand Miles, remember that he is not the "imperturbable little prodigy of delightful loveable goodness" the governess first thought (212), but a bright and "rather much" ten-year-old who has dared the governess -- "And I can again [do tricks such as the one on the lawn]" (250) -- and who was irritated by her behavior Sunday night. His Monday deception of her primarily is intended as another signal, or shock, to her that he wants to be left alone and sent to school. The full premeditation of Miles's act is evident when one recalls that Sunday he had saved her embarrassment by persuading Mrs. Grose and Flora that "we must do nothing but what she likes" (259); then, knowing what pleased her most (218), the children recite marvellously in class. Miles really caught her off-guard.[1] The governess eventually begins to respond as Miles wishes (Monday night and Tuesday morning), but her interpretation remains that his trick Monday was primarily intended to give Flora an opportunity to see Miss Jessel.

There was "no more brilliant, more exemplary morning"

than Monday in terms of the children's classroom performance: "They performed the dizziest feats of arithmetic, soaring quite out of my feeble range" -- that note of incompetence is sounding more often -- "and perpetrated, in higher spirits than ever, geographical and historical jokes." And Miles never had been "such a little gentleman as when, after our early dinner on this dreadful day, he come round to me and asked . . . to play to me." It was as fitting as David playing to Saul, she says, and reads into Miles's request and manner this meaning: "The true knights we love to read about never push an advantage too far. I know what you mean now: you mean that -- to be let alone yourself and not followed up -- you'll cease to worry and spy upon me, won't keep me so close to you, will let me go and come. Well, I 'come,' you see, but I don't go! There'll be plenty of time for that. I do really delight in your society, and I only want to show you that I contended for a principle" (269).

Her meaning is incomprehensible. The opening restatement of the adversary concept is clear, but what does she mean by having Miles say, "I know what you mean now" -- is the governess signalling something to him? -- "You mean that -- to be let alone yourself and not followed up. . . ." Again, the paranoid fear that they are bothering and watching her (242), in the same episode in which she repeats that she never "had allowed the little girl out of my sight without some special provision"; the fear, as I

said above (p. 54), arises from her resentment of her social status, and the intensity of the fear is suggested by the casualness with which she assumes we would understand her imputation to the children of this rarely mentioned spying.

Miles "played as he had never played," but she thinks he should have been kicking a football, the opposite of her earlier view that Miles's "only defect was a certain ingenuity of restlessness" (199-200). She awakens from her beguilement, and asks where Flora is. Answering, Miles says, "Why, my dear, how do I know?" and plays and sings extravagantly -- which is guilty euphoria, but which we must not judge without recalling that earlier she said that often "the schoolroom piano broke into all gruesome fancies" (219). She persists in describing the children as unusual and then implying at her convenience that their unusual traits are evidence of their guilt.

After a search of the house, the governess announces to Mrs. Grose that she has made up her mind that Flora is "at a distance" with "that woman," both of them without hats -- the familiar sign of the ghosts, now associated with one of the children -- and that Miles and Quint are in the schoolroom. But the governess "had never yet reached so calm an assurance," and does not mind the boy's being with the spirit. "Because of your letter?" Mrs. Grose hopes, and the governess whips it out of her pocket "by way of answer." But it is not the affirmative answer Mrs. Grose takes it to be: the

governess is deeply offended by Miles's trick, and that is why she does not worry about him; this comes out in her maniacal glee at the end when she in turn has played a trick on him with the letter (305). Miles is lost to her, and when her anger is aroused further by Flora, he will be quite vulnerable.

The discovery of Flora at the pond makes the intuition of the governess seem for once to be impressively accurate, if it is overlooked that the child prefers the pond to any place on the grounds: "She had not given me the slip for any small adventure, and, since the day of the very great one that I had shared with her by the pond, I had been aware, in our walks, of the quarter to which she most inclined. That was why I had now given to Mrs. Grose's steps so marked a direction" (273).

The governess assumes that Flora likes the pond because Miss Jessel sometimes is there, but the pond is a normal place for a child to prefer, and her preference is not evidence that she is haunted. And it would be just as natural for a child seeking escape to think of going to the other side of the pond. But, as when the governess tried to leave Bly, the question of a conveyance is the problem. The fact of the large flat-bottomed boat's being moored where the governess predicts is eerie, but the effect is lessened because the governess is familiar with the spot and it is a mooring place. She says that to have rowed the boat across

is a "prodigious . . . feat for a little girl" (276), but this is a shallow pond no wider than a "scant river" (274). It may be that Flora was capable of rowing the boat herself. Mrs. Grose does not seem surprised when the governess says Flora took the boat, only when she says Flora took it and hid it; but the fact of there being a handy recess answers that objection. Again, as in past enumerated instances, the strange fact of the boat, which could be one of the governess' best argments, is not treated as such by her: "I had by this time lived too long among wonders and had panted to too many livelier measures" (276). She,typically, is most moved by negative proofs. Before they find the boat, she says "our not seeing it is the strongest of proofs" (275).

Even more puzzling than the boat is Flora's ambiguous manner. When they find her, the governess "at once felt sure she had just come out of the copse" (276), presumably because one goes to the woods to meet the devil. Flora "smiled and smiled" -- which could be only prejudicial phraseology -- but the governess and Mrs. Grose exhibited a "rare solemnity" until Mrs.Grose broke the spell by hugging Flora. The governess notes that, looking over Mrs. Grose's shoulder, Flora is now serious; but the governess does not tell us what wild expression Flora may have seen on the face of the governess, as the young woman experienced triumph, solemnity, and envy of Mrs. Grose for the "simplicity of <u>her</u> relation" (276). Finally Mrs. Grose gets

up, and sides with Flora. The girl asks, "And where's Miles?" and "the small valour" in "these three words" -- again the potency of words -- makes the governess lose control, with characteristic sexual imagery (the blade and the cup), and despite Mrs. Grose's blazing suspense. "Where, my pet, is Miss Jessel?" the governess asks.

The governess says "this name had never once, between us, been sounded," which renders suspect her earlier remark that "to indulge . . . in some direct reference to the lady" would have been "for once in a way" (242). Whatever is true, the name draws from Flora "a quick smitten glare" and from Mrs. Grose "at the same instant uttered over my violence -- the shriek of a creature scared, or rather wounded" (278), which is followed by the governess' sighting of Miss Jessel. The governess joyfully credits herself with having "brought on a proof," presumably by saying the black magic word, and feels "justified" and "neither cruel nor mad. . . . No moment of my monstrous time," she says, "was perhaps so extraordinary as that in which I consciously threw out to her . . . an inarticulate message of gratitude" (278).

But the governess is shaken because Flora's face shows "direct dismay" -- the one response "for which I had not allowed" (279). Flora is looking at the governess with "an expression absolutely new and unprecedented and that appeared to read and accuse and judge me," the facial equivalent of Miles's words of the previous night. If Flora really is

responding to the governess' signal that a ghost is present, then her response is extraordinary; a child would show some sort of excitement and puzzlement, not such a confirmed attitude, unless either (a) the governess is right about there being a relationship between Flora and Miss Jessel (which I reject) or (b) Flora has made an amazing intuitive leap (which would be a trifle unfair for James to allow at such a crisis in such a mystery story, despite a conviction one senses in James that a clever child has the uncanny ability at times to anticipate everything an adult will say).

There is another more acceptable explanation for her response: that she is condemning the governess for causing Mrs. Grose to utter such a shriek of pain. Were it not for the mystery of the boat, I would press this possibility harder. Because of that, however, I leave the reason for Flora's response as an ambiguity, and note that the governess' response to it is consistent with her response to the earlier crises. Her primary response each time is not to the ghosts, but to either Mrs. Grose or the children. This time it is to Flora: "I was . . . more appalled at what I may properly call her manner than at anything else" (279-280).

Even when the governess realizes that Mrs. Grose cannot see Miss Jessel, she still is disturbed most by Flora: "With this hard blow of the proof that her eyes were hopelessly sealed I felt my own situation horribly crumble, I felt --

I saw -- my livid predecessor press, from her position, on my defeat, and I took the measure, more than all, of what I should have from this instant to deal with in the astounding little attitude of Flora" (280).

Mrs. Grose and Flora are now "united . . . in pained opposition" to the governess, which only completes Mrs. Grose's progress from a reluctance to go to the pond (272) or to see Miss Jessel ("Oh thank you!"), to a typical, non-committal "plunge of submission" to the governess' position (275), to the hugging of Flora, to the blazing suspense before the governess names Miss Jessel, to the shriek and "dazed blink," to the "deep groan of negation, repulsion, compassion -- the mixture with her pity of her relief at her exemption" (280). Mrs. Grose assures Flora that "It's all a mere mistake and a worry and a joke -- and we'll go home as fast as we can!" and Flora, who has "turned common and almost ugly" in the governess' eyes, tells her, "I don't know what you mean. I see nobody. I see nothing. I never have. I think you're cruel. I don't like you!" and begs Mrs. Grose, "Take me away, take me away -- oh take me away from her!"

The break is made, and the governess, after looking back at Miss Jessel and observing that she is "not there for my service" (282), says Flora has spoken under Miss Jessel's "dictation," and "I've done my best, but I've lost you. Good-bye," and orders Mrs. Grose, "Go,go!" Something awful

had occurred and some collapse engulfed us, the governess says, but in the collapse that italicized "have" in Flora's statement cannot be overlooked. It is another nugget of ambiguity. It could mean either that Flora protests too much and has seen Miss Jessel, or that the governess previously has suggested the supernatural communication to Flora in some indirect way so as not to make a lie of her statement about not having made "direct reference" to Miss Jessel. Typically ignoring apparently significant statements by others (see above pp.57-58), the governess does not comment on Flora's "have."

The governess collapses on the ground in grief like Milton's Adam for the rest of the afternoon and then echoes the end of Paradise Lost: "then I took, back to the house, my dreary and difficult course" (283).[2]

The boat, to the "surprise" of the governess, is gone, "so that I had a fresh reflexion to make on Flora's extraordinary command of the situation." She does not see either Flora or Mrs. Grose that night, because Flora's "rupture" with her is complete. As she did on the first night the governess was at Bly, Flora will sleep in Mrs. Grose's room on this, the girl's last night at Bly with the governess.

For "ambiguous compensation" the governess sees more of Miles than ever: "I saw . . . so much of him that it fairly measured more than it had ever measured" (283). The

insight she gathers, as she later reveals (288), is that he wants to confess something. "No evening I had passed at Bly," she says, "was to have had the portentous quality of this one; in spite of which . . . there was literally, in the ebbing actual, an extraordinary sweet sadness," which could be mere relief. She has broken with Flora, and Miles "had his freedom now -- he might have it to the end!" She did not look for him, and did not speak to him when he came and sat with her two hours at bedtime. She, "conscious of a mortal coldness . . . as if I should never again be warm," is staring into the fire "with my thoughts"; her thoughts are on her lost position and passion, the latter made clear by her act of looking into the fire, which is erotically symbolic.[3]

Chapter XXI is one of the most misleading in Turn of the Screw. It is marked by Mrs. Grose's conversion to the religion of the governess. But this conversion obscures the ominous fact that the governess had gained momentum for a confrontation with Miles and had her plan in mind before Mrs. Grose's revelation of Flora's "shocking" language and of Miles's theft of the letter to the master. What seems a volatile chapter is really a static one, when it becomes clear that the governess was going to act with or without Mrs. Grose's help. Mrs. Grose, the children's last defender, not only surrendered for a poor reason, but her surrender was incidental. Equally foreboding for Miles is the fact that

the governess continued, right up until her surrender, to misread Mrs. Grose, and the chapter ends with her still misreading Miles. She began by thinking Mrs. Grose came to resist her -- and consequently was unjustifiably defensive and wrongly apprehensive about what Mrs. Grose was holding back -- and she ended still with the conviction that Miles had come to her the previous night because he wished to confess. Neither assumption was true. Mrs. Grose was looking for a way to surrender. We do not know what Miles wished to tell her, but it seems from his long walk Tuesday and his defiance of her after dinner that he was not in a confessional mood. The governess has misapprehended and will push too hard.

The first clue to the governess' new control is that she slept the night of the disaster at the pond (285). She is not losing sleep now as she did most of the summer and autumn. Mrs. Grose awakens her to say that Flora is worse, and almost feverish in her fear of the governess.[4] The governess gets up and perceives that Mrs. Grose "had discernibly now girded her loins to meet me afresh." Yet nothing Mrs. Grose says supports this; her first comment is one of helplessness: "Ah Miss, it is n't a matter on which I can push her!" The governess snaps back almost as if in a jealous fit at a mature sexual rival: "Oh I see her perfectly from here. She resents, for all the world like some high little personage, the imputation on her

truthfulness and, as it were, her respectability. [Note the first emphasis on respectability since the prologue.] 'Miss Jessel indeed -- she!' Ah she's 'respectable,' the chit! The impression she gave me there yesterday was, I assure you, the very strangest of all: it was quite beyond any of the others. I did put my foot in it! She'll never speak to me again" (285). The governess' imagination is faulty, as usual. As Mrs. Grose later says, Flora has mentioned "not one" word about Miss Jessel. Ironically, the governess' insulting "high little personage" recalls that this was precisely how she thought of the children: "a pair of little grandees, of princes of the blood" (173).

The governess is intent on Mrs. Grose's face, which "had more behind it" and showed "not a little besides" what was being discussed, and she flares up when Mrs. Grose says she had to agree with Flora yesterday "by the lake that just then and there at least there was nobody." Even when Mrs. Grose replies sympathetically to the governess' supposition that Flora will try to ruin her with the uncle -- "And him who thinks so well of you!" -- the governess does not hear the support as much as the topic: "He has an odd way -- it comes over me now -- of proving it!" she replies. When Mrs. Grose agrees with her view that Flora "wants of course . . . to get rid of me," the governess asks testily, "So that what you've come to me now for is to speed me on my way?" Before Mrs. Grose can answer the charge, the governess reveals her

own plan, conceived the night before: "I've a better idea -- the result of my reflexions. My going would seem the right thing, and on Sunday I was terribly near it. Yet that won't do. It's you who must go. You must take Flora" (287).

The governess says she will count on Mrs. Grose's loyalty -- strangely, in view of her perception of the progress of the conversation -- and stay and save Miles. Mrs. Grose, thinking of Miles's having stolen the governess' letter (which the governess does not know), looks at her and begins, "Do you think he -- ?" The governess, thinking of Miles's actions the night before, interrupts, "Won't, if he has the chance, turn on me? Yes, I venture still to think it. At all events I want to try. Get off with his sister as soon as possible and leave me with him alone."

She is amazed at "the spirit I had still in reserve" and bothered because Mrs. Grose is not impressed by "this fine example of it." But Mrs. Grose still is bothered about Miles, and typically looks hard out the window as the governess concedes Miles's silence the night before but adds, "All the same, I can't, if her uncle sees her, consent to his seeing her brother without my having given the boy -- and most of all because things have got so bad -- a little more time."

Mrs. Grose seems reluctant until the governess, puzzled, eases the pressure: "Unless indeed you really want not to go." At this, Mrs. Grose overcomes her unwillingness to give

up on the children and blurts out the proof that she has been with the governess all through this conversation: "Your idea's the right one. I myself, Miss -- . . . I can't stay." She has, to the surprise of the governess, heard "horrors" from Flora, and has been converted through the aural medium -- from which she is not only "exempt" from horrors, but is predisposed to them, as her exchange with the governess on the way to the pond had shown. Mrs. Grose had asked then, "You suppose they really talk of them?" and the governess had thought, "I could meet this with an assurance! 'They say things that, if we heard them, would simply appal us!'" (274).

The governess is ecstatic at Mrs. Grose's tearful conversion, and pumps her for more details, yet is told only that what Flora says is shocking, about the governess, and that Mrs. Grose has heard some of it before. This leaves the reasonable possibility that it all could have come from Miles, particularly in view of the reason he was expelled. Mrs. Grose now confesses "as she had never done" that she believes in "such doings," and the governess says, ominously for Miles, "we were shoulder to shoulder: if I might continue sure of that I should care but little what else happened."

Mrs. Grose finally divulges her last secret, Miles's theft of the letter, revealing unconsciously its great significance to her by saying she noticed even in her distress as she came back from the pond with Flora "that it

was n't where you had put it" (291).

Mrs. Grose's complete capitulation is masterfully shown in her last two proposals: the hasty deduction that Miles stole letters, and her final promise to the governess, "I'll save you without him!" She is now aligned with the governess against Miles.[5]

VII

A Terrible Reversal of Positions

Preparing for her final encounter with Miles, the governess is a determined and desperate woman. She has no position left: "It was a tighter place still than I had yet turned round in"; and Miles is in control: "What he would now permit this office to consist of was yet to be settled" (294). The last three chapters of Turn of the Screw record the terrible process of their reversal of positions. Two patterns are simultaneously traceable: the governess' premeditation, fear, rising aggressiveness, cruelty, physical mistreatment of Miles, and madness; and Miles's initial defiance and cockiness, then fear, surrender, and death. More of Miles's character comes through in these chapters and refutes the idealized view of him the governess held earlier. He is a condescending little rich boy who may well have learned some evil from Quint: he has just deceived his governess and stolen a letter of hers. He also shows contempt for her, but this is invited by her past treatment of him and his sister and by her apologies for her teaching. It is easy to forgive his transgressions, however, when one considers his circumstances. He deceived her with the end in mind of forcing a visit by his uncle. His motivation for stealing the letter may be clouded in juvenile confusion. He says he did it to see what the governess had written about

him, but he surely would have realized that his theft would delay the visit of the uncle. No explanation -- either one that implicates him as the governess does, or one that rejects his connection with Quint -- clarifies how he expected his theft to help him get back to school.

The governess' statements from the beginning of Chapter XXII show that the state of mind she has reached since her meditations by the fire two nights previous inclined her toward a "spirited" salvation of the children that amounts to vengeance. That final afternoon, as dinner nears, she "felt afresh -- for I had felt it again and again -- how my equilibrium depended on the success of my rigid will." Her "monstrous ordeal" demands, "for a fair front" -- a callous concern in these circumstances -- "only another turn of the screw of ordinary human virtue" (295). Despite her protests of weakness, she is eager; "precious opportunity . . . had now come," and she "to reach his mind, [will] risk the stretch of a stiff arm across his character" (296). She is all the more prepared to risk because she considers him such a formidable opponent: "He had really a manner of his own, and I could only try to keep up with him" (299). She says she will try to break him through that very intelligence: "What had his intelligence been given him for but to save him?" (a rationalization befitting a rural vicar's daughter). Yet she ultimately will not appeal to his intelligence, but try to scare him. Since she does not proceed on her stated

course, her having stressed his intelligence as the proper way to reach him probably means — by association with the desperation and embarrassment she already has expressed — that part of her motivation is an envy of his intellectual superiority.[1]

As their struggle begins, she feels "as if he were suddenly afraid of me -- which struck me indeed as perhaps the best thing to make him" (301). She claims to feel a "perverse horror of what I was doing. To do it in any way was an act of violence" (301), but she pushes on even when "his surrender . . . was . . . so complete that I ought to have left it there" (306). For a final proof, "I flashed into ice to challenge him" (309). Such is the manic-obsessive push for a "victory" she had thought so unlikely that morning when Mrs. Grose left her alone.

The governess had paraded around Bly, not seeing Miles, and realizing that her perambulations

> . . . tended to make more public the change taking place in our relation as a consequence of his having at the piano, the day before, kept me, in Flora's interest, so beguiled and befooled. . . . the change itself was now ushered in by our non-observance of the regular custom of the schoolroom. He had already disappeared when, on my way down, I pushed open his door, and I learned below that he had breakfasted -- in the presence of a couple of the maids -- with Mrs. Grose and his sister. He had then

> gone out . . . for a stroll; than which nothing . . . could better have expressed his frank view of the abrupt transformation of my office. What he would now permit this office to consist of was yet to be settled: there was at least a queer relief -- I mean for myself in especial -- in the renouncement of one pretension. If so much had sprung to the surface . . . what had perhaps sprung highest was the absurdity of our prolonging the fiction that I had anything more to teach him. It sufficiently stuck out that, by tacit little tricks in which even more than myself he carried out the care for my dignity, I had had to appeal to him to let me off straining to meet him on the ground of his true capacity. (294-295)

The bitterness of this remarkable confession of the declining course of their relationship is shown by her having related incidentally that on the way down to breakfast "I pushed open his door" -- hardly proper, but suggestive of the aggression she now feels toward him.

The governess says she wants to get Miles alone because he wants to "confess," but it does not occur to her that his taking a long walk that morning hardly signalled a disposition to confess. Nor does he seem repentant when he comes back for dinner. He seems ready to joke about the joint of mutton, but his first question is about Flora: "I say, my dear, is she really very awfully ill?" (296). This is

bothering him, as events will bear out. He believes Flora was "too ill to travel," a conclusion drawn probably from their having breakfasted together despite the governess' warning to Mrs. Grose to keep them apart (287) -- (and, incidentally, the governess does not comment on the breakfast, despite her passionate request, so that another incident occurs in which characters ignore that which should be significant to them).[2]

The governess is "prompt" and "grand" -- and therefore cavalier -- in denying that Flora is too ill to travel, and she makes a double-entendre on the child's health: "The journey will dissipate the influence and carry it off." She watches Miles's impeccable eating and decides he is "unmistakebly more conscious," which, if he is, results from his fear of her after the way she treated Flora. Dinner ends and they wait silently for the table to be cleared -- "as silent, it whimsically occurred to me, as some young couple who, on their wedding-journey, at the inn, feel shy in the presence of the waiter. He turned round only when the waiter had left us. 'Well -- so we're alone!'" (297). Her reply confirms her erotic frame of mind: "Not absolutely. We should n't like that!"

Miles, making conversation, observes that "we've the others," obviously meaning the servants, by his afterthought, "Yet even though we **have them**, they don't much count, do they?" The governess, however, as she did on the road to

church, puts the most frightening interpretation on this: "I made the best of it, but I felt wan." To her, the "others" are Quint and Miss Jessel (237,246).[3]

Now Miles walks uncertainly to the window and looks out with his forehead against the glass, and the governess nervously -- and like a hunter -- "gains" the sofa. Strikingly like her performance at the pond when she first manufactured Miss Jessel, she falls to her needlework, and, "steadying myself with it there as I had repeatedly done at those moments of torment that I have described as the moments of my knowing the children to be given to something from which I was barred, I sufficiently obeyed my habit of being prepared for the worst." Sure enough, "an extraordinary impression dropped on me as I extracted a meaning from the boy's embarrassed back -- none other than the impression that I was not barred now." This grows to a "sharp intensity" that becomes "bound up" with the "direct perception" (!) that Miles <u>is</u>, and with her omnipotent intuition she creates the setting for her assault on him: "Was n't it the first time in the whole business that he had known such a lapse? The first, the very first: I found it a splendid portent" (299). There is no way, of course, that she could know by "direct perception" that he is "barred," nor could she know that, if he is "barred," this is the "first time." Likewise, she cannot know the next thing she says: "he had been anxious all day." She has not seen him for most of the day,

and his testimony is that he enjoyed his walk: "I've been ever so far; all round about -- miles and miles away. I've never been so free." Well, she says, "do you like it?"

He answers with "more discrimination than I had ever heard two words contain": "Do you?" This is an insult to her lame-duck position, which he softens with, "Nothing could be more charming than the way you take it, for of course if we're alone together now it's you that are alone most" (i. e., "This is my home, but you have no role here").

She acknowledges her lost office, but says she stays on to be with him, which makes him "graver" and skeptical: "You stay on just for that?" His attitude is changing, and when she follows this with a trembling reference to the devotion she expressed while sitting on his bed the other night, he begins to show nervousness, then sarcasm, then resentment when she asks him to tell her, "What you have on your mind, you know."

He pauses, and to her surprise, does not refute her assumption that he has something on his mind: "Do you mean now -- here?" What he had on his mind is never told -- it could have been escape to school, or any number of problems related to her awful reign, or it could have been nothing at all. His growing fear of her becomes evident. He looks around uneasily, and she senses it with a "rare, queer" impression. After his trick of yesterday and his sister's strange sudden illness -- which the boy must have some ideas

about from breakfast, assuming that Flora still was raving against the governess -- it is not difficult to guess that as he feels her insistence, he begins to fear that she may do something to him. He wants to go outside: "Awfully!" She thinks they fear for each other, but it is clear only that he is afraid for himself: "I'll tell you everything -- I mean I'll tell you anything you like. You'll stay on with me, and we shall both be all right and I will tell you -- I will. But not now." He has to see Luke, he says.[4]

The governess will allow that, but first, in the mincing, precise manner in which she asks the questions that disturb her,[5] she wants to know "if, yesterday afternoon, from the table in the hall, you took, you know, my letter" (302).

James Ward says the governess commits the "cardinal Jamesian sin of being direct,"[6] but when she does, it shocks her. Quint returns immediately, for the first time since she faced him down on the stairs, as she experiences the Freudian "fierce split of my attention." She springs straight up, grabs Miles, "instinctively keeping him with his back to the window. . . . It came to me in the very horror of the immediate presence that the act would be, seeing and facing what I saw and faced, to keep the boy himself unaware. The inspiration -- I can call it by no other name -- was that I felt how voluntarily, how transcendently, I might" (303).

What is her instinct, her inspiration, her feeling that she "transcendently <u>might</u>"? Is it not her painful memory that yesterday when she tried to show off Miss Jessel, nobody believed? It is particularly suspicious that she had such an intense feeling just minutes before that Miles now was "barred" from seeing Quint, and feels again "the positive certitude . . . of the child's unconsciousness" -- yet feels she must shield him from looking at the window.

He confesses to having stolen the letter. Trying to hide from Quint her "quickened courage" at this, she "had to shade . . . my flame"-- identifying with Miss Jessel, whom she called "big as a blazing fire" (280). The governess' confidence and Miles's unconsciousness make her go on, she says. His earlier confidence is gone: "the collapse of mockery showed me how complete was the ravage of uneasiness." In all her minute, misleading description of this scene, laced with her laughter and bounds and moans and shrieks and squeezes, and Miles's breathlessness, nervous perspiration, pounding heart, and bafflement, it never occurs to her that his symptoms of fear are caused by her frantic behavior and manhandling.[7]

Now Quint is gone, and she has what she says she wants: "at last, by my success, his sense was sealed and his communication stopped" (304). But she gives away what she really wants when she is elated and almost shouting in joy because Miles found "nothing" in the letter. This fact can

be no revelation to her; she wrote the letter. But his confessing it is a triumph for her over him.

Now she brings up school: what had he done there? He is only dazed, and when she asks the terrifying question of why he may not go back, "the only thing he felt was rather a dreary little surprise. 'Did you know I might n't go back?'" Again, a milestone has been passed -- the tabooed question that initiated events is on the floor -- Miles has made a deflating answer -- and the governess registers no surprise, and it is difficult to believe she still cares much about it.

She says she knows "everything," which of course puzzles him, and she repeats, with bitter comic effect, "Everything. Therefore <u>did</u> you [steal] --?" He says no, and she, with her blind self-righteousness, "for pure tenderness -- shook him as if to ask why, if it was all for nothing, he had condemned me to months of torment. 'What then did you do?'" she asks.[8] "Well -- I said things," he confesses, continuing the theme of verbal guilt. But he cannot remember to whom he said them. The governess' desire to break him revives. She has learned almost nothing from him, and yet she feels that "the desolation of his surrender" was "by this time, so complete that I ought to have left it there." This occurs to her even though he has not mentioned the ghosts, which gives the impression that the point of this confrontation to her is its being a struggle between the two

of them. She goes on, "blind with victory," even though "the very effect that was to have brought him so much nearer was already that of added separation" (306).

She asks again whom he said things to, but, ironically, names mean less to the child than to this girl, who is terrified by them, and Miles cannot remember, except that they were "those I liked." This "paralyzes" the governess with the thought that Miles is innocent, and "if he <u>were</u> innocent what then on earth was I?" But the thought deters her for only a few moments, and she asks if his friends repeated what he told them. "Oh yes. . . . To those <u>they</u> liked," Miles replies, and again her expectations are wrong: "There was somehow less of it than I had expected" (307). She had imagined him a fiend at school (214,236). When he says that what he said was "too bad . . . to write home," she asks sternly -- "for his judge, his executioner," or, presumably, the headmaster -- "What <u>were</u> these things?"

Since she has suffered enviously for weeks with suspicions that the children know something about sex she does not,[9] and since Miles has just described his offensive speech as "too bad to write home," the governess has a strong apprehension of what he might say. And she is afraid to hear it -- although she is intensely curious about it -- because she expects it to be of a sexual nature. Predictably, then, "there again, against the glass, as if to blight his confession and stay his answer, was the hideous author of

our woe -- the white face of damnation" (308). Miles was turning toward the window at that instant, and his movement "made me, with a single bound and an irrepressible cry, spring straight upon him," and "the wildness of my veritable leap only served as a great betrayal." Miles "divines" that a ghost is present and resists as the shrieking governess tries to hold him, asking, "Is she here?" and meaning, "Flora told me at breakfast you saw her at the pond." Again the governess is stunned by a wrong expectation, and Miles must explain -- as he does in a "sudden fury" -- "Miss Jessel, Miss Jessel!"

The governess "seized, stupefied, his supposition -- some sequel to what we had done to Flora, but this made me "only want to show him that it was better still than that," and so she says with homicidal irresponsibility, "It's not Miss Jessel! But it's at the window -- straight before us." Miles, in justifiable self-defense, is "at me in a white rage," and deduces, "It's he?" She, inexcusably torturing, asks, "Whom do you mean by 'he'?"

"Peter Quint -- you devil!" Miles says, in convulsions. And one wonders how it could be misunderstood, after this depiction of adolescent mania and juvenile rage, whom he is calling a devil. Miles has made the "supreme surrender of the name," climaxing the theme of the horror and power of words with something which, to this inexperienced girl who lives within her own verbal constructs, is like an Hebraic

naming of the name or summoning of the essence.

Confident he cannot see, the devilish governess exposes the boy to just the worst shock her insane motions and mood and words could have prepared him for: an empty window and the quiet day.[10] There are not even the bounds of sight to limit his terror, and Miles is killed by her murderous innocence.

This is the governess' resolution of the torturing, distorted frustration of her impossible love. One solution after another had failed her. She projected ghosts to ease her tension, and, as they became too much for her and Mrs. Grose to bear, began to find release in transferring her affections to Miles, whom she considered attainable. But the identity with which she invested the ghosts interfered with the transference -- which is the full meaning of the image of the wedding-journey accompanied by "the others" -- and to break this painful stasis in which she found herself unable to deal with either the ghosts or Miles, she had to "free" Miles of the connection with them, possess him, and reject them and the master. She succeeded in purging herself, if we can believe the prologue.

VIII

The Intentional Fallacy

Mine is the latest in a series of interpretations of Turn of the Screw that have come forth since Edmund Wilson's seminal article in 1934. Curiously, most of the respected opinion before Wilson -- that of The Critic (1898), Henry Beers (1915), Ezra Pound (1918), Harold Goddard (about 1920), F. L. Pattee (1923), Edna Kenton (1924), Theodora Bosanquet (1924)[1] -- supports the position that the governess is an unreliable narrator. But not until Wilson called Turn of the Screw Freudian in Hound and Horn did the thirty-years war of critics begin. It followed cycles that eventually vindicated Wilson, but the issue is not settled, and may never be. The powerful lure of the story is such that probably even now someone -- maybe in North Dakota, or Angola -- is writing yet another interpretation. In broadest terms, two issues of critical history have been debated: (1) How do we interpret James's remarks about the tale? (2) How do we evaluate the harshly conflicting critical opinions? Under those headings, like the "horrors gathered behind" the question of Miles's expulsion, are these questions: Can we believe the governess? Is this a simple ghost story or a psychological study of an hysteric young woman, is it compounded of both elements, or is it an allegory? Or is Turn of the Screw, as J. I. M. Stewart feels, "insusceptible of any assured

interpretation"?[2] Finally, what are the governing assumptions that divide the critics?

I will attempt to deal with those issues as pointedly as possible, by concentrating on representative critical works rather than by burdening this paper with another of those opening paragraphs that include rich clusters of footnotes referring to the classic controversies, about which Eric Solomon smiles.[3] I will treat the trends of critical history in terms of the cycles mentioned earlier, which no one has described as I see them. These cycles might be described as alternating dominance of liberal and conservative readings -- liberal being those that distrust the governess and read the story imaginatively, conservative being those that read Turn of the Screw as a simple ghost story, as an allegory, or as a story susceptible of simultaneous conflicting meanings. I will establish that it is no longer true, as critics once could say,[4] that the majority of critical opinion trusts the governess and reads the story literally. Quantitatively and qualitatively the critics have turned against her in the last decade. The foundations of the conservative position -- primarily the work of Robert Heilman -- have in fact been demolished. But the conservative opinion persists because critics have a way of ignoring views with which they are unsympathetic, and because many have taken advantage of the mysteries of Turn of the Screw to publish unthinking orthodoxy -- and even reaction, in the case

of F. R. Leavis and E. E. Stoll -- or inapplicable speculation and ratiocination, as in the case of John Clair.[5]

James's commentary has been made much too big a problem. It is disappointing to see how many critics are guilty of the intentional fallacy[6] and how many ignore the wisdom of Austin Warren and René Wellek on this fundamental point of the significance of the author's supposed intentions:

> The meaning of a work of art is not exhausted by, or even equivalent to, its intention. As a system of values, it leads an independent life. The total meaning of a work of art cannot be defined merely in terms of its meaning for the author and his contemporaries. It is rather the result of a process of accretion, i. e., the history of its criticism by its many readers in many ages. It seems unnecessary and actually impossible to declare . . . that this whole process is irrelevant and that we must return only to its beginning. It is simply not possible to stop being men of the twentieth century while we engage in a judgment of the past: we cannot forget the associations of our own language, the newly acquired attitudes, the impact and import of the last centuries. . . . If we should really be able to reconstruct the meaning which Hamlet held for its contemporary audience, we would merely impoverish it. . . . We would bar the possibility of a new interpretation.[7]

Attempts to impoverish Turn of the Screw follow the line of

using James as the final authority on his own work, by quoting with varying degrees of critical judgment his comments in isolated letters and notebook entries.[8] Conservative readers are most insistent on this practice. Many write almost as if they were influenced more by a concept of property rights than by literary critical judgment.

Ten letters, two notebook references, two prefaces, and a medical interview have been published that give opinions by Henry James on Turn of the Screw. The first comment in print is a January 12, 1895, notebook entry -- almost three years before he wrote the book in the fall of 1897 -- which is the germ of Turn of the Screw.[9] It is a vague anecdote told him by Archbishop A. C. Benson, which interests James because of the "strangely gruesome effect in it." Those critics guilty of the intentional fallacy have tried to argue that the entry proves that Turn of the Screw is a ghost story, ignoring James's reflection in his 1908 preface that he liked the germ because "the thing had for me the immense merit of allowing the imagination absolute freedom of hand, of inviting it to act on a perfectly clear field" (Norton Ed., p. 118). Earlier he had written W. D. Howells (December 11, 1902, Norton Ed., pp. 116-117), that Turn of the Screw was one of his works which was "conceived only as the 'short story' that . . . I could hope to work off somewhere . . . and then grew by a rank force of its own into

something of which the idea had, modestly, never been to be a book."[10] So much for attempting to encompass a finished book within its source. A. W. Thomson's judgment is sound: "The growth of works of the imagination often takes them far from even their recognizable origins. . . . There is nothing in either the Preface or the Notebooks which will confirm what James's final intentions were."[11] James's next extant reference to the work, a letter to the archbishop's son acknowledging the germ, makes an ambiguous statement that could support the view I take: "my unbridled imagination caused me to see the inevitable development of the subject" (Norton Ed., p. 108). One wonders how a product of an "unbridled imagination" can be "inevitable"; the truth resides in the area of the unbridled, I believe.

James's third provable commentary on Turn of the Screw is a gracious and modest reply in October, 1898, to Dr. Louis Waldstein, a psychologist who found the book "suggestive and significant" (Norton Ed., pp. 109-110). James says he did not intend all that Waldstein found, "But, of course, where there is life, there's truth, and the truth was at the back of my head." This statement could be used to support a Freudian interpretation, and James's comment that his tragedy "was" (did his intention change?) about "the helpless plasticity of childhood that isn't dear or sacred to somebody" can be used against the governess. But the tone of this letter is so diplomatic that it is susceptible

of conflicting interpretations and therefore is risky evidence.

Next came the celebrated letter to H. G. Wells (December 9, 1898; Norton Ed., pp. 110-111), in which James put down Turn of the Screw as a "pot-boiler and a jeu d'esprit," which is no more believable than his immediately preceding remarks that Turn of the Screw reveals "absolute lucidity and logic" and that the governess is "impersonal." If James thought the book a potboiler, why would he have included it in his New York Edition and advised his agent, J. B. Pinker, to tell the London publisher Martin Secker that he could reprint Turn of the Screw only with the "distinct understanding, please, that he conform literatim and punctuation to [the New York Edition] text"? James emphasized that it was "vital that he adhere to that authentic punctuation -- to the last comma or rather, more essentially, no-comma" (Norton Ed., p. 89). One wonders how the critics who build cases on James's stated low opinion of Turn of the Screw would respond if James had said, for instance, "Watch and Ward is the greatest novel in our language." Would these critics then be so eager to accept his judgment? The New York Edition in itself makes James's comments before 1908 almost irrelevant because he finally revised Turn of the Screw extensively, and it is that revised version we study, not the original.

But even the original had most of the appeal of the

final version. Significantly, another psychologist, F. W. H. Myers, shared Waldstein's sense of deeper meanings in the book than James cared to admit. On December 19, 1898, James replied evasively to Myers (Norton Ed., p. 112): "I don't quite understand the principal question you put to me about 'The Turn of the Screw' . . . I somehow can't pretend to give any coherent account of my small inventions 'after the fact.'" And once again James put down the book as "a very mechanical matter . . . a shameless pot-boiler."

James referred incidentally to Turn of the Screw in a June 29, 1900, letter to Howells, and then disparaged it in his notebook, August 9, 1900, as "something . . . simple . . . grossly and merely apparitional . . . the squeezed sponge" (Norton Ed., pp. 114, 115). The meaning of this disparagement is clarified in a letter he wrote Howells the same day (Norton Ed., pp. 115-116), in which he said he was tired of writing about ghosts: "If this experiment fails, I fear I shall have to 'chuck' the supernatural and the high fantastic." Leon Edel argues convincingly that James was ending a "personal healing process" at this time, of which ghosts had been a purgative element,[12] and it is fair to assume that, having passed that crisis, James would not put a high value on his molted shell.

In 1907 he mentioned Turn of the Screw in two letters to Auguste Monod, who wished to have some of James's stories translated into French, but neither of these letters reveals

much to help settle the debate over James's intentions.[13]

The next reference to Turn of the Screw by James is in the prefaces to Volumes XII and XVII of the New York Edition (1908, 1909). In Volume XII, he talks of the book as "a fairy-tale pure and simple," but springing "from a conscious and cultivated credulity" (Norton Ed., p. 119), which is ambiguous, to say the least. He calls it "an excursion into chaos . . . but an anecdote -- though an anecdote amplified and highly emphasised and returning upon itself; . . . a piece of ingenuity pure and simple, of cold artistic calculation, an amusette to catch those not easily caught. . . . 'The Turn of the Screw' was an action, desperately, or it was nothing." The evil in it "remains relative to fifty other elements, a matter of appreciation, speculation, imagination -- these things moreover quite exactly in the light of the spectator's [the governess'?], the critic's, the reader's experience. Only make the 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) [the governess and Mrs. Grose] will supply him quite sufficiently with all the particulars." James says that in Turn of the Screw "my values are positively all blanks," which I take to mean that he has left everything up to the "authority" of his "supposititious narrator." It would seem he gave critics plenty of clues -- enough to show his seriousness in Turn of the Screw, but too

many to settle the argument of his intentions. As he said in the 1909 preface (Norton Ed., pp. 102-105), "We want it clear, goodness knows, but we also want it thick" (p.103). I could take from that preface to support my interpretation the comment that "the apparitions of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel . . . are matters as to which in themselves, really, the critical challenge (essentially nothing ever but the spirit of fine attention) may take a hundred forms -- and a hundred felt or possibly proved infirmities is too great a number. Our friends' respective minds about them, on the other hand, are a different matter -- challengeable, and repeatedly, if you like, but never challengeable without some consequent further stiffening of the whole texture" (p. 104) -- but I will merely offer it mutely, rather than get into a "sad wild tangle" over the conflicts and ambiguities this particular quotation raises when compared with others in the two prefaces.

The last known comment James made on Turn of the Screw, other than in the letter to Pinker, supports the idea in the 1908 preface of leaving the nature of the evil up to the reader. In a medical interview he told Sir James Mackenzie, the heart specialist, that he did not divulge the mysteries of Turn of the Screw because "so long as the events are veiled the imagination will run riot and depict all sorts of horrors, but as soon as the veil is lifted, all mystery disappears, and with it the sense of terror."[14] This would

have been in 1909, because Sir James lists this patient as sixty-six years of age.

Many critics, of course, have said astute and sensible things about how to interpret James's commentary on Turn of the Screw, and I would be doing them an injustice -- and failing to support my own case -- if I did not refer to representative remarks from this sector. I shall arrange these critics in alphabetical order, beginning with Wayne Booth: "The relationship between his developing narrators and the original subjects was often more complex than his own critical talk recognizes." Peter Coveney said, "One feels the evasion of all this. . . . The artistic hands are being very carefully washed," and F. W. Dupée pointed out that James "wrote and said many conflicting things about the story." Leon Edel expatiated: "Like most artists, he did not like to 'explain' his art, and he was determined not to spoil the mystification he had created. He was to tease both readers and critics in his later preface by saying the story was 'a trap for the unwary,' and he quite regularly reminded questioners that he regarded the tale as a piece of hack work. Doubtless it was, in the sense that he wrote it in a hurry and for money; but James himself knew that what sometimes begins as hack work can end as a masterpiece." John Enck related James to a modern tendency: "James, like most important twentieth-century authors, described his books not at all or inscrutably," and Graham Greene, himself

an author, warned, "We must always remain on our guard while reading these prefaces, for at a certain level no writer has really disclosed less." Harold Goddard said sensibly, "If anyone will take the trouble to read in the letters of Henry James, all the passages referring to The Turn of the Screw, I shall be surprised if he does not come away with the impression -- which at any rate is emphatically mine -- of a very charming and good-humored, but a nonetheless very unmistakable, side-stepping of questions or comments. . . . But I do not press the point. It is not vital. It in no way affects the main argument. For in these matters it is always the work itself and not the author that is the ultimate authority." Mark Spilka contended that "Freudian critics, whatever their faults, have at least sensed the tale's erotic ambiguities: they have rightly rejected James's evasive labels," and J. A. Ward said, "James's remarks on 'The Turn of the Screw' are typically paradoxical."[15] Robert Ginsberg made an excellent summary of the cautions requisite to an understanding of the self-criticism of James or any artist, succinctly dealing with the critics' errors -- "The controversy has manifested an obstinate disregard of the differences between what an artist does as an artist . . . what he does as a critic . . . and what he does in other domains of his private and professional life" -- with James's use of the archbishop's anecdote, and with James's shortcomings as a critic, closing with the calm

reminder that "there is no requirement that one's conclusions about the story must be the same as the author's"[16] -- a reminder almost as pertinent as James's own about "the triumph of intentions never entertained."[17]

IX

Sexual Responses

Mrs. Grose turned right and left in her distress. So has critical opinion in trying to understand Turn of the Screw. It now seems settled that the tale is a psychological study, not a simple ghost story or allegory. But if the tendency to pronounced cycles that has defined the modern critical history of the book persists, opinion could become unsettled again. The modern critical history began with Edmund Wilson's article in 1934. Before that, there were not many interpretations -- mostly just uncritical acceptances of its scariness. Ezra Pound did refer to the tale as a "Freudian affair" in The Little Review in August, 1918, but he drew no great response. When Wilson developed the idea, however, there was a marked reaction against him in the 1940's, a swing back toward him in the early and middle 1950's, another reaction around 1960, and since then an overwhelming move toward psychological interpretations stemming from Wilson.

My analysis of these cycles is based on a reading of all significant commentary on Turn of the Screw, as listed in the bibliography in Cranfill-Clark, An Anatomy of 'The Turn of Screw' (1965), the James Number of Modern Fiction Studies (Spring 1966), the second edition of Willen's Casebook (1969), and PMLA bibliographies since 1965. Rather than

list in notes all the articles and books I have studied, I am including as an appendix (pp. 213-218) a table listing these works chronologically and dividing them in columns on the basis on which I have contrasted them: on the left will be the criticism which sees the governess as an unreliable narrator and interprets the book psychologically. On the right will be the criticism which believes the governess and interprets Turn of the Screw as a simple ghost story or allegory. Most of the criticism will be familiar to Jamesian scholars and full titles and dates easily can be checked against the bibliography of this paper.

The cycles have occurred as follows. Right after Wilson published his interpretation, Stephen Spender seconded him in The Destructive Element (1935). But from 1941 through 1949, twenty of twenty-four major articles and books on Turn of the Screw resisted Wilson, including works by well-established scholars such as F. O. Matthiessen (The American Renaissance, 1941), Matthiessen and Kenneth Murdock (The Notebooks of Henry James, 1947), A. J. A. Waldock (1947), Q. D. Leavis (1947), E. E. Stoll (1948), and two articles by Robert Heilman (1947, 1948 -- the latter being the long-heralded "'The Turn of the Screw' as Poem"). Wilson backed off in 1948 because he thought the notebooks proved that James meant to write a ghost story and that therefore his own interpretation of the "identification scene" was forced. Wilson decided that "not merely is the governess self-

deceived, but . . . James is self-deceived about her" (Casebook, pp. 145,147). Only Yvor Winters (1947), Osborn Andreas (1948), and Leon Edel (1948) had in any way supported Wilson in what came to be considered major critical works.

Edel's work in his 1948 edition of The Ghostly Tales of Henry James foreshadowed a new trend, since he would become the foremost critic of Turn of the Screw, and lead others in the direction of well-reasoned psychological interpretations. F. W. Dupée (Henry James, 1951), Marius Bewley (The Complex Fate, 1952), Edel (The Psychological Novel, 1955), and Oscar Cargill ("Henry James As Freudian Pioneer," 1956) continued the trend back toward Wilson, and from 1950 through 1956, ten of fifteen major critical works went that way.

Then in 1957 seven articles and books were published that challenged the conventional literal readings, offset only by Charles Hoffman's The Short Novels of Henry James, which followed Heilman. Opposing Hoffman were Richard Chase, Peter Coveney, Joseph Firebaugh, Harold Goddard, John Lydenberg, Simon Lesser, and John Silver, whose interpretation of the controversial "identification scene" caused Wilson to return in 1959 to his original position.

There was an apparitionist revival from 1958 through 1961, and ten of fourteen critical works were traditional interpretations, including articles by Heilman (1961) and Alexander Jones (1959), and Wayne Booth's The Rhetoric of

Fiction (1961).

Since 1962, however, the apparitionists have been crushed by numbers and subtlety. Some forty critical works on Turn of the Screw have come out since then, and at least thirty of them are psychological interpretations that question the governess' reliability, which means that almost two-thirds of the hundred-odd major works on Turn of the Screw are in that critical camp. Since 1962 only Maxwell Geismar (1963), Krishna Vaid (1964), and Eli Siegel (in a posthumous 1968 edition of his child-fearing 1953 lectures) have read Turn of the Screw straight. Among the great majority with opposing views are Pauline Kael (1962), Dorothea Krook (who originally read Turn of the Screw as a Faustian tale, then awoke to the ambiguities, and now is something of a straddler who emotionally belongs with the apparitionists), Hans-Joachim Lang (1964), Walter Wright (1962), Darrel Abel (1963), Oscar Cargill (a repudiation of his 1956 article,1963), Mark Spilka (1963), Thomas Cranfill and Robert Clark (1965), A. W. Thomson (1965), John Enck (1966), Paul Siegel (1968), Duncan Aswell (1968), and Edel again and pre-eminently (The Treacherous Years, 1969).

What is to be made of these cycles? Even within the tidal wave toward psychological interpretations, points of view vary enough to make narrow categorizing of critics misleading. I would say that it is instructive that the move away from the governess and toward more imaginative

and close reading is coincident with the general improvement in American literary criticism since World War II. There simply has been less tendency in the last twenty years to follow the impressionistic, generalizing, historical, absolutist, reminiscent, allegorizing, and often sentimental approach of many of Wilson's detractors. Criticism has tended to become more concerned with details of structure, psychology, and linguistic implication. If one reads Turn of the Screw as a ghost story, one can do little more than paraphrase in commenting on it, refer to James's comments, and shiver with delight. To realize the critical point of view this requires, consider that the only lengthy defense of the governess since 1961 is by a critic with the eremitic faith that James's narrators typically are reliable.[1] And to read Turn of the Screw straight, one must ignore so much of the story -- which brings us to the bitter heart of the critical debate.

What then are we to believe about Turn of the Screw? That it is just a ghost story? That it is a Christian allegory of Good and Evil? That it is a psychological study of an hysteric? Or, like the governess, "God help us if we know what it is!"? I believe the first two possibilities can be disposed of easily enough. Establishing the third and disposing of the resistance to it is more difficult, however.

Robert Heilman's allegorical reading is the conservative counterpart to Edmund Wilson's Freudian reading, in terms of

influence. As Hans-Joachim Lang points out, few critics fully accept either work today.[2] But Wilson's insight has led to a series of incisive, revealing studies, while Heilman attracted only a few early enthusiasts who could not long extend his line.[3] There are many flaws in Heilman's approach, but it is foredoomed by two broad critical necessities: (1) If one takes a conservative position and trusts the preface, then one cannot argue that a story can be both an _amusette_ and a serious statement on the nature of good and evil; (2) If one sees the governess as unreliable and hysteric, then she cannot be a convincing spokesman for such a serious theme. Of course, since Heilman trusts her, the second point would not trouble him, but he has not commented in his three articles on the first point. He did, in his last article on _Turn of the Screw_, return to the root of the controversy -- which I shall discuss below -- but he misinterprets it, and he has not answered the list of charges brought against him by other critics. Richard Chase made the general point that "_The Turn of the Screw_ is symbolistic rather than allegorical." Walter Wright raised the basic question of artistic economy and unity: "Had James wanted only to say that a pure, wise, self-sacrificing young woman was at war with evil and that her every act was irreproachably good, he could have written something not unlike a morality play. . . . He could not have justified in his actual story numerous incidents and a good many

comments by the governess which are irrelevant in such a narrative and often becloud the issue." Hans-Joachim Lang observed that the governess is not "the Good Angel, since the Good Angel is not usually depicted as being in sensual love with an employer." Mark Spilka attacked generalizing and evasion: "Conventional critics . . . speak consistently of generalized Evil, a capitalized abstraction, as opposed to generalized sexual evil, and so avoid 'weak specifications.' Heilman's view of the tale as a morality play . . . [and] his more recent retreat to 'the lure of the demonic,' suggest their line of evasion." John Lydenberg exploded Heilman's theory of "verbal patterns" in Turn of the Screw by pointing out that her Christian words "are not simply words that James attaches to her; they are words that James has her attach to herself" and -- most important -- that Heilman's conception does not make sense emotionally.[4]

As Lydenberg says, Heilman does not account for the fear in the book. Turn of the Screw is a masterpiece of terror, and this effect is not achieved by working out a highly stylized abstract way of accounting for evil in the world. Heilman simply does not feel the power of the turn of the screw. The point he should have made with his allegorical discovery is that it is a further refinement of the device of the unreliable narrator -- that this religious hysteric not only speaks in religious imagery, which would be a minimal requirement of characterization, but that she is so obsessed

that she describes her brutal intimidations of the children as an egotistical myth of salvation of the innocents.[5] Such an interpretation accommodates all elements in the tale, and does away with the disturbing prospect of respected critics insisting that their mutually irreconcilable interpretations are correct. It also invests all the power of the book in the governess' manner of narrating, which is where -- not in theme -- our emotions tell us it lies. When Heilman says James is speaking through the governess, he is like Mr. Deasy attributing Iago's sentiments to Shakespeare. To deal with such a view forces one into the difficult area of biographical influence on art, but if it must be done, Oscar Cargill's point is pertinent that "James's well-known low opinion of allegory and his indifference to theology mitigate against an allegorical interpretation" (Norton Ed., p. 165n).[6] And, as I pointed out earlier, James was in the 1890's attempting various methods to diminish the authorial presence, all in the opposite direction from the puppeteering of events that is allegory.

I have raised the cry of "Waste!" against those who insist on limited or overlaid conventional interpretations of Turn of the Screw. They have been crying "Reduction!" for years. Philip Rahv said in 1944: "The Freudian insight . . . is so elementary as to make the story less rather than more interesting. . . . Of course, there is no doubt that the story may be read that way, but that is by no means the same

as saying that such a reading conforms with the author's intention." Robert Heilman said in 1947 that "Wilson turns the story into a commonplace clinical record," and Robert Liddell the same year: "But the chief objection is one of general impression: this is not what the story means, and only perverted ingenuity, of a kind which has little to do with literature, could have detected the 'clue' . . . If some unresolved elements lingering in the unconscious have found their resolution in the imagery, and have added to the total atmosphere of evil, it is only another illustration of the way that everything sometimes works together for good when a novelist is producing a great novel." Oliver Evans believed (1949) that "to view the novel as an implied case history, a mere clinical record, is to deprive the reader of the peculiar sense of horror which it was James's ambition to arouse in him." Glenn Reed apologized (1949): "My thesis obviously admits of no startling imaginary discoveries, but it does have the virtue of returning the story from the arid atmosphere of a psychic case to its proper province as a haunted and haunting ghost story replete with all imaginable intangible horrors." Charles Hoffman wished to dismiss Freud (1957): "The Freudian interpretation of <u>The Turn of the Screw</u> can never be denied since it is a tautological theory . . . [but] it can be ignored as an interesting and even possible (though not probable) theory, reminiscent of the extreme interpretations of Shakespearian plays by Freudian critics,

acceptable only if one accepts the Freudian premise to begin with." Douglas Davis was extreme (1959): "Such an interpretation degrades the story to the level of a medical journal report, its author to the level of a cheap, if not obsessed, trickster, and its leading character to the level of a neurotic murderer -- in fact, one of the most despicable villainesses in all literature." (I observe in passing that this last critical standard would degrade a number of works marred by despicable villains, such as Macbeth and Othello.) And Margaret Lane misunderstood (1968): "If there were in truth no ghosts . . . the story, as an essay in horror, simply collapses."[7]

Those are representative complaints of "reduction," all in one way or another seeing psychological interpretations as demeaning to a good horror story, and all answerable on grounds of common sense, since maniacs are "considerably more disturbing than ghosts," as Wolcott Gibbs observed, and since "a good strong, determined woman, so tortured by fears and visions that all her passion goes into making others look her fear in the face, is about as complexly dreadful a demon as any horror story can encompass," as Pauline Kael observed.[8] It also should be said that the former critics leave no room in their complaints for a distinction between a critic who uses literature to document an intellectual position, and one who is trying to explain the nature of a given piece of literature. They also do not face the fact that to insist

that this is a splendid but simple supernatural horror story or allegory is to accuse Henry James of artistic failure -- not because such subjects cannot be treated artistically, but because to call Turn of the Screw only a ghost story is to accuse James of loading his tale with irrelevancies that tease us unwary critics into fantastic psychologizing.

It is tempting to dismiss the conventional critics with Mark Spilka's remark that with Freudian principles "we may reduce literature to clinical cases, as purists often say; but without them we may reduce imagination to sterile fancy, as purists sometimes do" (Norton Ed., p. 253), but more needs to be said to try to understand the conflicting criticism of Turn of the Screw. Simon Lesser has said some of it: "To study the unconscious forces which play so important a part in literature and in our response to it, it is clear that one must employ some kind of dynamic depth-psychology, either Freudian psychoanalysis or one of its variants. Yet the resistance to introducing this kind of knowledge into literary study is especially intense -- so intense as to make one suspect that it is partly determined by irrational considerations."[9]

Lesser goes on to outline some of these irrational considerations, echoing Freud's views that people resent psychoanalysis because they feel it undercuts their intellect and self-control and exposes their weaknesses, and making points that reasonable critics accept today: "The greatest

fiction occupies and rewards the entire psyche," and "all but the shallowest works of fiction are overdetermined and admit of a number, often a large number, of correct interpretations."[10]

Quoting Lesser on bias brings us to the last, shadowy arena of the conflict, where resolution is much less likely than in discussion of the other two extra-textual questions, the extent of James's knowledge of psychoanalysis, and the meaning of his self-criticism. If it were not for the particular nature of Turn of the Screw, a critic could discuss the text, score his points, score his opponents, and be done. But -- as James said -- the nature of the evil in the tale has been left unstated, to be inferred from clues, and because of this, the critic must comment on critical assumptions that influence inferences: why some readers insist on reading the story a certain way, and why others insist -- on what should be the same evidence -- on reading it an opposing way. Turn of the Screw is, even more specifically than Harold McCarthy said, "an index of critical techniques and of shifting fashions in evil."[11] While I reject Robert Heilman's interpretations of the story, I agree with him that elements outside the text contribute to the critical divergences. But I reject his interpretation of those elements, which was, in 1947:

> [Wilson's] capacity for doctrinaire inflexibility deserves a word because it tells us something about the intellectual

> climate in which he works. In that climate there is so strong a suspicion of the kind of elements that are central in The Turn of the Screw -- salvation, the supernatual, evil as an absolute -- that the critic ripened in the climate runs into a mental block: he is compelled to find a 'scientific' way around these irrationalities; and in doing so he is likely to lose sight of the proper imaginative values. We run again into the familiar clash between scientific and imaginative truth. This is not to say that scientific truth may not collaborate with, subserve, and even throw light upon imaginative truth; but it is to say that the scientific prepossession may seriously impede the imaginative insight.[12]

In 1961 Heilman was saying that the critical divergences were symptomatic of "a period of philosophical transition" in which "some readers' acceptance of the literal text is hampered by several assumptions of romantic origin and hue: the essential innocence of children; the corruptness of authority, whether political or educational; the untrustworthiness of traditionalist attitudes toward wrongdoing. . . . This is a rational age; ghosts do not exist, and we shrink from finding within ourselves a strong residual capacity for so frank a response."[13]

He remains evasive. While Turn of the Screw does appeal to a sensitivity for corrupt authority and puritanism,

it does not properly appeal to a concept of the innocence of children, since the children are not the emotional focus of the story. The focus is on the governess' responses to what she experiences. Because of her extraordinarily intuitive manner of perceiving and narrating, and because of her dangerous and irresponsible manner of acting, we are maneuvered into a position of having to accept or reject her story on the basis of how we evaluate her -- and her morbidity and insistence leaves no room for neutrality in the reader. The majority of critics now rejects her not for scientific values, but for humanitarian values -- they cannot tolerate her treatment of the children. They reject her not because they reject ghosts (Hamlet still is acceptable), but because they reject arrogant aggression based on self-serving intuition. Given the carefully detailed way this woman presents her experiences and describes her reasoning and inferring, if one accepts her, he must accept her as a character of truly heroic proportions, of incredible powers of physical and mystic vision. Too much is given, the story is too organic for the critic to hide in tentative interpretations. I argue that the record of her process of acquaintance with the ghosts -- that is, her dramatization of her painful relations with the master, Mrs. Grose, and the children -- is the point of Turn of the Screw. To recapitulate: her most extreme responses are not to the ghosts, but to the people: no one knew how proud she

was to accept the master's terms (240), nothing meant more to her than her work with the children (181), nothing about her work meant so much to her as its being an escape from trouble (181), nothing was so odd as her response to Mrs. Grose after the first ghost (180), nothing she related seemed so dire as her perception about Flora at the pond (202), nothing shocked and scared her so much as Miles on the lawn (227, 245), the children made her want to leave (256), nothing was so extraordinary as her gratitude for Miss Jessel's appearance before two witnesses at the pond (278), nothing was so foreboding as Flora's attitude then (280), and the clearest revelation of the collapse of the system at Bly was that her role as teacher had been a fiction (294). Further, her control of the ghosts betrays her, since they come when she needs them, and seem to spread a handy infectious exemption that strikes the governess (246), Mrs. Grose (280), and Miles (299) at precisely those times when it can help the governess maintain her mystery. The nature and behavior of the ghosts are mystifying because they are the products of the excited imagination of an irregularly educated and inexperienced young girl who compounds them of Gothic stereotypes and sexual morbidity. In the power of this haunted girl are placed two bright children she does not understand and fears to deal with, and a housekeeper she scares and insults into an irregular subversion. Horror results, and the process is even more frightening than its

elements because its relation is in the tone of an hysteric whose fears increase as she fails in one attempt after another to resolve her strange relations with those around her, and to break her compulsive chain of cruxes. She knows intellectually but cannot accept emotionally that her social standing prevents her being noticed by the master. The thought, repressed, is projected in ghosts: the ghosts make her feel she has encountered a situation she cannot control, and if she cannot control it, she fails as governess and must face, on other terms, the root fear of rejection by the master. So she transfers her affection to the boy -- who with "the rights of his sex and situation . . . stamped upon him" (248) is so handy a substitute for the uncle -- and, having loaded him with her sins like a scapegoat, disposes of him. This, not salvation, is the true religious archetype undergirding Turn of the Screw. The governess suffers from an immature passion in conflict with a rigid class-consciousness. She is an unstable person at a highly impressionable period of life who has exposed herself to the worst possible set of pressures for her particular personality, and the experience proceeds through an alternating series of inflating anticipations and deflating realties which shake and anger the girl and drive her to her final solution. To call this reading scientific is to assume that psychology is fully scientific, and not, like the rest of medicine, still largely an art, the art of understanding the

patient.

I have shown that the illness, the fear, of the patient -- the governess -- is sexual. She does not, for instance, primarily fear that her ghosts will do violence to the children -- she is not worried about leaving Miles with Quint (271), or, like the normal Mrs. Grose, that Miss Jessel might drown Flora (274). Violence would be only incidental to the goal of the ghosts, the governess says (238), but it is the goal -- the further transmission of knowledge, "the work of demons" that had begun during the lives of Quint and Miss Jessel -- that frightens the governess. And what special knowledge do we associate with Quint and Miss Jessel? Mrs. Grose has accused them of only one kind of "evil," and the governess has built her case on extrapolations from Mrs. Grose's testimony. Even the literalists grant the sexual overtones of the story.[14] But the story ultimately beguiles the reader into trying to determine more than overtones -- into determining what the nature of the evil is -- and readers begin to divide on the extent to which they will agree that sex is the primary energizing force of Turn of the Screw, the element which terrifies the governess into seeing and doing what she sees and does. It is here that disagreements occur which have their origin, as Marius Bewley said of aspects of his argument with F. R. Leavis over What Maisie Knew and Turn of the Screw, "at levels not readily accessible to critical

persuasion."[15] In bluntest terms, conventional critics are saying that psychological critics are afraid of ghosts, and psychological critics are saying that conventional critics are afraid of sex.

The textual imperative for a response in terms of one's sexual sensibilities accounts for the whole range of responses to Turn of the Screw -- presumably all the responses possible from critics in puritanically inhibited Anglo-Saxon societies. (Of course, even with our inhibitions, we are not so inhibited as the governess, and it takes some perception to understand her terror at something that frightens us less. This is typical of the difficulty readers often have in identifying with James's strangely refined characters.) Some critics will aggressively pursue a search for fuller understanding of the sexual nature of Turn of the Screw; for whatever complex of reasons, this pursuit eases their tensions or strengthens their egos in dealing with a subject that northern societies seem unable to consider normally or neutrally. Other critics will resist such interpretations, for the reason that those who ought most to be concerned with psychology often are inclined to avoid the subject. Other critics will recognize the sexual nature of the story, but find it personally preferable not to be identified with the psychological interpreters.

These cultural influences are another reason -- along with the obscuring intuition, the occult highlighting, the

ambiguous language, and the distortion of communication[16] -- that Turn of the Screw will remain a critical subject to a greater extent than even its considerable merits as a study of psychology and suspense deserve. It will continue to resist elucidation and reduction of any kind.

NOTES

I

[1]Henry James, The Aspern Papers; The Turn of the Screw; The Liar; The Two Faces, Vol. XII, The Novels and Tales of Henry James, The New York Edition (New York, 1908), p. 158. All subsequent references to Turn of the Screw are to the New York Edition, and will be incorporated into the text. Turn of the Screw first was published in serial form in Collier's Weekly, XX, No. 17 (January 27, 1898) — XXI, No. 2 (April 16, 1898).

[2]Henry James, The Treacherous Years (Philadelphia, 1969), p. 368. Edel however believes there was a strong similarity in the creativity of James and the findings of Freud: "On the level of art James was probing the same human experience -- and in an analogously systematic if unconscious way -- as Sigmund Freud, who was making his discoveries at this very moment in Vienna" (p. 15). In his introduction to a recent edition of Watch and Ward, which first was published in 1871, Edel cited this Freudian passage: Roger Lawrence wondered if "a little preliminary love-making would do any harm. The ground might be gently tickled to receive his own sowing; the petals of the young girl's nature, playfully forced apart, would leave the golden heart of the flower but more accessible to his own vertical rays" (New York, 1960), p.6.

[3]James said in a book review that "a good ghost-story,

to be half as terrible as a good murder-story, must be connected at a hundred points with the common objects of life." See "Miss Braddon," The Nation, I (November 9, 1865), partially reprinted in the Norton Critical Edition of Turn of the Screw, ed. Robert Kimbrough (New York, 1966), pp. 97-99. In the preface to Vol. XVII of the New York Edition, James said, "The moving accident, the rare conjunction, whatever it be, does n't make the story . . . the human emotion and the human attestation, the clustering human conditions we expect presented, only make it. The extraordinary is most extraordinary in that it happens to you and me" (Norton Edition, p. 104).

4"'The Turn of the Screw' and the Turn of the Century," Norton Edition, p. 263. To call the governess an unreliable narrator is not to call her a liar, as Oscar Cargill does in "'The Turn of the Screw' and Alice James," PMLA, LXXVIII (June 1963), 238-249, reprinted in the Norton Edition, pp. 145-165. She can be reporting honestly, but mistakenly, or her observations can be accurate, but her inferences wrong, as Walter Wright believes in The Madness of Art: A Study of Henry James (Lincoln, 1962), p. 178. Alexander Jones argued against the possibility of unreliable narrators in PMLA, LXXIV (March 1959), 112-122, reprinted in Gerald Willen, ed., A Casebook on Henry James's 'The Turn of the Screw,' 2d ed. (New York, 1969), pp. 298-318, contending that "the basic convention of first-person fiction is necessarily a confidence in the narrator" (p. 317). But Hans-Joachim Lang

discredited that position by placing Turn of the Screw in a tradition of American fiction told by unreliable narrators, including Irving's "Adventures of the German Student" and Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." "The Turns in 'The Turn of the Screw,'" Jahrbuch für Amerikastudien, Band 9 (Heidleberg, 1964), 110-128.

[5]The Treacherous Years, p. 204. The chapter in this book, "The Little Boys," is Edel's latest writing on Turn of the Screw. His introductions in The Ghostly Tales of Henry James (New Brunswick, 1948), pp. xxviii-xxix, 425-435, and part of his The Psychological Novel, 1900-1950 (Philadelphia, 1955), pp. 59-68 (partially reprinted in the Norton Ed., pp. 228-234), are excellent commentary, and "Hugh Walpole and Henry James: The Fantasy of 'The Killer and the Slain,'" American Imago, VIII (December 1951), 3-21, anticipates "The Little Boys."

[6]Both in Jahrbuch für Amerikastudien. Lang, 1964, and Miss Domaniecki, "Complementary Turns in 'The Turn of the Screw': The Straight Turning," X (1965), 206-214.

[7]"The Ambiguity of Henry James," Hound and Horn, VII (April-June 1934), 385-406. Revised for The Triple Thinkers (New York, 1938, 1948), pp. 88-132. Reprinted in Gerald Willen, Casebook, pp. 115-153.

[8]Pagination for the two works cited in this paper is from the paperback edition by Avon Books (New York, 1966), a reprint of Vol. II of the Standard Edition of The Complete

Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (London, 1955).

[9]In April, 1893,"only three months after the publication of the 'Preliminary Communication' -- a fairly full account of it was given by F. W. H. Myers at a general meeting of the Society for Psychical Research in London and was printed in their Proceedings in the following June. The 'Preliminary Communication' was also fully abstracted and discussed by Michell Clarke in Brain (1894, 125). . . . The Studies on Hysteria seem to have been duly published [in Leipzig and Vienna] in May 1895, though the exact date is not stated.. . . In England it was given a long and favorable notice in Brain (1896, 401) by Michell Clarke, and once again Myers showed his interest in it in an address of considerable length, first given in March 1897, which was ultimately included in his Human Personality (1903)," ed. introd. (anon.), Avon edn., Studies on Hysteria, pp. xv, xvi.

[10]Studies on Hysteria, p. 40.

[11]Studies on Hysteria, p. 160.

[12]Freud, Dora (New York, 1963), p. 154.

[13]The governess says, "I began to watch in a stifled suspense, a disguised tension, that might well, had it continued too long, have turned to something like madness" (199); "It was my new suspicion that was intolerable; and yet even to this complication the later hours of the day had brought a little ease" (209-210); "Would exasperation, however, if relief had longer been postponed, finally have betrayed me?

It little matters, for relief arrived. I call it relief though it was only the relief that a snap brings to a strain or the burst of a thunderstorm to a day of suffocation" (247).

[14]The principle of constancy is outlined by Breuer, pp. 239-245. The quotation is from p. 243.

[15]These references to Studies on Hysteria are on pp. 166, 174 (virginal anxiety), 47 (psychically acquired hysteria caused by suppression of a sexual affect), 43-45 (why traumas go unresolved), 44-45 (hypnoid state of day-dreams), 47 (needlework), 293 (lovers' reveries).

[16]See Appendix B, where I discuss Jane Eyre as a source for Turn of the Screw.

[17]Studies on Hysteria, pp. 38 (all hysteria related to original trauma), 162 (distortion), 246-247 (factors conducive to hysteria).

[18]Studies on Hysteria, pp. 161 (spitting of consciousness), 51 (hysterogenic stimulation).

[19]"Turning the Freudian Screw: How Not To Do It," Lit & Psych, XIII (Fall 1963), 105-111; reprinted in Norton Edition, pp. 245-253. See p. 250.

[20]The governess suspects Miles and then Miss Jessel (168-169), holding Mrs. Grose excitedly in a manner that Marius Bewley calls obscene in The Complex Fate (London, 1952), p. 104; the governess panics over the unstated extent of Quint's "freedom" (196); she imagines the master keeps bad company (196-197); she has divined an affair between Quint

and Miss Jessel (205-207); she imagines the children "lost" upon hearing of Miss Jessel's suspicious departure (208); she thinks Miles knew of the affair (213-214); she imagines appalling language by the children about the ghosts (274); she fears the revelation of the substance of Miles's offensive language at school (308).

[21]The governess' first criticism of the master is mild, but surprising in view of her having said nothing previously against him: "This [perception by Mrs. Grose] squared well enough with my impression of him: he was not a trouble-loving gentleman, nor so very particular perhaps about some of the company he himself kept" (196-197). This worsens to "his indifference [regarding the children] must have been awful" when her affections more fully involve Miles (239), and later, feeling "sacrificed," she dispassionately tells Miles himself, "I don't think your uncle much cares [about how Miles is 'going on']" (252), which she now sees to apply to both of them. She blasts the uncle in her frustration after the episode on the church-road: "After all, it's their uncle's fault [that the children are corrupt]" (261). Finally, bereft of hope for the requieting of her original passion, she ironically answers Mrs. Grose's comment that the uncle "thinks so well of you": "'He has an odd way -- it comes over me now,' I laughed, '-- of proving it! But that does n't matter'" (286-287).

[22]Wilson and his duplicators have discussed the more

obvious sexual symbolism: the man appearing erect on the tower, cut off at the waist (censored, that is); the man at the window, again cut off; the woman ghost at the pond; Flora's toy at the pond. Robert Wolff rather early pointed out some original Freudian probabilities (AL, XIII [March 1941], 1-8, reprinted in Norton Ed., pp. 125-132): the crenelations of the tower, which the figure handles (178); Flora's appearing at the "open door" after having been left "in the schoolroom with a sheet of white paper, a pencil and a copy of nice 'round O's'" (167) -- which John Enck patterns with her toy at the pond (Norton Ed., p. 264) -- and the relation of the ghosts to candles, staircases, windows, and corridors. For instance, the defeat of Quint on his only appearance in the house (feminine) is heavily and functionally Freudian: obviously stimulated by Amelia into a love reverie that induces "a deliberation that must have seemed magnificent had there been any one to admire it," the governess meets Quint on the stairs under a "presiding" tall window and stares him down after extinguishing a candle with a "bold flourish" (221-223). Herbert Feinstein, in "Two Pairs of Gloves: Mark Twain and Henry James," American Imago, XVII (Winter 1960), 349-387, explores the sexual symbolism of the dining room, particularly the significance of the governess' gloves (see above, pp.53-54).

There are other symbols I have elucidated in this paper: the cleft stick (above, p. 78), the rose and the fallen tree

(p. 89), the blade and the cup (p. 107), the fireplace activity (p. 111), and the hatlessness of these "familiar" ghosts (pp. 48, 104), which may symbolize nakedness, according to Paul Siegel, "'Miss Jessel': Mirror Image of the Governess," Lit & Psych, XVIII, No. 1 (1968), 30-38, note 6. Of course the obvious symbolic honeymoon fantasy of the governess has been noticed, but I have a new interpretation of it (p. 129). There are yet other images and events which appear to be sexually functional, not coincidental. The governess comes to look for Quint "in the circle of shrubbery" (243), quite precisely where he would be coming from (even Rip Van Winkle passed through a vaginal grassy ravine to see his vision). In the "crystal depths" of the "sociability and tenderness" of the children the governess sees that "like the flash of a fish in a stream -- the mockery of their advantage peeped up" (244-245). Their "advantage," as she conceives it, and here so graphically illustrates, is sexual knowledge she lacks. She and Miles are standing by a "low oblong table-like tomb" when their debate reaches its climax with his mention of the uncle, and she drops "straight down on the stone slab" (252). She and Mrs. Grose are puzzling over Miles's sin at school, and "it was Mrs. Grose who first brought up the plumb" (291). The governess anticipates that Miles, who stands "with his hands in his pockets," will make a joke about the joint of mutton (296), and finally, she "achieved thoughtfully a few loops of

my knitting" as she built up to the climactic question about the stolen letter that brings on Quint in the last scene (302-303). Since the fish and the plumb are figures of speech, while the circle of shrubbery, the tomb, and the joint are visual stimuli, and the loops are manual creations, the governess' obsessive preoccupation is revealed in all her incidental activities, and the tendency implicit in her frequently stated prurient suspicions is underscored.

[23]Miles's claim that he went on the lawn so that the governess would "think me -- for a change -- bad!" (234) is suggestive of inspiration by Mrs. Grose, coming as it does right after the governess finally had pumped out of Mrs. Grose the "bad" Miles had done, and said she "must just wait" for more proof (212-216). Mrs. Grose joined the governess only "under pressure" to discuss the incident the next day, and her first comment after the governess' harsh indictment of Miles is, "Lord, you do change!" -- doubtless a reference to the governess' last stated position on the issue, which was abeyance of judgment (216), and possibly an expression of frustration that her collusion with Miles backfired. Seeing now that the governess is going to read every act of the children with the same suspicion, Mrs. Grose suggests that the uncle should take them away, and then has her falling-out with the governess, who perceives that Mrs. Grose thinks she is crazy (239-240). Mrs. Grose may have pursued this goal by suggesting to the children that they ask for a visit

from the uncle, because they begin right after the falling-out to ask constantly when he will come (246). Equally suggestive of Mrs. Grose's possible secret communication with the children is the fact that she let them have breakfast together the final day and left without seeing the governess (293-294), after the governess explicitly said, "they must n't, before she [Flora] goes, see each other for three seconds" (287). Mrs. Grose's motivation would be, of course, to ease the governess' suspicion of the children, and to do whatever she could to ease the pressure on them.

[24]An Anatomy of "The Turn of the Screw," the book by Thomas Cranfill and Robert Clark (Austin, 1965) which is as hard on the governess as she is on the children, summarizes her bullying of Mrs. Grose. See pp. 86ff , and also The Complex Fate, pp. 102-107.

[25]The governess noted from her first day how Mrs. Grose dotes on the children (161), and she rightly perceives the woman as between her and the children: "I had already begun to perceive how, with the development of the conviction that . . . our young things could, after all, look out for themselves, she addressed her greatest solicitude to the sad case presented by their deputy-guardian" (230-231). Later she snaps at the old woman: "You were too sweet too -- I can hear you all" (259). At the pond, Flora's stare "strengthened the pang with which I at that moment envied Mrs. Grose the simplicity of her relation" (276), and minutes later Mrs.

Grose and Flora were united "in shocked opposition to me" (281). Next morning Mrs. Grose "had discernibly now girded her loins to meet me afresh" (285). As I point out, the governess does not realize the full extent of Mrs. Grose's resistance to her and defense of the children.

[26]For Mrs. Grose as a villain, see Eric Solomon's amusing "The Return of the Screw," University Review, XXX (Spring 1964), 205-211, reprinted in Norton Ed., pp. 237-245; John Clair's unbelievable The Turn of the Screw: The Ironic Dimension in the Fiction of Henry James (Pittsburgh, 1965); C. Knight Aldrich, "Another Twist to 'The Turn of the Screw,'" MFS, XIII (Summer 1967), 167-178, reprinted in Casebook, pp. 367-378. Solomon's effort deserves commendation for being a welcome relief in a sometimes stuffy critical debate, and Aldrich merely goes too far with some alert observations. Clair, however, is just too much: he sees Mrs. Grose as the manipulator of a mad scene at Bly caused by the uncle's having fathered Miles and Flora on Miss Jessel, who went mad and is locked in the tower under the guard of Quint. Carl Strauch put down that interpretation with the seriousness it deserves when he extended it with the remark that "that would account for Miss Jessel's always appearing at the pond -- she goes there to bathe."

[27]"From the first moment," the governess says, "I should get on with Mrs. Grose" (159). Then: "We should on every question be quite at one" (162); "She accepted without

directly impugning my sanity the truth as I gave it to her" (193); "So, for a little, we faced it once more together" (206); "She went all the way with me as to its being beyond doubt that I had seen exactly what I had seen" (209); "She believed me, I was sure, absolutely" (230); "She offered her mind to my disclosures as, had I wished to mix a witch's broth and proposed it with assurance, she would have held out a large clean saucepan. This had become thoroughly her attitude" (231); "'Laws!'. . . [Her] exclamation was homely, but it revealed a real acceptance of my further proof of what . . . must have occurred. There could have been no such justification for me as the plain assent of her experience to whatever depth of depravity I found credible in our brace of scoundrels" (238); "I knew that, whatever, to her apprehension, might befall me, the exposure of sticking to me struck her as her least danger" (274); "Mrs. Grose took again . . . one of her plunges of submission" (275); "She would have backed me up if she had been able" (280). But on the last day the governess must admit that she never had had Mrs. Grose's full support: "Her simple description of them [the ghosts] required . . . to be carried no further, and she gave me the whole thing as she had never done. 'I believe.'" The governess amusingly comments: "Yes, it was a joy, and we were still shoulder to shoulder" (290-291).

[28]Pauline Kael says of the film version of Turn of the Screw, "The Innocents": "The children are so impersonal that

we are not anxious about them: their fates are never quite real. . . . Whatever happens in 'The Innocents' happens because of fear." "'The Innocents' and What Passes for Experience," Film Quarterly, XV (Summer 1962), 21-27. See p. 24. Her observation is not so true of the book, but I am more inclined to fear the governess than to fear for the children.

[29]This is more meaningful to me than is the view of some critics that the governess suspects homosexual relationships between Quint and Miles and between Miss Jessel and Flora. I do not, however, reject the possibility. See William Lyon Phelps, "Henry James," Yale Review, V (July 1916), 783-798; Lyon Richardson, ed., Henry James: Representative Selections (New York, 1941), pp. lxxiv-lxxxvii; Oscar Cargill, "Henry James as Freudian Pioneer," Chicago Review, X (Summer 1956), 13-29, reprinted in Casebook, pp. 223-238; Joseph J. Firebaugh, "Inadequacy in Eden: Knowledge and 'The Turn of the Screw,'" MFS, III (Spring 1957), 57-63, reprinted in Casebook, pp. 291-297; M. Katan, "A Causerie on Henry James's 'Turn of the Screw,'" Psychoanalytical Study of the Child, XVII (1962), 473-493, reprinted in Casebook, pp. 319-337; Dorothea Krook, The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James (New York, 1962), p. 113n.

[30]The governess begins to talk in this adversarial tone when she returns to her bedroom and finds Flora out of bed:

"I had never had such a sense of losing an advantage acquired (the thrill of which had just been so prodigious) as on my consciousness that she addressed me with a reproach" (224). She has the same experience with Miles when she sees him on the lawn: "I felt, this time, over his real embarrassment, a curious thrill of triumph" (232), but she loses this triumph, too. Later, "the little wretches" gracefully mock her with their "advantage" (245) and have their "triumph" (247). On the church-road, she thinks Miles "perceived the advantage he had gained" (249). She talks about Flora as if she were a rival, and is eager to take on Miles (285-287). Miles's theft of the letter "will have given him so scant an advantage" (292). And her attitude in the last scene is all-conquering.

II

[1]The Treacherous Years, p. 368. Critics who say Douglas is Miles are Carvel Collins, "James's 'The Turn of the Screw,'" Explicator, XIII (June 1955), item 49; Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "One More Turn of the Screw," MFS, IX (Winter 1963-1964), 314-328, reprinted in Casebook, 367-378; and Stanley Trachtenberg, MFS, XI (Summer 1965), 180-182. Gerald Willen is not sure (Casebook, pp. xi-xii). None of the advocates comments on the ambiguous ending to James's "Master Eustace" (1871), which would provide comparative support for their position. It is James's only other tale told by a governess, and it ends with the reverse of Turn of

the Screw -- a son killing his seductive mother. Or so the governess says. Her interlocutress challenges, "What a dismal tale! But it's interesting. Of course Mrs. Cope [the mother] recovered." To which the narrator, an old woman who was twenty-two and on her first job when the events of her story occurred, replies: "You are like me, your imagination is timid." The Complete Tales of Henry James, Vol. II, ed. Leon Edel (Philadelphia, 1962), p. 373.

[2]Robert Slabey, in "'The Holy Innocents' and 'The Turn of the Screw,'" Die Neuren Sprachen, XII (1963), 170-173, argues that the use of three narrators -- one representing the present (the narrator of the prologue), one the recent past (Douglas), and the third the remote past (the governess) -- "removes the reader aesthetically from the story . . . and establishes the veracity of the three narrators" (p. 171). He also sees significance in Douglas's beginning his reading -- if he did -- on December 28, the day of "the Feast of the Holy Innocents, the commemoration of Herod's massacre of the boys . . . who were two years old or younger" (170). Slabey apparently borrowed his idea about the effect of the three narrators from Leon Edel, intro., The Sacred Fount (New York, 1953), pp. xxiv-xxv, except that Edel thinks the effect of the technique is "mystification," not verification.

[3]Juliet McMaster believes James does this to lay the foundation for a double reading of Turn of the Screw: one can read it, like the vulgar ladies, simply as a thriller.

Or, one can read with the acuity of the second narrator. "'The Full Image of a Repetition' in The Turn of the Screw," Studies in Short Fiction, VI (Summer 1969), 377-382.

[4]Mark Spilka says the governess initially feels a romantic, not a sexual, love for the master, and explains the cultural influence causing this and subsequent developments in the story: "Romantic love was identified by Victorians with affection: its sexual side was severely censored, hence the object of much furtive interest. The governess's feelings for the tower, the children, her master, all loosely enveloped in a romantic haze, are fully primed for prurient attunement." Norton Ed., 247.

[5]Studies on Hysteria, pp. 48, 276.

[6]A prime example of the wrong-headedness of critics on this point is Dorothea Krook, p. 379, who includes it under her first point in a summary of "the several morals for literary criticism to be drawn from Mr [Edmund] Wilson's errors." Mrs. Krook sounds a little like the governess with her highly biased assumptions and the harsh judgments that proceed from them with so little proof.

[7]Most of the dating in Turn of the Screw is consistent, but without weakening its timeless fairy-tale quality (xvi). Some, however, is confusing. Douglas heard the story ten years after it happened (149), and kept it to himself for forty years (151). If he was to have been telling it to a contemporary audience, then, since Turn of the Screw was

published in 1898, the events occurred in the late 1840's: "We are in a kind of Brontë world in which calm and hysteria mingle -- and we are in the Brontë period. . . . It happens to be also the decade of James's own early childhood," Edel points out (Treacherous Years, pp. 204-205). That much is consistent. So is the dating of the events of the governess' summer at Bly. She arrives in June (158), apparently early June because the first apparition appeared at the middle of June (189, 243). Yet the governess gives the impression that she had been at Bly a long time before the first ghost visited: "I now feel that for weeks the lessons must have been my own" (173) and "In the first weeks the days were long" (174). Actually less than two weeks passed before he came. His second appearance had to be in June, too (189), on a Sunday (183), apparently at the end of the month. The next reference to a time -- and that is seasonal -- is the day after Miles's escapade on the lawn, when the season has turned (231), so it must be late summer. Quint had been on the steps eleven nights earlier (227), and Miss Jessel on the steps just after that. Miss Jessel's first appearance was at the pond on an uncommonly hot afternoon, "days" (217) before Quint on the stairs, apparently in July since Quint was at the window late in June. Autumn passed in mania (243), and Miles's "revolution," initiating the last three days of action, was on an autumn Sunday (248), in November (298). So most of that is clear, except for the governess' exaggerating

her period of bliss with the children. Likewise, one can relate all the dates given for the period just preceding the experiences of the governess. If that summer is given the arbitrary date of 1848, then Miles and Flora were orphaned in 1846, two years before (153). The master and Quint were at Bly "last year," or 1847, Mrs. Grose says, and then Quint was "alone" and in charge (192), which would have to have been after Miss Jessel died. This does not seem to have been the case, however, because Miss Jessel had been at Bly until "she went off at the end of [previous] year [1847]," Mrs. Grose says (170). The effect of the inconsistency is to make Mrs. Grose a careless historian, which would be expected of a woman of her type. A nursemaid took over the children during what was expected to be a "short holiday" for Miss Jessel, but word came that Miss Jessel had died, "the great awkwardness of which had, precisely, left no alternative but the school for little Miles," who was underage (154-155). Apparently Miles left for school in February or March, for a term of three months (266). Meanwhile, that winter, Quint died from a fall on the ice (198).

[8]_Turn of the Screw_ was written in the period when James's fiction was influenced by his attempts at play-writing: "Beginning with _The Spoils of Poynton_ [1896] . . . there emerged a new and complex Henry James of the novel. His work required also a new and complex reader: one who had to be aware he was 'following,' not simply reading, a story.

. . . It was a case of the novelist skillfully withholding information rather than giving it; or making it available piecemeal, doling it out and asking the reader to keep close track of it," as Edel says, (Treacherous Years, pp. 111, 112, 113). Thus I took the trouble to arrange the dates of Turn of the Screw, and Muriel West wrote a fascinating expansion of the hints relevant to the last scene, "The Death of Miles in 'The Turn of the Screw,'" PMLA, LXXIX (June 1964), 283-288, reprinted in Casebook, pp. 338-349. Miss Blackall observes that James wrote "with a minimum of direct authorial intervention and an extreme reliance upon organic dialogue to reveal character, relationships, and the very action itself," and that "since James has given us a great many inducements to see through and beyond the narrator, . . . we should adopt criteria other than those the narrator offers us, e.g., common sense and a sense of the ridiculous." She cites Mrs. West's article as an explanation of "the extent to which physical attitudes may be apposite to the interpretation of James's fiction," Jamesian Ambiguity and the Sacred Fount (New York, 1965), pp. 5, 33, 5n. All of this echoes the awareness of James's amanuensis, Theodora Bosanquet, of an "uneasy doubt of the sincerity of the conversational encounters recorded [in James's fiction]. . . . Between the people created by Henry James lying is as frequent as among mortals and not any easier to detect." Henry James at Work (London, 1924), p. 10.

[9]The Science of Life (London, 1877) is anonymous, but has John Ruskin's endorsement, pp. 6-8. For the dating of events in Turn of the Screw, see note 6, above. For an excellent summary of relevant cultural facts of the Victorian era, see Mark Spilka's essay, Norton Ed., pp. 245-253.

[10]The Science of Life, pp. 9-11, 12.

[11]The Science of Life, pp. 14, 15.

[12]The Science of Life, p. 31. However, Steven Marcus points out that Lord Acton's popular The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs (London, 1857), "communicates unmistakably the sense that childhood sexual play and childhood masturbation were both widespread and well-known phenomena." The Other Victorians (New York, 1964), p. 15.

[13]Marius Bewley examines this scene to show the governess' "technique of persuasion," which she uses to slander the children with sexual evil. He says "all of the governess's speeches submit to this kind of analysis." The Complex Fate, pp. 101-105.

[14]"'The Turn of the Screw,'" in American Literature (Great Neck, N. Y., 1963), Vol. III, p. 302.

[15]Some of the other suspicious apologies and insulated arguments by the governess include, "I could reconstitute nothing at all [wicked in Miles], and he was therefore an angel" (182-183); The man at the window "was there or was not there: not there if I did n't see him" (185); "I don't in

the very least" (188); "Nothing was more natural than that these things should be the other things they absolutely were not" (201); "There are depths, depths! The more I go over it, the more I see in it, and the more I see in it, the more I fear. I don't know what I don't see, what I don't fear!" (204); ". . . I dealt; the more readily for my full vision -- on the evidence -- of our employer's late clever good-looking 'own' man" (207); "The more I've watched and waited the more I've felt that if there were nothing else to make it sure it would be made so by the systematic silence of each" (236); "So much avoidance could n't have been made successful without a great deal of tacit arrangement" (241); "Our not seeing it is the strongest of proofs" (275).

[16]"'The Turn of the Screw': Grammar and Optics," CLA Journal, IX (September, 1965), 68-72. See below, p. 77 my discussion of her suspicious power of sight when Miles is on the lawn.

[17]This was suggested to me by Robert Wolff's description of Charles Demuth's illustration of that scene for Edna Kenton's article, "Henry James to the Ruminant Reader: 'The Turn of the Screw,'" The Arts, VI, 245-255 (November, 1924). The illustration appears on p. 247. Norton Ed., p. 126n.

[18]I discount the scene at the end of Chapter XVII, when she feels "an extraordinary blast and chill, a gust of frozen air and a shake of the room as great as if, in the wild wind, the casement had crashed in" (267). She felt a chill after

the first ghost (179), turned cold on seeing the second (184), and had "an extraordinary chill of a feeling" when she found Miss Jessel in the classroom (257), so the feeling of chill and frozen air is not unique or convincing, but symptomatic. The "wild wind" itself could have caused the noise and shaking of the room, and she might even have felt Miles's breath as he blew out the candle.

[19]Freud calls the hat a potent but "obscure" sexual symbol. A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis (Garden City, N. Y., 1938), p. 140.

[20]Literature and the American Tradition (Garden City, N. Y., 1960), p. 238.

III

[1]Feinstein, pp. 366ff.

[2]Studies on Hysteria, p. 43.

[3]My understanding of the significance of the "identification scene" is an extension of Harold Goddard's: "[In it] the governess' fears and repressed desires and the housekeeper's memories and anxieties unconsciously collaborate," p. 13 of "A Pre-Freudian Reading of 'The Turn of the Screw,'" NCF, XII, No. 1 (June 1957), 1-36, reprinted in Casebook, pp. 244-272, and in Norton Ed., pp. 181-209. The uncertainty of those who think the governess is a liar -- such as Oscar Cargill, Norton Ed., pp. 145-165 -- is shown by the haste with which they seized upon John Silver's article, "A Note on

the Freudian Reading of 'The Turn of the Screw,'" AL, XXIX (May 1957), 207-211, reprinted in Casebook, pp. 239-243, for their final proof. Silver acknowledges that the biggest obstacle to a non-literal reading is the governess' detailed description of Peter Quint, whom she is not supposed to have known about. But Silver's reading does not remove this obstacle. The essence of his argument is that when Mrs. Grose asks if the man at the window was someone from the village, and the governess replies, "Nobody -- nobody. I did n't tell you, but I made sure" (188-189), this means, "she has actually been to the village to check." Silver's error is in believing a woman whose sureties and certainties are suspect at best (see above, pp.180-181). The governess really means, "I didn't tell you what I saw earlier, but I made sure in my own mind" -- just as she made sure who Miss Jessel was not without looking -- "that the man I saw was not from the village." Evidence for this view of her investigative techniques is in two other passages in Turn of the Screw where the governess uses that same phrase, "I made sure." At the beginning of Chapter XVI she thinks the children have "bribed" Mrs. Grose not to mention the governess' absence from church. The only way she can prove her suspicion is by asking one of the children or Mrs. Grose. Yet the governess says she proves it by studying Mrs. Grose's face: "I did this to such purpose that I made sure they had in some way bribed her to silence" (258). In Chapter XXI she believes

again from Mrs. Grose's facial expression that the housekeeper is hiding something from her, and again only on intuition she says, "[Mrs. Grose] granted my point [that Flora does not want to see the governess again] with a frankness which, I made sure, had more behind it" (286). So to the governess, "I made sure" does not mean "I objectively examined and arrived at a foolproof conclusion," as it does (and should) to John Silver. Further, there is evidence that the governess was not alone in nineteenth-century literature in colloqually using the term to mean, "I believed." Ironically -- for John Silver -- in Treasure Island (1883), Jim Hawkins, bobbing around the island in a coracle behind the drifting, pirated Hispaniola, twice expresses the usage. "I made sure, of course, that I should be taken," he says, and then, perceiving the ship to be out of control, "If only I dared to sit up and paddle, I made sure that I could overhaul her." Robert Louis Stevenson, Treasure Island (New York, 1925), pp. 169, 170. In neither case did Jim literally "make sure." His perception of the ship's being unmanned cancelled his first surety, and a sudden change of direction of the Hispaniola which caused it to sink his coracle cancelled his second surety. But both sureties eased pressures for him, and that is how the governess' sureties function for her.

[4]This idea was suggested by Eric Solomon's droll point that the governess has only Mrs. Grose's word for it that the

apparition is Peter Quint. Norton Ed., p. 241. Bruce L. McElderry, Jr., observes that "a logical explanation of her experience is something she [the governess] never seeks." Henry James, Twayne's United States Authors Series (New Haven, 1965), p. 119.

[5]Other examples of these off-beat responses are: (1) In this same conversation, when Mrs. Grose reveals "from a deeper depth" that Quint was "in charge," the governess ignores it (192), but when Mrs. Grose repeats it in their next conversation, the governess reacts so strongly she has to smother a howl (197). She has learned more about Quint since the first conversation, but she should not have forgotten that he was in charge. Apparently that information was not what she needed to hear the first time. (2) On the way to church (Chapter XIV), the governess overreacts to Miles's innocent remarks, but is not disturbed by his only overt threat (252). (3) The governess makes a strong point that Miles and Flora are not to be together on the last day (287-288), but then relates with no concern that they have breakfasted together (294). (4) Throughout the book the governess has feared discussing Miles's expulsion with him, but when she finally mentions it, his response is a "dreary little surprise," and she takes it in stride (305); likewise, he is not disturbed by her questions in the final scene -- as she is -- but by her actions regarding the apparition, which frighten him at least.

[6]"A Pre-Freudian Reading." See above, p. 56, n. 3.

[7]Oscar Cargill says Flora told the governess about Quint and accepts John Silver's idea that she also had informers in the village (Norton Ed., p. 153). See p. 56, n. 3, above. E. Duncan Aswell says the governess learned of Quint from the master's briefings. "Reflections of a Governess: Image and Distortion in 'The Turn of the Screw,'" NCF, XXIII (June 1968), 49-63. Nathan Bryllion Fagin, although believing the governess, notices that Quint has "red hair and red whiskers, the conventional guise of the Devil." "Another Reading of 'The Turn of the Screw,'" MLN, LVI (March 1941), 196-202, reprinted in Casebook, pp. 154-159. Allen Tate and Katherine Anne Porter also discussed the resemblance during a May 3, 1942, Columbia Broadcasting System radio symposium reprinted in Casebook, pp. 160-170.

[8]As he said in his preface, James preferred the "dear old sacred terror" of "the good, the really effective and heartshaking ghost-stories" to the "new type" of "modern 'psychical' case, washed clean of all queerness" (xv). He also said, however, that he planned for personal experiential judgments by readers of the nature of the evil in Turn of the Screw (xxi) -- of which Harold Goddard's is the most famous, being related to a mad governess of his own boyhood. In fact, James said so many conflicting and ambiguous things about Turn of the Screw, as I shall point out in Chapter VIII of this discussion, that we cannot use

him for a final authority, if indeed we should wish to. His stated opinions can best be taken as critical possibilities, although I believe many of the possibilities have been effectively eliminated by recent critics. It is interesting that the makers of the film "The Innocents," based on Turn of the Screw, although greatly altering James's text, followed him in making all the ghosts questionable, but leaving one puzzling tangible: not a detailed description of Peter Quint, but a tear on the desk where Miss Jessel had been seated. See Pauline Kael's discussion, p. 24.

[9]See Muriel West, A Stormy Night with 'The Turn of the Screw' (Phoenix, 1964), p. 8.

[10]Leon Edel uses this scene to demonstrate his contentions that the governess "speculates and she assumes -- and what she first states as fancy she later states as fact. . . . We are always in the realm of the supposititious. . . . But it is the governess who does all the seeing and all the supposing." Norton Ed., pp. 230,233.

[11]Studies on Hysteria, p. 47.

[12]The "portentous clearness" came over her during their first long talk, and she revealed the ghost's connection with the children (194). "The very act of bringing it out" -- her interpretation of this relationship -- "really helped me to trace it -- follow it all up and piece it all together," as she made her wild conclusions after seeing Miles on the lawn (237).

[13]I consider it of secondary importance, but worth noting in connection with the governess' insensitive treatment of Mrs. Grose, that although James could be quite "proper," he would not have shared the governess' class bigotry. His biographer, Edel, devotedly believes "there was no touch of bigotry or racism in his make-up." Treacherous Years, p. 275. Characteristically, James would pit American democracy against European class-consciousness with his sentiments clear insofar as those opposing qualities were concerned. And certainly he would have known how the aggressively democratic American readers of the 1890's would have taken this evidence of the "evil" of a woman's "reaching down" for a lover. James said of it in his 1865 review of Aurora Floyd: "Lady Audley was diabolically wicked; Aurora Floyd . . . was simply foolish, or indiscreet, or indelicate -- or anything you please to say of a young lady who runs off with a hostler." Notes and Reviews by Henry James, ed. Pierre de Chaignon la Rose (Cambridge, 1921), p. 113. As the rest of the review makes clear, James disapproves of but does not condemn ladies becoming familiar with "fast," or socially inferior, men. Among critics who have dealt with the social criticism in Turn of the Screw are Goddard, Casebook, pp. 270-271, and Norton Ed., p. 207; Muriel West, A Stormy Night, pp. 43-51; Albert Stone, "Henry James and Childhood: 'The Turn of the Screw,'" Stetson University Bulletin, LXI (April 1961), who believes Turn of the Screw is "'about' the problem

of social class stratification and the religious psychology of a person occupying a peculiarly vulnerable but important position in that social system" (p.8); Richard Rees, "Miss Jessel and Lady Chatterley," in For Love or Money (Carbondale, 1961), pp. 115-124. Kenneth Burke sees a "class struggle" in it. A Rhetoric of Motives (New York, 1950), p. 117.

[14]This is one of several puns, rhymes, and alliterations in strategic parts of dialogue in Turn of the Screw which are so much out of tone with their contexts as to suggest satire. The other puns are: the governess' "who would consent that I should go unhung [if I introduced the subject of ghosts to the children]?" (233), paired with her reading of Mrs. Grose's defiant expression at the pond: "'I'll be hanged,' it said, 'if I'll speak!'" (277); the governess' scolding of Miles after she caught him on the lawn, with Peter Quint, she believes, "'While you,' I concurred, 'caught your death in the night air!'" (234); and in the last scene Miles puns on his own name: "I've been ever so far; all round about -- miles and miles away" (299). The jingling rhyme is the governess' judgment on Flora, "'And that manner' -- I summed it up -- 'is practically what's the matter with her now'" (286), which is most unexpected in such a bitter scene. The alliterations are alike in sound, subject, and setting: "He [Miles] fairly glittered in the gloom" the first time he and the governess talked in his bedroom (234). The second time, his voice "was gaiety in the gloom!" (262). James is so

manneristic and slangy that care is necessary in analyzing his word patterns. For that reason I did not mention the amusing but not necessarily strategic juxtaposition of "eyes" and "pupils" (244) and of "grounds" (the estate) and "grounds" (bases) (228-229). However, the examples I did give are instances of rhetoric that is inappropriate or at least odd for the subject of the moment. The effect of her gay expression of serious matters is to increase suspicion of her hysteric condition. In regard to puns, many critics assume that Mrs. Grose's name is a pun on "gross" and therefore consistent with her nature, but Maxwell Geismar disagrees (as he usually does with Jamesians, or "Jacobites," as he calls them). He says the name is pronounced "grows." Henry James and the Jacobites (New York, 1963), p. 162.

IV

[1]Edel, Norton Ed., p. 230, and Cargill, Norton Ed., p. 163, have shown the particular influence of Amelia. See Appendix B ("Sources") of this study for the influence of two other novels about exemplary young ladies in isolated and haunted country homes, Jane Eyre and Uncle Silas.

[2]James changed the reference to the governess from "instructress" in the Collier's story to "deputy-guardian" in the New York Edition, which may imply that he wanted to suggest that her function as tutor was declining. The Norton Edition lists all textual changes (pp. 92-94), and

editor Robert Kimbrough comments: "The major revisions appear in the 1908 New York version. Here James seemed intent on shifting the center of attention away from the details of action observed by the governess to the reactions felt by the governess. By removing commas . . . he came closer to approximating the stream of her consciousness. . . . By increasing the use of the possessive pronoun 'my' and by replacing verbs of perception and thought with those of feeling and intuition . . . James draws us intimately into the course of her narrative" (p. 91). See also the Cranfill-Clark book, pp. 16-20.

[3]The break does not seem to be specifically influenced by the demands of serial publishing. It is the middle of the seventh installment in Collier's. See the Norton Edition for the serial divisions.

[4]Robert Heilman believes that "children of that age simply are not wide awake, imaginatively alert, and capable of strategic maneuvering in the middle of the night," and therefore Miles and Flora, ages ten and eight, must be under demonic influence. "The Freudian Reading of 'The Turn of the Screw,'" MLN, LXII (November 1947), 433-445. Following Harold Goddard's lead in offering personal evidence, I can only say that my children, ages ten and six, who typically retire about 10 p. m., have been quite active near midnight, without, I hope, the incitement either of ghosts or an oppressive home authority. Miles and Flora also usually got

to bed at 10 p. m. (283, 288). The scene is unusual, but these are unusual children, and part of the point of Turn of the Screw is that the governess is inexperienced and is exaggerating everything they do. Heilman's article is his first attempt to refute psychological interpretations of Turn of the Screw, which, in his since-overturned landmark article, "'The Turn of the Screw' as Poem," UKCR, XIV (Summer 1948), 277-289, reprinted in Norton Ed., pp. 214-228, and Casebook, pp. 174-188, he interprets as a Christian allegory of good versus evil. His strategy in the 1947 article is to present many realistic details of the story which he says prevent a Freudian reading. It seems to me, however, that the only convincing point he makes is one to puzzle critics who think the children are trying to help the governess in her mania. If she is unbalanced, Heilman argues, and the children sense her disorder, then why would they engage in "violent pranks that might be expected to be dangerously aggravating"? (440). See my comment on this (p. 117). As I pointed out above (p. 60), I do not believe there are naturalistic blocks to interpretations based on the governess' being an unreliable narrator. I will deal more with critical trends, and Robert Heilman, in Chapters VIII and IX.

[5]Here begins a major theme of the balance of the book: the horror of words that infests the governess and Mrs. Grose. The function of this theme is to reveal that the evil -- and most of the "action," despite James's misleading comments in

the preface (xx) -- is verbal and suppositious. The theme reflects also a hypersensitivity to confrontation which delays discussion of the problem with the children until the governess and Mrs. Grose are so nervous that the discussions wound Mrs. Grose and send the governess into hysteria again. Hearing "horrors" converts Mrs. Grose to the governess' viewpoint (289), and Miles's crime proves to be that he "said things" (306). The other incidents of fear of the word are: "I always broke down in the monstrous utterance of names" (245); "I call it a revolution because I see how, with the word he spoke, the curtain rose on the last act of my dreadful drama" (248-249); "I should get off without a scene, without a word" (256); Mrs. Grose "bravely blinked under the signal of my word. . . . 'A talk! Do you mean she spoke?'" (259); "It made me, the sound of the words . . . drop on my knees" (267); Mrs. Grose: "'You suppose they really talk of them?' [That is terrifying enough, much less talking to them.] I could meet this with an assurance! 'They say things that, if we heard them, would simply appal us'" (274); "'And where's Miles?'" Flora asks, and "these three words" push the governess to ask the dreadful question about Miss Jessel (277); "'Has [Flora] said . . . a single other word about Miss Jessel?'" the governess asks (286); " . . . at last he put into two words -- 'Do you?' -- more discrimination than I had ever heard two words contain" (299).

V

[1]I shall deal in Chapter IX with the charge of "reduction" and other biases brought against psychological interpretations, but at this point it should be noted that the question of James's degree of awareness of "Freudian" sexual images in his prose never can be proved. The psychology of creativity still is not fully understood, and it often is not possible to determine whether events and images in a writer's work result from his own conscious intentions or his subconscious associations. In this case, Oscar Cargill challenges critics who say James was not aware of the sexual meanings in his work. The Novels of Henry James (New York, 1961), p. 17, n. 36. Cargill later tries to prove, Norton Ed., p. 161, that James probably knew of Freud's work. In the 1942 radio symposium, Allen Tate and Katherine Anne Porter shared a variation of the truism that Freud did not invent his psychology, he only identified it: "TATE: James knew substantially all that Freud knew before Freud came on the scene. PORTER: All major artists do." Casebook, p. 167. Peter Coveney thinks Turn of the Screw "might easily give the misleading impression that James was mainly concerned with innocence assailed with the horrors of sexual depravity," but that the book primarily is "relevant to a discussion of the 'case' of Henry James. . . . In treating of childhood in The Turn of the Screw, we see how closely, for patently neurotic reasons, he came to complete

artistic disaster." The interest in Turn of the Screw, Coveney says, "is biographical, and not literary." Poor Monkey: The Child in Literature (London, 1957), pp. 151, 154, 168. Leon Edel agrees that Turn of the Screw is part of "a kind of 'self-analysis'" James was undergoing "strangely enough in the very years in which Sigmund Freud was undergoing his self-analysis and writing his book on dreams. . . . In the case of James it was an involuntary, intuitive, unerringly accurate historical search, conducted subliminally." Treacherous Years, p. 264. The final test must be demonstration that the imagery functions in the art in a provable manner, and this is the way I am attempting to deal with the question. I obviously do not agree with Robert Gale that Turn of the Screw "yields only one figurative passage containing elements in the least Freudian [the cup and blade, 277]." The Caught Image: Figurative Language in the Fiction of Henry James (Chapel Hill, 1954), p. 221.

[2]The governess and the ghosts interchange positions at the dining-room window, in the classroom, on the steps, and at the pond. See E. Duncan Aswell and Paul Siegel on the governess as a "mirror." See also Juliet McMaster's development of this idea.

[3]In his "causerie" on Turn of the Screw, M. Katan suggests that in the classroom Miss Jessel reveals to the governess what the governess would have become had she left. Casebook, p. 331. I believe, however, that this ghost

primarily solves for the governess the immediate problem of rationalizing her enforced stay at Bly. "The sense that I must stay" (257) is amusing: certainly she "must" stay; she could not have left without a "conveyance," and the ghost was her reflection of the only action she could see herself taking if she did stay. Secondarily, the ghost suggests that if the governess leaves, Miss Jessel will reign unchallenged.

[4]See C. Knight Aldrich, Oscar Cargill's two articles, Richard Rees, Eric Solomon, and Muriel West (A Stormy Night).

[5]"The Structure of 'The Turn of the Screw,'" MLN, LXXV (April 1960), 312-321.

[6]Francis X. Roellinger, "Psychical Research and 'The Turn of the Screw,'" AL, XX (January 1949), 401-412, reprinted in Norton Ed., pp. 132-142.

[7]Dorothea Krook is the most insistent on this double view, extending Edmund Wilson's position (for Wilson's position, see Casebook, p. 120), which stresses ambiguities but settles firmly against the governess. Ordeal of Consciousness, p. 388. However, "blurring former sharp distinctions" in critical positions is in order, as Hans-Joachim Lang explains (p. 111).

VI

[1]Turn of the Screw is, as Peter Coveney says, a conflict between Miles and the governess, but not for the reasons he thinks. Poor Monkey, p. 166.

[2]Adam, till nightfall "On the ground / Outstretcht he lay, on the cold ground, and oft / Curs'd his Creation" (X, 850-852). The poem ends, "They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow, / Through Eden took thir solitary way." Comparing her fall with Adam's would be consistent both with the governess' pride and with her puritanical view of the world. Her imagination is fired by eighteenth-century salaciousness and Old Testament theology. Small wonder Turn of the Screw turns out as it does.

[3]The possibilities of the fireplace image to James are made clearer in his comment on the low erotic content of English novels: "They seem to foreign readers, probably, like vast, cold, commodious, respectable rooms, through whose window-panes one sees a snow-covered landscape, and across whose acres of sober-hued carpet one looks in vain for a fireplace or a fire." French Poets and Novelists (London, 1919), p. 172. The possibility is similarly realized when Mrs. Grose is studied before a fireplace as "a large clean picture of the 'put away' -- of drawers closed and locked and rest without a remedy" (258) -- this sexless old woman, her drawers closed and locked (although I do not credit James with the pun).

[4]Robert Heilman objects that Flora's behavior sounds exaggerated, and uses this as evidence that she is faking (1947, p. 441). Yet if the children were as diabolically inspired as the governess claims, they would not be so

transparently hypocritical. It is more likely that Mrs. Grose is exaggerating her report, either figuratively, or so she can "get her [Flora] far away. Far from this, far from _them_" (290).

[5]Joseph Firebaugh says "the adults in the story could not have been more irresponsible or less adequate if they had deliberately conspired against the children. . . . [_Turn of the Screw_] show[s] very young children of ineffable charm and intelligence completely under the control of persons whose venality, or innocence, or even illiteracy, make them simply incompetent to deal with children, and especially with children of real substance." _Casebook_, p. 292. See also Joseph Ward, "The Ineffectual Heroes of James's Middle Period," _TSLL_, II (Autumn 1960), 315-327, much of which is reprinted in _The Imagination of Disaster: Evil in the Fiction of Henry James_ (Lincoln, 1961), especially pp. 67-72.

VII

[1]Joseph Firebaugh believes that "Miles dies because he knows more than his governess. There is no doubt that he knows more. In the course of the story, his knowledge outstrips hers so far that she is herself aware of the fact." _Casebook_, p. 295.

[2]This passage also is an excellent example of the imputative leaps of the governess' intuition. She had just told Mrs. Grose not to let Miles and Flora meet, when "it

came over me" that her orders might be too late. She anxiously asks Mrs. Grose, who has said nothing nor relayed any non-verbal signal insofar as the narrative indicates, "Do you mean that they _have_ met?" She seems to have ascribed to Mrs. Grose the suspicion that occurred in her own mind (287-288).

[3]Peter Coveney says the images mean that the "others" "lay between the bride and groom . . . on this substitute 'wedding-journey'" which is in Coveney's view the governess' search for Miles's sexual secret. _Poor Monkey_, pp. 167-168. He is right in thinking the ghosts separate the bride and groom in the governess' mind, but the meaning of the image is fuller than he suggests. See my remarks at the end of this chapter.

[4]Is James thinking of Paul's lament in II Timothy 4:6, 11: "For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. . . . Luke alone is with me" (_RSV_)?

[5]See her question to Mrs. Grose when she decides to give "the last jerk to the curtain." It begins, "I don't believe anything so horrible [which is a lie]," and goes on for half a page, including this gem of circumlocution: "What was it you had in mind when, in our distress, before Miles came back, over the letter from his school, you said, under my insistence, that you did n't pretend for him he had n't literally _ever_ been 'bad'?" She judges it "a straight

question enough" (212). Even the short questions are mincing: "Where, my pet, is Miss Jessel?" (277). Muriel West points out that the governess' "serene, dignified dialogue . . . tends to obscure [her] nervous excitement and rash physical activity. . . . We may overlook, for instance, that after the governess' 'mere blind movement of getting hold of him' (303), she does not entirely let go her hold until the conversation reaches the point of Miles's admission that he said 'things' only to those he 'liked'; and that, even then, she lets him go merely 'a little' (307)." But after "No more, no more, no more!" (308), "her speeches lose a great measure of their earlier composure and clarity." Casebook, pp. 341, 345.

[6]The Imagination of Disaster, p. 176n.

[7]Even Glenn Reed and James Gargano, who are faithful supporters of the governess, acknowledge that she is extreme in the final scene. Reed, in "Another Turn on James's 'The Turn of the Screw,'" AL, XX (January 1949), 413-423, reprinted in Casebook, pp. 189-199, says, "We might, of course, disagree violently with the governess's technique for dispossessing her young charge of the devil" (p. 198). Gargano, in "The Turn of the Screw," Western Humanities Review, XV (Spring 1961), pp. 173-179, confesses, "Somewhat brutally, I admit, but from a sense of duty as she conceives it, the governess forces the distracted boy to 'confess'" (178). The best understanding of the scene, however, is Muriel West's: "It is the violent behavior of his [Miles's]

governess that brings about his death -- whether directly or indirectly is scarcely possible to determine. . . . Everywhere we are prevented by ambiguities and abysses of shadow from reaching a position that permits flat-footed statements. . . . We may however reaffirm our position that the governess' violence is at least the indirect cause of Miles's death by observing that earlier in the tale James prepares us for the violence of the ending. He covers his tracks," but "early symptoms of the governess' tendency toward violence are disguised by a great wealth of huggings and kissings. . . . But -- whenever she is in the peculiar condition of being able to 'see' ghosts, . . . she displays a stronger than ordinary urge to grip or clutch someone." Casebook, p. 346. Mrs. West points out that Spencer Brydon in "The Jolly Corner" has the same tendency, and that the governess may be especially effective because when afraid, "her strength is greater than ordinary" (225) and "she is a young woman of some size," as James hints in divulging that she had not previously been able to see herself full-length in mirrors (159), she walks noisily (262), and she fears to squeeze into a pew with Miles (255). Casebook, p. 348.

[8]Her "tenderness" may be the same sadistic kind displayed by another of James's "half-mad narrators" (Geismar, p. 165), Neil Paraday's friend (?) in "The Death of the Lion," who knows a young woman so enraptured of the author that she does not feel deserving even to look upon him. So the narrator,

"to torment her tenderly," forces her to look at Paraday's bald head through opera glasses. Stories of Writers and Artists, ed. F.O. Matthiessen (Norfolk, Conn., 1944), pp. 231-232. Further chilling irony accrues to the word in that story when the narrator says, "In the event of [Paraday's] death it would fall to me perhaps to bring out in some charming form, with notes, with the tenderest editorial care, that precious heritage of his written project" -- a manuscript the narrator already has lost (pp. 242-243). As Muriel West points out, the governess uses "tenderness" in "what seems to be an unconscious effort to gloss over the force of an action or an attitude." Casebook, p. 343. See the story, 215-216, 233, 266, 306 for examples of this deception.

[9]Miles's confession "would give her an insight into the former situation at Bly, which is the real object of her curiosity and terror," according to Hans-Joachim Lang, p. 128.

[10]Leon Edel notes that "Cinderella and Blue Beard were particularly invoked by Henry James in his discussion of The Turn of the Screw," and demonstrates common elements in the nouvelle and the two fairy tales. The Ghostly Tales, pp. xxi-xxii; James's preface, xvi-xviii. If James did draw upon Blue Beard, he may have remembered the refrain from the tale, which describes a scene similar to what Miles saw when he looked out the window into the quiet day (309). Blue Beard's last wife, like Miles in danger of her life, calls to her

sister looking out for help from brothers expected to arrive soon. But twice she hears only the reply, "I see nothing but the sun, which makes a dust, and the grass, which is green." The Blue Fairy Book, ed. Andrew Lang (New York, 1965; first published in London, c. 1889), p. 293.

VIII

[1]Anonymous review, "The Recent Work of Henry James," The Critic, XXXIII, o. s. (December 1898), 523-524, reprinted in Norton Ed., pp. 173-174; Beers, "Fifty Years of Hawthorne," Yale Review, IV (January), 307; Pound, "A Shake Down," The Little Review, V (August), 9-41; Goddard, Norton Ed. and Casebook; Pattee, The Development of the American Short Story (New York, 1923), p. 180; Miss Kenton, Norton Ed. and Casebook; Miss Bosanquet, Henry James and His Work.

[2]Eight Modern Writers: Oxford History of English Literature, XII (Oxford, 1963), p. 103.

[3]Norton Ed., p. 237.

[4]See for instance, Oscar Cargill, Norton Ed., p. 146; Charles Hoffman, The Short Novels of Henry James (New York, 1957), p. 83; Alexander Jones, "Point of View in 'The Turn of the Screw,'" PLMA, LXXIV (March 1959), 112-122, reprinted in Casebook, pp. 298-318.

[5]For reactionary views, see "What Maisie Knew: A Disagreement by F. R. Leavis," The Complex Fate, pp. 114-131; and Stoll, "Symbolism in Coleridge," PMLA, LXIII (March

1948), 229-233. For orthodoxy, see James Gargano, Western Humanities Review, and reprints in Casebook of articles by Nathan Fagin, pp. 154-159; A. J. A. Waldock, "Mr. Edmund Wilson and The Turn of the Screw," pp. 171-173 (from Modern Language Notes, LXII [May 1947], 331-334); Glenn Reed, pp. 189-199; and Oliver Evans, "James's Air of Evil: The Turn of the Screw," pp. 200-211 (from Partisan Review, XVI [February 1949], 175-187). John Clair's wild speculations are mentioned on p. 171, n. 26. A notably inaccurate view is one by John Fraser that the governess possesses a "peculiarly American nature" and "is as little touched by conventional class-feeling as Isabel Archer would have been . . . and she [the governess] assumes the most awful spiritual responsibilities without a flicker of a thought . . . about God and the assistance of prayer." "'The Turn of the Screw' Again," MQ, VIII (July 1966), 327-336. She does pray (193) and considers thanking God (244).

[6]"Intentional fallacy" is a term introduced by W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., in The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry (Lexington, Ky., 1954). It refers to the error of judging the success and meaning of a work of art by the author's expressed or ostensible intention in producing it.

[7]Theory of Literature (New York, 1956), p. 31.

[8]Dorothea Krook is particularly guilty of this practice, as A. W. Thomson shows in reviewing her Ordeal of Consciousness. "Some Points on the Hallucination Theory,"

REL, VI (October 1965), 26-36. Others mentioned in articles and books referred to in this paper who rely too much on James's commentary include F. R. Leavis, E. E. Stoll, Maxwell Geismar, Glenn Reed, Oliver Evans, Nathan Fagin -- and most of the other conventional critics.

[9]F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth Murdock, The Notebooks of Henry James (New York, 1947, 1955), pp. 178-179. Both notebook references to Turn of the Screw are reprinted in Norton Ed., pp. 106-107, 114-115; the January 12, 1895, entry is in Casebook, pp. 383-384. The date of composition of Turn of the Screw has been deduced from circumstances of James's life -- his move to Lamb House in Sussex, etc. -- and a December 1, 1897, letter to Alice James. See The Treacherous Years, pp. 193-200.

[10]The Letters of Henry James, 2 Vols., ed. Percy Lubbock (New York, 1920), I, 408, reprinted in Norton Ed., p. 116. Most letters in which James refers to Turn of the Screw are reprinted in the Norton Ed. or Casebook, and will be referred to in the text by their pagination.

[11]REL, 28.

[12]The Treacherous Years, pp. 223, 265.

[13]Henry James: Letters to A. C. Benson and Auguste Monod, ed. E. F. Benson (London, 1930), pp. 95, 103, 106.

[14]Sir James Mackenzie, Angina Pectoris (London, 1923), pp. 139, 209-210. See also The Treacherous Years, pp. 213-214, and Harold L. Rypins, "Henry James In Harley Street,"

AL, XXIV (January 1953), 481-492.

[15]Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 346; Coveney, Poor Monkey, p. 166; Dupee, Henry James (Garden City, N. Y., 1951), p. 184; Edel, The Treacherous Years, p. 212; Enck, Norton Ed., p. 267; Greene, The Lost Childhood and Other Essays (New York, 1952), p. 40; Goddard, Norton Ed., pp. 207-208, 209; Casebook, pp. 271, 272; Spilka, Norton Ed., p. 253; Ward, The Search for Form: Studies in the Structure of James's Fiction (Chapel Hill, 1967), p. 26.

[16]"Criticism, Jamesian Criticism, and James's Criticism of James: 'The Turn of the Screw,'" in Criticism and Theory in the Arts (Paris, 1963), pp. 20-37, partially reprinted in Norton Ed., pp. 269-273.

[17]Quoted in Ora Segal, The Lucid Reflector: The Observer in Henry James's Fiction (New Haven, 1969), p. 239.

IX

[1]Krishna Vaid, Technique in the Tales of Henry James (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), p. 93. Vaid believes the governess implicitly. He says of James's narrators that "their outstanding features are intelligence, wit, curiosity, skepticism, and, above all, an infallible intuitive faculty," and the governess' "intuitive faculty is more highly developed than that of any other Jamesian narrator, except perhaps the narrator of The Sacred Fount" (pp. 254, 122). It is interesting to compare these views with Leon Edel's

comment on those two narrators in his introduction to The Sacred Fount (New York, 1953): "The question at issue is the credibility of the principal witness. And James's attitude is one of complete neutrality. So neutral is he that he leaves a wide imaginative margin for the reader who, if he is not careful, will be adding material from his own mind to the story. This is what most readers of The Turn of the Screw have done. The same trap is set for readers of The Sacred Fount" (p. xxv). The device of the first-person narrator -- who usually is unreliable in James -- relates Turn of the Screw to a large number of his other works of that type, but critics have followed Wilson (Casebook, pp. 120, 123) and Edel in relating the tale most closely to The Sacred Fount (1901) and to "The Friends of the Friends" (1896), which is told and "felt" by a jealous woman who accuses her lover of an affair with a ghost, and, anticipating the governess' technique with Mrs. Grose, demands to know how he could identify the ghost without having seen a picture of her when she was alive. He says he has heard her described. Edel comments on the tale: "The personality of the jealous woman -- as indeed all the elements of this tale -- foreshadows the governess of The Turn of the Screw." Ghostly Tales, pp. 202-203, 183. Turn of the Screw also is related to the stories with which it is grouped in Vol. XII of the New York Edition: The Aspern Papers, "The Liar," "The Two Faces" -- stories of liars and deceivers, as Edel

points out in quoting James that the "groupings" of the New York Edition were "exceedingly considered." Edel, "The Architecture of Henry James's 'New York Edition,'" NEQ, XXIV, 2 (June 1951), 169-178. See also Bewley, The Complex Fate, p. 135, regarding "The Liar" and Turn of the Screw. Other works with striking similarities of detail to Turn of the Screw are "Master Eustace," with its governess narrator (see above, p. 174 n. 1); "The Author of Beltraffio" (1884), in which a mad narrator tells how a headstrong puritan woman kills her son to "save" him from his father's supposed bad influence (Ora Segal, The Lucid Reflector, pp. 114-115); "Rose-Agathe" (1878), in which a man falls in love with a dummy cut off at the waist (Wilson, Casebook, p. 152n); and "Gabrielle de Bergerac" (1869), in which a tutor named Pierre Coguelin resists social pressure and loves a governess (Muriel West, A Stormy Night, pp. 47-50). Turn of the Screw also is one of James's unusual morbid novels dealing with ghosts and victimized children, and written in experimental dramatic form between 1895-1901 -- such as The Other House (1896), What Maisie Knew (1897), The Awkward Age (1899) -- as James was trying, after his failure in the theatre, to "rid himself of his private demons by writing about them." The Treacherous Years, p. 14.

[2]Jahrbuch, 1964, p. 111.

[3]It should be noted that Heilman did not originate the allegorical interpretation. He only popularized it. Nathan

Fagin had written in March, 1941, that "The Turn of the Screw is a simple allegory of the type which fascinated Hawthorne . . . an allegory which dramatizes the conflict between Good and Evil." Casebook, p. 156, 157. Likewise, as noted above, Wilson was not first specifically to see Freud in Turn of the Screw. Ezra Pound called it "a Freudian affair" and obscene in The Little Review (August 1918), 34-35.

[4]Chase, The American Novel and Its Tradition (Garden City, N. Y., 1957), p. 239; Wright, The Madness of Art, p. 177; Lang, Jahrbuch, p. 111; Spilka, Norton Ed., p. 248; Lydenberg, "The Governess Turns the Screws," NCF, XII (June 1957), 37-58, reprinted in Casebook, pp. 273-290 (see pp. 275-276).

[5]The only major weakness in James's execution of first-person narration in Turn of the Screw is realistic: for a Hampshire girl who is not the intellectual equal of a bright ten-year-old, the governess is rather Jamesian in her style. Of course, so is Mrs. Grose; the occasional "Laws!" or "he do" is the exception, not the rule.

[6]I might add that as one who has an interest in Christian ideals, I am made uncomfortable by Heilman's describing Turn of the Screw as a "Christian allegory." There are many variants of the faith, and I cannot accept the governess' behavior as patterned after Jesus'; the Christian ideal of dying to be reborn was not meant to be executed on children

by adults. To the extent that the meanings Heilman sees are relevant, they are ironic because of the governess' treatment of the children -- and would be so even if the children were corrupted by evil ghosts. I am grateful to John Lydenberg for pointing out some of this (Casebook, p. 290). Muriel West treats it with amusing pertinence in A Stormy Night, having the mad governess say to a trussed-up critic, "You are guilty of heresies blasphemously expressed against the foundations of the Christian religion. You have said that prayers for the dead will bring about an earlier resurrection? . . . You have! You have! You know you have! . . . Besides, you believe in polygamy and rebaptism at thirty! . . . Confess you don't believe in predestination, that the last shall be first, the first last, and in the utter depravity of man! Confess! Repent! Retract -- and be saved! . . . You would, would you, shake your head at me! Think yourself wiser than your instructress, than your preceptor! I'll shake your head for you! . . . Oh, you are guilty! You are! You are! But I'll save you, I'll save you! pp. 74-75.

[7]The Great Short Novels of Henry James, ed. Rahv (New York), p. 624; Heilman, "The Freudian Reading," 443; Liddell, A Treatise on the Novel (London), pp. 142, 145; Evans, Casebook, p. 208; Reed, Casebook, p. 192; Hoffman, Short Novels, p. 71; Davis, "'The Turn of the Screw' Controversy: Its Implications for the Modern Critic and Teacher," Graduate Student of English, II (Winter 1959), 7-11; Miss Lane,

"The Disappearing Ghost-Story," Cornhill Magazine, Vol. 176, No. 1052, 136-146.

[8]Gibbs, "Black Magic and Bundling," New Yorker, XXV (February 11, 1950), 44; Pauline Kael, Film Quarterly, p. 27. See also Harold Goddard's defense of whether he "rationalizes" Turn of the Screw. Norton Ed., pp. 205-207; Casebook, pp. 269-271.

[9]Fiction and the Unconscious (New York, 1957), p. 297.

[10]Fiction and the Unconscious, pp. 301, 305n.

[11]Henry James: The Creative Process (New York, 1958), p. 110.

[12]"The Freudian Reading," p. 444.

[13]"The Lure of the Demonic," CL, XIII (Fall 1961), 346-357. See pp. 346-347.

[14]For example, see Robert Liddell's conclusions in A Treatise on the Novel, pp. 144-145. Even Heilman concedes somewhat unenthusiastically that "it would be plausible to suppose that sex is involved and to conclude that . . . James had 'anticipated' the Freudian discoveries of preadolescent sexuality." "The Lure of the Demonic," 347.

[15]The Complex Fate, p. 132.

[16]Commenting on the extravagence of the language of James's characters in the later works, John Lydenburg says of Turn of the Screw: "His luxuriant imagery provided the material for a variety of symbolic interpretations, of which the most obvious was the Christian." "Comment on Mr.

Spilka's Paper," Lit & Psych, XIV (Winter 1964), 8. I suspect that Leon Edel is correct in believing that James's adoption of dictation in 1896 as a means of transmitting his art (he even bought a typewriter in 1897) influenced this change toward more complex linguistic patterns in his later work. Edel says: "Henry James writing, and Henry James dictating, were two different artists. His sentences were to become, in time, elaborate -- one might indeed say baroque -- filled with qualifications and parentheses. . . . Out of several years of consistent dictating the 'later manner' of Henry James emerged. . . . The spoken voice was to be heard henceforth in James's prose in a way that it had never been heard before, not only in the rhythm and ultimate perfection of his verbal music, but in his use of colloquilisms and in a more extravagant play of fancy, a greater indulgence in elaborate and figured metaphors, and in great proliferating similes." The Treacherous Years, pp. 175-177.

APPENDIX A

A Chart of Critical Cycles

The table below is a graphic presentation of the cycles of major critical opinion regarding Turn of the Screw since Edmund Wilson's Freudian analysis of it in 1934. (See discussion above, pp.142-146.) On the left are listed works of critics who follow Wilson and read the tale as an unreliable narration and psychological study. On the right are listed works of critics who read the tale as a reliable narrative of a ghost story or allegory. Full names of critics and titles of works may be found in the bibliography, pp. 249-266. (References to The Complex Fate under 1952 are in parentheses because the book reprints articles by Bewley and Leavis listed under 1950. The articles are counted under 1950 in the figures on p. 144 , but The Complex Fate is in the list, too, because I have referred to it often.)

1934

Wilson, "Ambiguity"

1935

Spender, Destructive Element

1941

Fagin, "Another Reading"

Matthiessen, American Renaissance

Richardson, HJ: Selections

1942

Nuhn, Wind Blew

CBS radio symposium

1943

Troy, "Altar of HJ"

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APPENDIX B

Jane Eyre and Uncle Silas

Despite all the argument over the meaning of Turn of the Screw, there has been almost no close attention paid to its sources. Conventional critics have accepted James's note on the archbishop's anecdote as the main source and influence, although, as I have demonstrated, this is a concept inadequate to account for the richness of the book. Critics who read Turn of the Screw as a psychological study generally have not looked closely for sources, leaving the implication that they consider it a highly unusual, if not original book. That is my own evaluation, but I will now examine two works I consider to be probable sources for a good deal of Turn of the Screw. I cannot account for the process by which James transformed these materials from good fiction into highly imaginative literature. Indeed, even accounting for selection, for the attraction of one source over another is almost impossible, as James warned us:

> . . . I drop with scant grace perhaps to the admission here of a general vagueness on the article of my different little origins. . . . The habitual teller of tales finds these things in old note-books -- which however but shifts the burden a step; since how, and under what inspiration, did they first wake up in these rude cradles? One's notes, as all writers remember, sometimes explicitly mention,

> sometimes indirectly reveal, and sometimes wholly dissimulate, such clues and such obligations. (Norton Ed., p. 105)

So we should not rely too much on the archbishop's anecdote as a source.[1] The important thing to James was what he could do with the anecdote and other such materials he appropiated: the point about "allowing the imagination absolute freedom of hand" (Norton Ed., p. 118). These comments in his prefaces are helpful advice for any source study.[2] It is risky to insist too much on the proof of sources of highly wrought art such as James's, which is why I shall only suggest -- but with reasonable confidence that I am not harvesting coincidences -- certain clues and obligations James found and owed to one of his generally noted sources, Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre (1847), and to a source no one has discussed yet, Joseph Sheridan LeFanu's Uncle Silas (1864).

There is little comparison of quality, for Turn of the Screw is superior to both -- particularly to Uncle Silas. Drawing upon Uncle Silas for Turn of the Screw is somewhat like shopping at a rummage sale to furnish a society debut. This is only more tribute to James's revivification of dead or comatose elements of Gothic fiction. James gives a clue in Turn of the Screw of the relation of the book to Jane Eyre, when the governess asks, "Was there a 'secret' at Bly -- a mystery of Udolpho or an insane, an unmentionable relative kept in unsuspected confinement?" (179), which is

suggestive of the mad wife Rochester keeps in the attic. A suggestion of respect for the properties of Uncle Silas -- outside the abundant textual evidence I will provide -- is in James's short story "The Liar" (1888). At luxurious Stayes, Oliver Lyon finds in his room "the customary novel of Mr Le Fanu, for the bedside; the ideal reading in a country house for the hours after midnight. Oliver Lyon could scarcely forbear beginning it while he buttoned his shirt. Perhaps that is why he not only found every one assembled in the hall when he went down, but perceived from the way the move to dinner was instantly made that they had been waiting for him."[3]

Jane Eyre is primarily of value in the study of Turn of the Screw in that it provides an understanding of James's unstated theme: "It does good to no woman to be flattered by her superior, who cannot possibly intend to marry her; and it is madness in all women to let a secret love kindle within them, which, if unreturned and unknown, must devour the life that feeds it; and, if undiscovered and responded to, must lead, ignis-fatuus-like, into miry wilds whence there is no extrication."[4]

There are many details of plot, which I will outline, but Jane Eyre and James's governess are not much alike, Jane being a blunt, pragmatic girl. James's governess is modeled more after the heiress in Uncle Silas, Maud Ruthyn, and James gained many other details from LeFanu's novel,

particularly to create the setting of Peter Quint's appearances.[5]

To begin the comparisons with Jane Eyre, I will note that the theme of the frustration of socially forbidden love -- a special threat to governesses -- is repeated by Miss Brontë. Jane warns herself, "He is not of your order: keep to your caste; and be too self-respecting to lavish the love of the whole heart, soul, and strength, where such a gift is not wanted and would be despised" (JE, 174), and the housekeeper warns her, "Try and keep Mr. Rochester at a distance: distrust yourself as well as him. Gentlemen in his station are not accustomed to marry their governesses" (JE, 287). Charlotte Brontë made "all right in the end" by the fairy-tale device of having Jane -- who early at a fashionable party, like Cinderella, "perceived my sandal was loose" (JE, 194) -- inherit a fortune so she could marry the blind old Rochester, like a Victorian Rapunzel. But James was writing another kind of fairy tale -- of two children left with a cruel stepmother -- and so borrowed only Miss Brontë's engine and a few items of trim and implication. His governess suffers precisely because she fails to follow Jane Eyre's advice.

We must imagine also that Miles and Flora experience "such dread as children only can feel" because their governess, like Jane's guardian, "knew not what [she] did: while rending my heartstrings, you thought you were only

up-rooting my bad propensities" (JE, 17). Miss Bronte"'s other points about a child's capacity to feel, but not analyze (JE, 17) and her touching but bitter depiction of the child's awesome task of confronting a torturing adult, are straightforward statements of the dramatizations of Turn of the Screw (compare JE, 21, 37, and ToS, Chs. XIV, XVII, XIX-XX, XXII-XXIV). The one-to-one comparisons which suggest James's borrowing come, however, when Jane begins her career as governess at Thornfield. The following chart of parallel pagination shows like elements in the two governesses' narratives:

Item	Pagination	
	JE	ToS
Each is nervous on the way to her new job	95	158
Each remains quite nervous	99	158
Each relates similarly to her housekeeper	101	159
Each had come with similar apprehensions about housekeeper	102	159
Jane's housekeeper says, "I am so glad, I am so glad you are come"; James's governess imagines that Mrs. Grose feels the same	102	159, 162
Each is overwhelmed by rich furnishings	110	162-163
Each is overly inquisitive	111	passim
Each gets a tour of the house and roof	112-113	163

	JE	ToS
Each meets a frightening red-haired person	114	190
Each walks alone on the grounds	116	174
Each is restless	116	160
Jane is given to pacing back and forth upstairs, telling herself "a tale my imagination created, and narrated continuously," just as James's governess shuts herself up to think, to rehearse, to fling herself about	116	180,245
Jane says people "must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it"	117	implicit
Each is subject to fairy-tale influences	119, 280, 309	163, 175
Rochester has trouble placing Jane in the "social scale" which James's governess reveres	122	207
Jane helps Rochester "identify me," just as governess helps Mrs. Grose identify Peter Quint	122	191
Each loses sleep in fear	158-159	160
Each thinks in sea imagery	163	163-164
Each acts involuntarily	174,etc.	passim
Each sees the schoolroom as "refuge in trouble"	177	183
Neither can give up a love merely because she is ignored	199	162, 239-240

	JE	ToS
Each is under "ceaseless excitation and ruthless restraint"	200	199
Each experiences twilight as her "sweetest hour" by walking on the grounds	268	174
Each must speak to relieve tensions	273	implicit
Each "knows no medium" [is not moderate tempermentally]	436	"

In addition there are parallel elements of plot and language:

	JE	ToS
Rochester and his horse slip on ice, like Peter Quint	120	198
Jane's "I was a lady" suggests Mrs. Grose's "She was a lady"	168	207
" . . . there was a mystery at Thornfield"	177	179
"Say Edward--give me my name--Edward--I will marry you," anticipates the significance of words and naming in ToS	276	passim
David playing to Saul	478	269

The particular aptness of these borrowings from Jane Eyre is that they fit the device of the first-person narrator, and the character of the narrator. She is much given to fantasies from her romantic reading, and she might perfectly think of herself in terms of Jane Eyre,[6] just as, being a country parson's daughter, she writes in Biblical imagery.

Likewise, she could identify with Maud Ruthyn, the young heiress who is heroine of Uncle Silas. (Maud,

incidentally, serves a governess' role for her untutored cousin, Milly Ruthyn, and has "authority" over her education). Uncle Silas is Maud's relation of her ordeal as she carries out a vow to her dead father to live the remaining two years of her nonage with her uncle, Silas Ruthyn, an eccentric, diabolic, debt-ridden old drug addict. By doing so, Maud hopes to prove that Silas is an honest man and to clear the family name of the dishoner brought on it by the suspicious death in Silas's home, Bartram-Haugh, years before of a gambler to whom Silas was supposedly in debt. At age nineteen, Maud goes to Bartram-Haugh and experiences a succession of subtle tortures Silas devises to break her down and to extort from her the great wealth she has inherited. Silas attempts to persuade her to marry his vicious son, Dudley, gradually isolates her from all her friends, and puts her under the control of a criminal French governess, Madame de la Rougierre, who had been Maud's governess before her father died, and who had terrorized her then. Maud increasingly perceives her uncle's enmity and dishonesty towards her, but although she cannot allay her fears, she persists in repressing her suspicions about the implications of his attitude and behavior, presumably out of reverence for her father's faith in Silas -- and to keep from frightening herself more.

Finally on the night Silas has decided to have her killed, she understands what is imminent, and intuitively

allows her governess to maneuver herself into the position in which the killer, Dudley, expects to find Maud. Dudley kills the governess, and Maud escapes out the open door and on to the adjoining estate of her cousin, Monica Knollys. Uncle Silas dies of an overdose of drugs, Dudley flees to Australia, and Maud is out of danger. She marries a charming Lord Ilbury, and completes her narrative without admitting that her father made a fatal error of blind pride in committing her to Silas's care, or that she went to morbid extremes in carrying out her vow to her father. It is not, however, in these larger outlines of the plot, but in the tone of Maud's narrative and in details of characterization and dramatization that one begins to sense the relation of Uncle Silas to Turn of the Screw.

James's governess and Maud Ruthyn are remarkably alike, and, disagreeable and exasperating as Maud can be, her shortcomings would not register with the governess, who would be enraptured by Maud's romance and heroism. In both Uncle Silas and Turn of the Screw, the medium of terror is the complex of responses of a narrator who is a pretty young daughter of a religious eccentric, a girl who has accepted a huge idealistic task and obsessively tries to accomplish it. Like the governess, who is given her task of running Bly with the "main condition" that she must not trouble the master with any problems (156), Maud is given her task with the highly inhibiting conditions that she must not discuss it with her

confidante, Cousin Monica, until the task will have become an obligation when her father goes on a journey -- that is, dies. Maud does not understand her father's metaphor, and consequently does not anticipate that he will die soon and Silas will be named her guardian in her father's will.[7]

Each girl must persevere at a lonely country estate, isolated from her own kind and having only simplistic domestic confidantes (except for occasional help Maud gets from Cousin Monica). Each girl is fascinated by her master (Maud by Silas, the governess by the uncle in Harley Street), and each is menaced by the unknown, symbolized by a white face. Maud recalls: "Oh! Uncle Silas, tremendous figure in the past, burning always in memory in the same awful lights; the fixed white face of scorn and anguish!" (US, 261), and "It was the face of Uncle Silas which haunted me. . . . in the coup-d'oeil of that white face that dazzled me in darkness, and haunted my daily reveries . . . there was . . . the insidious and the terrible" (US, 356).

Both girls are instinctive, intuitive, evasive (if not hypocritical), lacking in self-knowledge, unwordly, snobbish, and increasingly hysterical and insomniac as they perceive their danger. To some extent many of those traits are common to educated Victorian adolescent girls, but the intensity of their natures and the detailed similarity of their experiences separate Maud and the governess only by a sheet of carbon paper. LeFanu achieved intensity in Maud by

having her resist condemnation of Uncle Silas despite a series of clues the obvious meaning of which she commented upon. She admitted to Cousin Monica that "it is not pleasant" after summarizing her suspicious and discomforting experiences at Bartram-Haugh (US, 247). After Silas decides he cannot accept a gift of 20,000 pounds from her to relieve his financial strain, she perceives that a new relationship exists between them and that her and Silas's natures are "silently repellant" (US, 346). And when she contemplates the meaning of the expressions she sees on his face, she is terrified (US, 356). When she discovers her old tormenter, Madame de la Rougierre, hidden upstairs at Bartrm-Haugh, "something like indignation kindled in my mind as I began to wonder at the sly strategy which had been practised upon me" (US, 360). Yet she sustains her trust in her uncle. She has either to be obsessed with her vision of Silas's martyrdom (US, 159) or to be stupid, as Dudley and her governess think (US, 351, 403). Since she is not consistently characterized as stupid, I believe she is obsessed. The obsession, born of her fascination with Silas's portrait (US, 10, 178) -- she is susceptible to visual stimulation, as when she "unaccountably" notices the engraving of the girl being chased by wolves (US, 345) -- and of her promise to her father, drives her the way a vow and visions drive James's governess.[8] Each girl finally escapes her dilemma by distractedly sacrificing someone else's life (US, 426).

The most instructive way to present their common characteristics is by parallel texts. These passages echo verbally and are closely comparable in content; their differences usually are the result of the contrast between the journalistic simplicity of LeFanu and the indirection and dramatic structuring of James.

Uncle Silas	Turn of the Screw
I know that I could not then have defined my feelings and agitations. ... Any misgiving about Uncle Silas was, in my mind, a questioning the foundations of my faith, and in itself an impiety. And yet I am not sure that some such misgiving, faint, perhaps ... may not have been at the bottom of my tribulation. (160)	It suited me too, I felt, only too well; by which I mean that it suited exactly the particularly deadly view I was in the very act of forbidding myself to entertain. (215)
'Heaven grant! ... but if he doesn't, it is all the same to me, go I will. He may turn me out, but I'll go, and try to expiate the	...something within me said that by offering myself bravely as the sole subject of such experience, ...I should serve as an expiatory victim and guard the tran-

breach of faith that I fear is so horribly wicked.' (171)

[Maud's taste for horror stories shows in references to Udolpho (199, 358), Erlking (199), "two harrowing novels" (347); she also has embarrassing experiences when caught with the Bible (284) and almost caught with the Peerage (276).]

Indeed I am a wavering, irresolute creature as ever lived, in my ordinary mood. High excitement or passion only can inspire me with decision. Under the inspiration of either, however, I am transformed, and often both prompt and brave. (238)

quillity of the rest of the household. (195)

[The governess' similar tastes show in the Udolpho and Jane Eyre references (179), and her response to Amelia (221).]

...I was in these days literally able to find a joy in the extraordinary flight of heroism the occasion demanded of me.... It was in short a magnificent chance. (198-199)

I must have been, I think, naturally a rather shrewd girl; and considering how very little I had seen of the world--nothing in fact -- I often wonder now at the sage conclusions at which I arrived. (297)	I learnt something ... that had not been one of the teachings of my small smothered life. (173) ... I confess I rather applaud myself as I look back! (199)
I was young, nervous, and afflicted with a trouble-some sort of conscience, which occasionally went mad, and insisted, in small things as well as great, upon sacrifices which my reason now assures me were absurd. (343)	She was young, untried, nervous (155) [and see also the earlier quotation from p. 195; a number of quotations almost merge with one another].
That night I saw my uncle. ...I was longing to tell him how anxious I was to help him. (343)	"Dear little Miles, dear little Miles, if you <u>knew</u> how I want to help you!" (267)

How marvellously lie our anxieties, in filmy layers, one over the other! (356)

"No, no--there are depths, depths! The more I go over it the more I see in it, and the more I see in it, the more I fear. I don't know what I don't see, what I don't fear!" (204)

In the case of one we love or fear intensely, what feats of comparative anatomy will not the mind unconsciously perform?... How instantaneous and unerring is the instinct! (369)

...in this position I began to take in with certitude and yet without direct vision the presence, a good way off, of a third person.... (201)

'Lawk, Miss!' remonstrated honest Quince,... which plainly implied a suspicion that I was dreaming. [that I had seen Dudley]. 'Yes, Mary.... I can't be mistaken. I won't be questioned. You'll find I'm right. He's here.' [He is.] (370)

"Laws!" said my friend under her breath. The exclamation ... revealed a real acceptance of my further proof ... (238) "I know, I know, I know!...And you know, my dear!" (194)

I think I must have had a fit. When I came to myself I was drenched with water.... I did not in the least know where I was. (384)	Of what first happened when I was left alone I had no subsequent memory. I only knew that at the end of, I suppose, a quarter of an hour, an odorous dampness ...[awakened her]. (282)
It was my turn to look pale now. (372)	She turned white, and this made me ask myself if I had blanched as much. (185)
I staggered back, and at that instant fancied, with a thrill of conviction, I heard Lady Knollys's voice in Uncle Silas' room.... Lady Knollys was not there. (420)	...I had never had such a sense of losing an advantage acquired (the thrill of which had been so prodigious) ... (224)

Further enhancing the impression that James was drawing on Uncle Silas for Turn of the Screw are two similar central incidents in each book: the experiences of Maud and the governess on their first walk on the grounds, and their experiences in identifying their two sexual bogeys: Dudley Ruthyn and Peter Quint. Maud's walk is to "the setting of a dream of romance," haunted by "charming elves and goblins"

(US, 205), and on the walk she meets Lord Ilbury, whom she eventually marries. James's governess may have thought of experience such as Maud's when she imagined "it would be as charming as a charming story suddenly to meet someone" (175). Maud's experience is mixed, however, for she meets also Old Pegtop, who reminds her of a ghostly "wooden-legged old soldier," just as in the governess' visions Peter Quint "comes into view like a sentinel" (303) and is cut off at the middle (184). Lord Ilbury approaches "upon the precarious footing of the battlement" of a bridge, just as Peter Quint appeared on the battlement at Bly and moved his hand from one crenelation to another with suggestions both of sex and dizziness (175, 178). Lord Ilbury is dressed in the "careless morning-dress of a gentleman" (US, 208), while Peter Quint shows a "sign of familiarity" (177) in not wearing a hat. Lord Ilbury asks, "May I take a great liberty" and introduce myself, and the governess after her experience believes "some one had taken a liberty rather monstrous" (180). Maud "fancied" that Lord Ilbury "from the moment he spoke to us . . . felt an interest in me" (US, 212), and the governess thinks the man on the tower is much interested in her (177). Maud exclaims, "This was a day of apparitions!" (US, 208), and so it was for the governess, but more compacted and meaningful than Maud's.

The relation of Dudley Ruthyn, Maud's profligate cousin, and Peter Quint seems close. Dudley is handsome, self-

complacent, impudent, spoiled, and depraved (US, 256-257), just like Quint (ToS, 191, 207). Dudley is sly (US, 257) while Quint is deep (197), and Dudley is low (257) like Quint (223). Dudley is a gentleman, but his dress is vulgar, while Quint dresses like a gentleman but clearly (to the governess) is not one (191). Like Quint, Dudley is given to appearing outside the dining-room window with his hat off (US, 255); and later, in the murder scene, Dudley comes in the window of Maud's room, having just been let down from the roof (US, 425-426) -- just as the governess thought Quint was on the roof directly above her (229) -- and Maud notes that "his head was bare." When Maud first sees Dudley (US, 252), she remembers him from two frightening earlier encounters when she did not know who he was, but he denies having been at those places and she cannot make a "positive identification" of him (US, 252). But when he appears outside the window for the first time, Maud remarks, "It was odd how repulsively my confidence in my original identification always revived on unexpectedly seeing Dudley after an interval" (US, 255), which is remarkably close to the governess' response when she steps into the dining-room and sees Quint at the window and is instantaneously sure it is the same man she saw on the tower (183-184). Peter Quint may have one other root in Uncle Silas: his name may be from Mary Quince, because of the easy association of the names Peter and Mary.[9]

Another scene suggestive of Turn of the Screw occurs when Maud and Milly sit up to watch Uncle Silas, and Milly falls asleep. The head and part of the body of Maud's dreadful former governess, Madame de la Rougierre, appears at the door -- cut off at the middle -- and Maud cries, "Look! look!" just as James's governess cried to Mrs. Grose at the pond and to Miles in the final scene. Milly, who, like Mrs. Grose, "had seen nothing," wakes up and asks, "Was it Charke?" (who had been murdered in the house years before), and Maud replies, "No, no -- don't ask me; a fiend in a worse shape" (US, 324), which James sharpens to Mrs. Grose's asking, "Do you mean aware of him?" and the governess' replying, "No -- of her" (203).

Finally, there is a heavy sprinkling of common elements of plot, character, and expression in Uncle Silas and Turn of the Screw, which I shall present, as above, in parallel texts.

Uncle Silas	Turn of the Screw
'We must not talk of ghosts now. You are a superstitious little woman ... and you shan't be frightened.' And now Cousin Monica grew silent again, and looking briskly around the room, like a lady in search of a	... his stare ... quitted me for a moment during which I could still watch it, see it fix successively several other things. On the spot there came to me the added shock of a certitude that ... he had come for some one else. (184)

subject, her eye rested on a small oval portrait ... representing a pretty little boy, with ... delicate features, and a shy, peculiar expression. (55)	..."He was looking for little Miles." (194) [The governess imagines that Peter Quint is doing what Cousin Monica does. The striking similarity of their actions suggests that James remembered the scene from Uncle Silas and used it as a device for the governess to describe her method of perceiving Peter Quint's intent.]
... my dear Maud, I am quite happy about you now that you are quite on your guard. (74)	The best way to picture it all is to say that I was off my guard. (173)
Seeing me resolutely maintain my position, she [Madame de la Rougierre] faced about, tossed her head, like an angry beast, and seemed uncertain for a while what course to take with me. (77)	I enfolded, I drew him close; and ... I kept my eyes on the thing at the window and saw it move and shift its posture. ... its slow wheel, for a moment, was rather the prowl of a baffled beast. (304)

'Did he look like a gentleman?' I inquired, as I dare say, other young ladies would. (154)

'Dudley is the material of a perfect English gentleman. I am not blind ... I simply say that the material is there.' (253)

I was just as wild in my woe as poor Milly; and it was not until we had wept together for a full hour--sometimes standing--sometimes walking up and down the room--sometimes sitting and getting up in turns to fall on one another's necks, ... (326)

"He's tall, active,erect ... but never--no, never!--a gentleman."
... "A gentleman? ... a gentleman he?" (191)

"They've made them ... still cleverer even than nature did; for it was wondrous material to play on!" (286)

There had been this evening, after the revelation that left me for an hour so prostrate-- there had been for either of us no attendance on any service but a little service of tears and vows ... our retreating together to the schoolroom and shutting ourselves up there to have everything out. (193)

'Take me away from this. Oh, darling, for God's sake take me away!' (375)

'How far do you suppose Dudley is to-day? ... Guess!' ... So, stammering a little and pale, I performed the required hypocrisy ... (376) [Silas and the governess play a deceptive game with Maud in which each day they ask her to guess how far Dudley's ship is from England. Dudley, of course, is still at Bartram-Haugh, as Maud knows.]

"Take me away, take me away--oh take me away from her!" (281)

It was striking of the children ... of the precious question that had helped us through many a peril. "When do you think he will come?..." It was impossible to have given less encouragement than he had administered to such a doctrine ... (246-247)

The scene in Uncle Silas most suggestive of Turn of the Screw is Chapter LVIII, in which Maud's governess, Madame de la Rougierre, treats her with as outrageous cruelty as Miles's governess treats him in the final scene of Turn of the Screw. Not only is the action similar, but there is a verbal similarity to the two episodes. Maud's governess is violently restraining her from calling to Cousin Monica's

carriage from a window; Miles's governess is violently restraining him from looking at his supposed friend, the ghost of Peter Quint, at the window. There is one mechanical difference in the episodes: James's is approximately twice as long as LeFanu's. The borrowing therefore is threaded over a longer distance than in the source, but it is no less clear for being so used.

'The carriage is driving away!' I cried.
'Yes, it is draiving away,' she echoed. (388)

[The governess has just asked Miles what he found in the letter he stole from her.]
He gave the most mournful, thoughtful little headshake.
"Nothing."
"Nothing, nothing!" I almost shouted in my joy.
"Nothing, nothing," he sadly repeated. (305)

'Oh, oh, oh!' I shrieked, in vain and prolonged agony, as Madame, exerting her strength and matching her fury against my despair, forced me back in spite of my wild struggles, and pushed me sitting on the bed, where she held me fast, glaring in my face, and chuckling and panting over me. (389)

I sprang straight up, reduced ... to the mere blind movement of getting hold of him, drawing him close and, while I just fell for support against the nearest piece of furniture, instinctively keeping him with his back to the window. ... [Miles] had a perfect dew of sweat on [his] lovely childish forehead. (303) ... I enfolded, I drew him close; and ... I could feel ... the tremendous pulse of his little heart. (304) ... That movement made <u>me</u>, with a single bound and an irrepressible cry, spring straight upon him. ... I tried to press him against me. ... Miles panted (308) ... he was at me in a white rage ... I caught him, yes, I held him— it may be imagined with what a passion ... (309)

'Oh, Mary, Mary, is it gone --is it gone? Is there nothing there?' cried I, rushing to the window; and turning to Madame, after a vain straining of my eyes, my face against the glass-- 'Oh, cruel, cruel, wicked woman! why have you done this? What was it to you? Why do you persecute me?' (389) ... I was sitting now on the bedside, crying in mere despair ... with a clasping of my hands and turning up of my eyes, in incoherent prayer. (389-390)

But he had already jerked straight round, stared, glared again, and seen but the quiet day. With the stroke of the loss I was so proud of he uttered the cry of a creature hurled over an abyss ... (309)

The similarity of these last episodes particularly suggests borrowing by James. Both men are using the same words, actions, and scenes, but James is vastly more skillful. In the one instance, he takes LeFanu's simple description of a physical struggle and converts it almost to stage directions, spreading it over a longer time-span and creating more tension than LeFanu did in his briefer episode. In the

second instance James makes more dramatic use of setting, and compresses LeFanu's wasteful dialogue into one cry by Miles that is more expressive than all Maud's attempts to articulate the outrageousness of her treatment by Madame. In the final scene between Maud and her governess (US, 412-424), in which they are talking in a locked room in Bartram-Haugh and Maud has become aware of her danger, there is more of the tone and setting of the final scene of Turn of the Screw, but not so many verbal echoes, except for one inversion: Maud is asking Madame to save her, while the governess is intent on saving Miles.

One should not argue too strongly for sources, because similar ideas and expressions can occur independently to different artists or can be drawn from broad literary and cultural traditions. Uncle Silas and Turn of the Screw are in the Gothic tradition -- and Jane Eyre is to some extent -- which has been popular and highly stylized since the eighteenth century. Hence I have tried to be cautious and to avoid similarities that might only be clichés, and to offer instead what I felt to be distinctive verbal constructs and elements of plot and character. Since there are too many echoes to ignore in Turn of the Screw from the two other books, and since James is known to have had a familiarity with Jane Eyre and with LeFanu's work, one may conclude that James -- like the bibulous Madame and the speculative Jane -- dipped occasionally into the bedrooms and

halls of Bartram-Hough and Thornfield for refreshment and inspiration as he conceived his own more complex and perfect mansion of horror.

Notes to Appendix B

[1]For some other sources for Turn of the Screw -- an illustration, psychical research, Wuthering Heights, and Alice James's mental condition -- see the articles by Robert Wolff, Francis X. Roellinger, Miriam Allott, and Oscar Cargill in the Norton Ed., pp. 125-168. Other inspiration doubtless came to James from details of his life described by Leon Edel in The Treacherous Years, such as, for example, the fact that James had two drunken servants (Mr. and Mrs. Smith) just before writing Turn of the Screw (p. 197), and he had a strong interest in boxing (pp. 175, 227), which supplied the unlikely image for the governess in the last scene: "So we circle about with terrors and scruples, fighters not daring to close" (303). Nobushige Tadokoro tries to relate LeFanu to Turn of the Screw in "The Problem of Hallucinations in The Turn of the Screw," Kyusha American Literature, No. 8 (1965), pp. 23-35.

[2]For more such advice, see Wellek and Warren, pp. 247-248.

[3]Edel, ed., The Complete Tales of Henry James, VI (Philadelphia, 1963), 383-384.

[4]Jane Eyre (New York: Modern Library College Edition, 1950), p. 172. Subsequent pagination from Jane Eyre will be from this edition and will be incorporated into the text together with the page.

[5]James Thurber believed intuitively that James got the

idea for Peter Quint outside the window from playfully frightening some young girls once by peering in a window at them. One of the girls told Thurber the anecdote. "The Wings of Henry James," New Yorker, XXXV (November 7, 1959), p. 201.

[6]See Duncan Aswell, NCF, p. 50. Leon Edel first pointed out parallels between Jane Eyre, the governess, and governesses in James's boyhood. Ghostly Tales, pp. 430-431. Muriel West discusses the governess and other eccentric governesses who preceded her in literature. A Stormy Night, Chapters I-III. Oscar Cargill suggests that the David-Saul image and the "sunk fence" come from Jane Eyre. Norton Ed., p. 155.

[7]Uncle Silas (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), pp. 103-105, 136. Subsequent pagination from Uncle Silas will be from this edition, and will be incorporated into the text.

[8]Although it cannot be proved as an influence on Turn of the Screw, and need not be one, Maud projects her desires just as James's governess does. This is the meaning of Maud's hearing a voice at the fireplace repeating a phrase her father had translated for her from Latin -- "Fly the fangs of Belisarius" -- which is an apt warning for her regarding Uncle Silas. Her father told her to endure the stay at Bartram-Haugh and only he can tell her to leave -- which she wishes he could do. (US, 345-346)

[9]Edel and Muriel West believe the source for the name

is Peter Quince in A Midsummer-Night's Dream. See Ghostly Tales, p. 219, and A Stormy Night, p. 53. West also suggests Pierre Coquelin of "Gabrielle de Bergerac," an early James tale (1869), for thematic reasons.

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