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# THE GHOSTS IN HENRY JAMES

A Thesis Presented By

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## INTRODUCTION

Henry James' The Turn of the Screw, is a story that has aroused an enormous amount of commentary since the time of its publication. It has been condemned as morbid, attacked for its lack of lucidity, praised for its artistic quality and deprecated for its lack of importance.

It has been analyzed from the point of view of style, it has been viewed as a theological problem, called an allegory; it has been focused from a Freudian view-point, and the governess has been psychoanalyzed. Finally, the critics have been divided into two large opposing factions: the "apparitionists" and "non-apparitionists," so-called.

Those that belong to the first group, contend that the governess is a reliable narrator, that her manuscript is to be taken at face value, that the children are evil, depraved through the association with corrupting servants, who view the ghosts, the children and the governess as symbolic representations of the struggle between Good and Evil; this group embraces, as well, those that consider The Turn of the Screw a mere ghost story.

The "non-apparitionists" usually speak of several levels in the story; the first one being that of an entertaining horror tale, the subsequent levels,

one choice from a wide variety. Henry A. Beers, in 1919, was the first to suggest that the governess was mad; and Edmund Wilson, in "The Ambiguity of Henry James"<sup>1</sup> was the first to build a theory of hallucinations around the "ghosts" the governess "sees."

Many another has followed this thesis in seeking a basis for the strange actions of the governess, yet no attempt has yet been made to compare her actions with existent data on the symptomatology of hallucinations; that is one of the aims of this study.

I believe that the governess in The Turn of the Screw hallucinates; moreover, she follows a pattern in her seizures which adequately corresponds to the symptoms observed by medical investigators in the field of hallucinations. The non-apparitionist does not accept the governess as a reliable narrator; the character reference James gives us as to her reliability is limited, and he has truly set a "trap for the unwary,"<sup>2</sup> for he gives us indications that the governess had not been "the most agreeable woman I've ever known

1- Wilson, Edmund, "The Ambiguity of Henry James," Hound and Horn VII (April-June 1934), 385-406.

2- Edel, Leon, The Psychological Novel 1900-1950; N.Y., J.B. Lippincott Co., 1955, p. 59.

in her position"<sup>1</sup> at the time the events in her manuscript take place; she became worthy of this character reference later in her life.

Henry James' conscious and subconscious intention was the creation of a horror tale in which the ghosts included in the story are created by the governess' diseased imagination, making them more horrible than traditional chain-clanging ghosts.

I extend the hypothesis that Henry James was well-acquainted with the workings of a diseased imagination because he had firsthand experience through his sister Alice's hallucinations. My attempts to validate this hypothesis in an exoteric manner have failed; I cannot prove that Miss James' illness could have been diagnosed as schizophrenia, as a matter of fact, the word didn't exist when she was alive.

An attempt to diagnose Miss James' symptoms fifty years after her death is a ludicrous endeavor and susceptible to innumerable fallacies. But an attempt to parallel corresponding symptoms found in the modern practice of medicine can provide valid material. No endeavor is here made to transform criticism into

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<sup>1</sup>- James, Henry, The Turn of the Screw; N.Y., New American Library, 1962, p. 293.



psychological analysis, but rather to use the new scientific psychology in the setting of my particular focus. "The growing confidence in science, particularly as it evidenced itself in the tangible or quantitative, in psychology, biology, zoology, comparative anatomy, and anthropology, could hardly help but create a parallel interest in the use of concrete detail by the artist and, at the same time, a desire to discover the value of that detail."<sup>1</sup>

Objections will here be offered that the material available to a modern physician in this area, would not have been accessible to the doctors in care of Alice James' case, and naturally would not be at her brother's disposal.

No, James could no more have written the case history of a schizophrenic in 1897, than I can prove that Miss James' dossier belongs under this particular subject in the files of mental illness. But I can prove ✓ that Henry James was as well-acquainted with the material then available on this subject as the doctors who tried to ease Alice's sufferings, and that he was much better versed than they, as to the practical manifestations of it.

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1- Graham, John, "Character Description and Meaning in the Romantic Novel", Studies in Romanticism, The Graduate School, Boston Univ. Boston, Mass., vol. V, Summer 1966, no. 4, p. 218.

Having proven that Henry James artistically conceived a story of the inner workings of a mentally diseased woman, having offered proof that he was adequately cognizant of the manifestations of that derangement, I hope to show that he introduced these symptoms into The Turn of the Screw.

Why attempt to prove that a woman who has been dead half a century suffered from a horrible form of mental illness? In the light of the numerous objections that have been raised to the non-apparitionist interpretation of The Turn of the Screw, I think this endeavor is a valid one.

Alice James suffered from mental derangement; although the medical knowledge on the particular form her illness took, was very limited in her lifetime, modern scientific literature points up her symptoms as being very similar to those nowadays accepted as indicative of schizophrenia.

Not only did James have direct access to the source for his material in the experience of his sister's hallucinations, but he had access to the medical knowledge on the subject through his brother William's studies.

William James was a medical doctor whose interest in the field of medicine was directed towards an investigation of mental phenomena. He was a professor of psychology, a disciple of the leading psychiatrists of

the time-Charcot and Janet. He pursued investigations of psychic manifestations through his membership in the Society for Psychical Research.

Alice James' brother Henry, nursed her through the last years of her life; having patently declared the existence of a very close relationship with his sister, he must have been an observer on occasions, of the manifestations of his sister's illness. This vicarious participation must have afforded him the firsthand facts for the transformation of a horrible reality into the channel which was his modus operandi-the nouvelle.

Henry James transformed the hallucinations which his sister experienced into the ghosts of a horror tale. Henry James' ghosts are all the more terrifying when viewed in their true context.

## A SHORTER 'TURN OF THE SCREW'

A group of people are sitting around the fire at a country home on Christmas Eve, telling ghost stories; one of the guests, Douglas, offers to narrate a story, unusual in the fact that the events were experienced by two children.

Douglas cannot relate his tale at the moment, for he claims it is contained in a first-person narrative, the manuscript of which he keeps under lock in town. He sends for the manuscript and in the interim offers his audience a few background details as to the circumstances under which the manuscript came into his possession.

The manuscript had been given him by the main character, the governess, who sent him "the pages in question before she died," twenty years earlier. It is a first-person narrative of events that had taken place long before and were experienced by the amanuensis.

The prologue to the tale consists of a rapid sketching of the circumstances by which the governess arrives at Bly, as well as a rendering of a few traits of the main character, both at the time of the experience related, and at the time the tale is entrusted to Douglas.

The governess "on taking service for the first time," answers an advertisement and learns that her job

will be to take care and teach Flora and Miles, the niece and nephew of the prospective patron - a bachelor who lives in Harley Street; these children were left in his care two years earlier, after the death of their parents. The bachelor had sent them to his country home, putting his valet and housekeeper at their service, and a governess in total charge of the household. This governess, however, had met "an awkward death" and he was therefore seeking a young lady to take her place.

The governess thinks it over for a few days, as she envisions the great responsibility (she is never to consult her patron, but take all decisions upon herself) and loneliness this employment means, and accepts due partly to the large salary offered, but mostly to the "passion" she entertains for the bachelor.

In his prologue, Douglas also tells us a bit about the young lady who is to become the governess at Bly: she is about twenty, is going to work for the first time in her life, and is unexperienced and nervous; she is the youngest daughter in the large household of a poor Hampshire vicar, and is quite overwhelmed by her employer's imposing figure and vast household.

After offering these preliminaries, Douglas, the host and the rest of the audience, leave the stage to make way for the governess' story proper.

She arrives at Bly, meets Flora and falls in love at first sight with her; finds the housekeeper, Mrs. Gross, "inordinately glad to see her." Miles arrives from school two days later, and the governess takes full charge of both children.

The eve before Miles' arrival, the bachelor sends a letter from the headmaster expressing regret that Miles will not be able to return to school after the holidays.

Little by little, the governess learns the past history of Bly; learns that Quint, the valet, and Miss Jessel, the preceding governess, are dead. She meets the ghosts of the dead servants on eight occasions: Quint at the tower, Quint at the window, Miss Jessel at the lake, the valet at the staircase, Miss Jessel at the stairs, Miss Jessel in the schoolroom, Miss Jessel at the lake and Quint at the window. In the midst of all this "spooking", she elaborates a theory - which she accepts as fact - that the ghosts have come to haunt the children, and feels it is her duty to save the children from these horrors.

The governess manages to destroy both children; Miles dies of a heart attack and Flora is taken ill and removed to London by Mrs. Gross.

This, then, is the story that has enthralled

many readers for sixty-odd years. In re-reading this synopsis, one realizes that it is not the story that makes for the mastery in the narration; once more, form and content, inseparably conjoin to give us a masterpiece. James has managed to give us a story of intuition and blanks left to the reader's imagination; to outline a subjectively perceived reality so that it may fit a number of possible plots.

Is the governess' a mere ghost story intended to "scare the world" or the record of the uncannily gruesome experience of a psychotic break? I think both levels are present in the story, affording different degrees of reading pleasure; superficially it may be read as a scary tale, but more deeply and much more satisfactorily, it is the record - made literature - of the hallucinatory experiences of a hysterical woman.

## THE POTBOILER

Bless your heart, I think I could easily say worse of the Turn of the Screw, the young woman, the spooks, the style, the everything, than the worst any one else could manage... The grotesque business I had to make her picture and the childish psychology I had to make her trace and present, were for me at least, a very difficult job, in which absolute lucidity and logic, a singleness of effect, were imperative... But the thing is essentially a potboiler and a jeu d'esprit.<sup>1</sup>

This passage, as Leon Edel points out, has often been cited as proof of Henry James' deliberate intention of writing a "plain and simple" ghost story.

The conscientious scholar cannot ignore the author's own comments about his production nor minimize the fact that James' statements about this story are generally in a deprecatory note. Nevertheless, the fact that James called the Turn of the Screw an amusette, a pot-boiler, a wanton little tale, cannot be taken at face value; there are too many counterindications in his critical comments that point to James' deliberate effort at disguising his real intentions.

As Dr. Trilling says, "It is in the nature of the writer's job that he exhibit his unconscious. He may disguise it in various ways, but disguise is not

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1- Leon Edel, ed. Selected Letters of Henry James (N.Y.: Farrar Strauss and Cudahy, 1955) p. 150.



concealment. Indeed it may be said that the more a writer takes pains with his work to remove it from the personal and subjective, the more - and not the less - he will express his true unconscious..."<sup>1</sup>

An excellent balance of Henry James' efforts at concealment in the Turn of the Screw<sup>2</sup> may be found in Dr. Thomas Cranfill's book; here I merely wish to demonstrate that disguise of his intentions was common paractice with James.

In reference to his dramatic adventures, James wrote to Robert Louis Stevenson saying "simplifying and chastening necessity has laid its brutal hand on me and I have had to try and make somehow or other the money I don't make by literature" and in the same breath he announces to his brother William, "I feel as if I had at last found my form - my real one - that for which pale fiction is an ineffectual substitute." Once more to William in 1891, "I find the drama much more obsedant than the novel" and two lears later, "Nothing is more soothing than to remember that literature sits patient

1- Lionel Trilling, "Art and Neuroses" in Art and Psychoanalysis (N.Y.: World Publishing Company, 1957) p. 510.

2- Thomas Cranfill, An Anatomy of the Turn of the Screw, (Austin: U. of Texas Press, 1965)

at my door, and that I have only to lift the latch to let in the exquisite little form that is, after all, nearest my heart."

Could critics cite any of the above-mentioned statements as conclusive evidence on either side of the question in a hypothetical discussion on James' favorite form? This discussion is comparable to the quotations cited in the apparitionist-nonapparitionist debate of the Turn of the Screw.

Another incident in James' career will further illustrate the fact that, not only unconsciously but also consciously, the novelist attempted to disguise and conceal the autobiographical strain in his work by subjecting reality to the refining process of art.

Vernon Lee (Violet Paget) had dedicated her first novel to James, and he had very diplomatically criticizes it;<sup>1</sup> she had, however, taken offense and in a later novel had derogatorily depicted a character based on Henry James. This incident bred a feud between the two, which lasted throughout most of their lives. James considered their friendship destroyed, not because Miss Lee had painted an insulting portrait of him, but because she had committed the unpardonable sin of taking a portrait from life and failing to expose it to the refining process of art.

1- Edel, op. cit., p. 204.

In the Art of Fiction Henry James compared the role of the historian with that of the novelist, the latter having more difficulty in collecting his evidence, "which is so far from being purely literary."

There is no doubt that the novelist's contradictory statements regarding his "potboiler" serve to point up that his working material is not purely literary and is far removed from the Gothic tradition.

The ghosts in The Turn of the Screw are not portraits of the specters of deceased servants, but productions of the governess' diseased mind.

## THE INVULNERABLE GRANITE

Henry James held, as his eminent biographer Leon Edel says, that it was a writer's duty to clear away the approaches to his privacy; if documents did survive, it was questionable whether others could take it upon themselves to destroy them.

"Others" have not destroyed the evidence, but they have taken it upon themselves to circumvent the availability of these papers. I have endeavored to obtain permission to look at the James family private papers and have been informed that they are not available to students. I have written twice to the sanatorium where Alice was a recluse in 1881, and which is still in operation, asking for diagnostic information of her case, but have received no reply. I have attempted to obtain like case history from the English clinics where Alice James was hospitalized and have once more come up against a wall of silence. (See Appendix) Where an answer has been forthcoming, I have been instructed to turn to the published documents; these too, draw a line where Alice's illness is concerned.

A few instances will illustrate my meaning; the ellipses are part of the original letters as published:

December 5, 1869 William to Henry James

To prove to you how well Alice is, I may tell you that today ... she started before eleven for town, where she is to go... lunch in a restaurant.

January 2, 1885 Henry to William

The book came at a bad time for Alice ... but though she has been able to have it in her hand but for a moment, it evidently gives her great pleasure.

September 27, 1886 William to Alice

Psychical research shall be dropped.... I hear everyone sing praises about Henry's Princess Cassamasima, and am eager to get the volume into my hands.

The ellipses serve, as far as I'm concerned, the same purpose that the expressive dashes of The Turn of the Screw; by making my "general vision of evil intense enough," my own imagination, experience, sympathy and horror have released me from the "need for weak specifications."

If the ellipses are not present, certain parts of the correspondence - though alluded to elsewhere - are missing, probably used to ignite Henry James' huge bonfire at Lamb House.

The correspondence between Robert Louis Stevenson and Henry James was published by Janet Adam Smith. In her introduction Miss Adam conjectures that

a number of the letters written over the Bournemouth period were lost or destroyed. It is more than likely that they were destroyed, following James' instructions, for it is these particular letters which would give an inkling to the period when Alice was hospitalized at Bournemouth, and her brother struck up his friendship with the Stevensons.

The letters which are extant, contain messages from James to Stevenson's wife and mother-in-law. Though James and Robert Louis Stevenson formed their friendship while the latter was an invalid at Skerryvore (Stevenson's home in Bournemouth) and Alice was interned at a clinic close by, it is interesting to note that the reverse is not true.

James was a frequent and beloved visitor at Skerryvore and a personal "pet" of Mrs. Stevenson. In all of the letters extant, however, there is but one allusion to Alice on either side, that of March 19, 1892 from James to Stevenson, containing a mention of his sister's death.

William James' letters to Henry from 1877 to 1881 are also missing; this period corresponds to Alice's greatest crises while she still lived in America.

In the entry made in his notebooks twenty days after Alice died, Henry James wrote: "The idea

of the responsibility of destruction - the destruction of papers, letters, records, etc. connected with the private and personal history of some great and honoured name ..." is one of the factors that should provide for a more equal battle between the artist and the scholar who wishes to find an answer in the personal experiences of the artist, and make the scholar turn to the "invulnerable granite" of the writer's oeuvre.

Henry James destroyed thousands of personal papers a few years before his death; he crossed the Atlantic knowing he would be late for his brother William's funeral, ostensibly to destroy the "letters, records, etc. connected with the private and personal history" of the James family. He enjoined his friends to "destroy, destroy, destroy" their correspondence, but few were as courageous as he, to do so.

However, James' efforts were successful enough to make us turn to "the invulnerable granite" of his writing and use the personal documents that are available as background support for his artistic reality, and from it, a reconstruction of his personal essence.

## THE TRAP FOR THE UNWARY

In reference to The Turn of the Screw, Leon Edel says: "In this nouvelle James even provides an elaborate testimonial to the good character of the governess, yet if the reader reads attentively, he will discover that he is tied down by the limitations James imposes upon him. The data given goes only so far: beyond, he can have recourse only to his own imagination."<sup>1</sup>

Yet the limitations James imposes upon the testimonial of the governess' good character are much greater than the mere blanks left to be filled in by our own personal inductions; he definitely shows the governess to be presenting a false impression of the facts - of which she is not aware - on three occasions.

The first, is a relatively unimportant one, and might be chalked off, but the wary reader will sense a false note. In describing the children, the governess claims: "Both the children had a gentleness (it was their only fault ... )"; several pages later she again refers to Miles' only fault and speaks of a different object of criticism: "a purpose so laudable in a young man whose only defect was an occasional excess of the restless."

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1- Leon Edel, The Psychological Novel, (N.Y.: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1955) p. 59.



The second instance of her falsehood is when she informs Mrs. Gross that she has made up her mind to "everything." When the housekeeper demands to know what "everything" means, the governess replies, "Why to sending for their uncle." She accordingly writes a letter, which she keeps in her pocket for some time, and when she finally decides to send it, the letter disappears. In discussing this disappearance several pages later, the governess admits that the letter contained "the bare demand for an interview." Evidently, the governess still feels that the uncle's arrival at Bly would be "almost more awkward than anything else might be for me."

The third, and much more flagrant, instance of the governess' misconception of reality takes place when she narrates the visitation of Miss Jessel in the schoolroom. "And what did she say?" questions "the good woman in stupefaction." "That she suffers the torments... of the lost. Of the damned. And that's why to share them .... She wants Flora," answers the governess, interspersing her replies with faltering, dumbfounded commentary from Mrs. Gross.

If we turn back to the moment of the scene in the schoolroom, the apparition "looked at me long enough to appear to say (*italics mine*) that her right

to sit at my table was as good as mine to sit at hers." The ghost says nothing at all, and what it appears to say, is only embroidered upon at the later repetition.

It is clear, through these instances, that James is giving us - if we are "wary" enough - an indication as to the reliability of his narrator. He is also presenting another psychotic symptom present in schizophrenics, the ability to lie or to pretend about his delusional life,<sup>1</sup> sign which, incidentally, is a good prognostic indication.

Henry James also gives the wary reader two very important indications of his conscious intention in depicting the ghosts; at two different intervals in the tale, the governess says "understanding that when my visitor had gone, he had gone" for, "He was there or was not there: not there if I didn't see him."

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1- Arieti, op. cit., p. 340

## YET I CAN READ YOU WITH RAPTURE.

Of the material available to Henry James on mental abnormalities, one might attempt to supply a list of the relevant literature of the time and immediately provoke the reader's objection as to adequate proof that it was within the novelist's ken. It is a valid objection, therefore I will dispense with such a list, presenting instead a listing of related subjects which were within the domain of William James, immediately following it up with proof of Henry James' acquaintance with his brother's work.

In 1889, William James became the American representative of the committee formed by the International Congress of Experimental Psychology to conduct a census of hallucinations. William James hoped that psychical research, like other studies of abnormal phenomena might throw light on the unconscious motivation of mental manifestations. Without a doubt, psychical research was also connected to the possibility of mental healing, as related to his own personal sufferings and recoveries.

In 1891 William James writes to F.W. Myers, then president of the English Society for Psychical Research, about his work on the census of hallucinations; "I find that narratives (*italics James'*) are a weariness, and I must confess that the reading of

narratives for which I have no personal responsibility is almost intolerable to me." <sup>1</sup> Evidently William was more interested in firsthand observation than in narratives.

On July 6th, 1891, William wrote to his sister Alice:

When you're relieved from your post, just that bright note will remain behind, together with the unscrutable and mysterious character of the doom of nervous weakness which has chained you down for all these years. As for that, there's more in it than has ever been told to so-called science. These inhibitions, these split-up selves, all these new facts that are gradually coming to light about our organization, these enlargements of the self in trance, etc., are bringing me to burn for light in the direction of all sorts of despised spiritualistic and unscientific ideas. 2

All the "new facts which are gradually coming to light" compose the subject matter of the eight lectures delivered in 1896 before the Lowell Institute on "Abnormal Mental States." Some of their titles are: "Dreams and Hypnotism," "Hysteria," "Demoniacal Possession," "Multiple Personality." In the lecture he delivered on hysteria, James defined it as: "an obsession, not by demons, but by a fixed idea of the person that has

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1- James, Henry, ed., The Letters of William James, in 2 vols.; Boston, The Atlantic Monthly Press, V. II, p. 342

2- James, Henry, ed., op. cit., Vol. I, p. 218

dropt down - Janet's phrase suffices here." Evidently William James' interest in hallucinations was greatly stimulated by the personal contact with his sister's mental derangement.

That he had always shared this abounding interest in the manifestations of abnormal mental states with his sister Alice is manifest in the following excerpt dated even earlier, February 5, 1887:

I have been paying ten or eleven visits to a mind-cure doctress... I sit down beside her and presently drop asleep, whilst she disentangles the snarls out of my mind. She says she never saw a mind with so many, so agitated, so restless, etc. She said my eyes, mentally speaking, kept revolving... I am now, unconsciously to myself, much better than when I first went, etc. I thought it might please you to hear an opinion of my mind so similar to your own.

On February 1, 1897, William James addresses Henry W. Rankin:

One of my lectures in New York is at the Academy of Medicine before the Neurological Society, the subject being "Demonical Possession." I am not as positive as you are in the belief that the obsessing agency is really demoniac individuals... the lower stages of mere automatism shade off so continuously into the highest supernormal manifestations, through the intermediary ones of imitative hysteria and 'suggestibility' that I feel as if no general theory as yet could cover all the facts... I am convinced that we stand with all these things at the threshold of a long inquiry, of which the end appears as

yet to no one, least of all to myself. And I believe that the best theoretic work yet done in the subject is the beginning made by F. W. Myers in his papers in the SPR Proceedings.

These quotations prove that William James was fascinated by the abnormal manifestations of the human mind; through letters to his sister it is evident that it was a common subject of interest, not only objectively, but specifically referring to her case. It may be objected that I have proven both Alice and William James were engrossed in abnormal psychology for subjective reasons - aside from William's scientific interest in the subject - but it does not necessarily prove that their brother was acquainted with and shared this fascination.

Apart from voluminous proof throughout William, Henry and Alice's published correspondence, pointing to lifelong participation in each other's production, there exists specific evidence of Henry James' intimate cognizance of the results of his brother's research on this particular subject.

In 1890 William James sent a written report - published in the SPR Proceedings - of his findings in the investigations on psychic phenomena. The reading of this paper before the Society produced the following exchange of letters:

October 9, 1890, Henry to William

Frederick Myers has written to ask me to read your letter on Mrs. Piper at a meeting of the Society for Psychical Research... and I have said I would...

October 20, 1890, William to Henry

I think your reading my Piper letter (of which this very morning proof came to me from Myers) is the most comical thing I ever heard of.... Alice says I have not melted enough over your reading of my paper... It is the most beautiful and devoted brotherly act I ever knew, and I hope it may be the beginning of a new career, on your part, of psychic apostolicism...

It was also in 1890 that William James' Principles of Psychology appeared; in it he discusses such subjects as dissociation, hysteric anaesthesia, multiple and alternating personality, the subconscious; he regards psychical research as an extension of abnormal psychopathology. James had a hypothesis which contained "dramatic probability;" he pictured the "situation as an interaction between slumbering faculties in the automatist's mind and a cosmic environment of the other consciousness of some sort which is able to work upon them." The hallucinator possesses a "will to personate."

In February 1891, Henry James writes to his brother in relation to the Principles of Psychology:

I blush to say that I haven't had freedom of mind or cerebral freshness ... to tackle - more than dipping in just here and there - your mighty and magnificent book...

This letter might constitute exhibit A for the prosecution; but if we turn to an interesting "slip of the pen" in a letter written sixteen years later, we can pretty well surmise what passages Henry James did "dip into";

Then I was lost in the wonder of the extent to which I have all my life unconsciously pragmatized. You are immensely and universally right and I have been absorbing a number more of your followings-up of the matter in the American (Journal of Psychology?) ...

The name of the magazine Henry refers to in this letter to his brother is The American Journal of Philosophy and Scientific Methods.

The passage charted into the seas of the unbalanced mind by Sigmund Freud, was first offered to the public in the "Preliminary Communication" of his Studies on Hysteria. In it are included case histories of hysterics treated both by Freud and by Breuer, and the summary of the psychical mechanisms of hysterical phenomena.

This paper was, of course, published in Vienna and created some manifest effect in Germany and France. In England it was fully abstracted and discussed by Michael Clarke in Brain<sup>1</sup> in 1894.

1- Clarke, Michael, Brain, 17, p. 125 (1894)



Most important, only three months after Breuer and Freud's first publication, F. W. Myers gave a full account of it at a general meeting of the Society for Psychical Research in April, 1893. The full paper was printed in the Society's official publication, Proceedings, in June of that year.

In 1905, Henry tells his brother; "And yet I can read you with rapture," in answer to William's criticism of the novelist's style of "avoiding naming it straight, but by dint of breathing and sighing all round and round it, to arouse in the reader who may have had a similar perception already (Heaven help him if he hasn't !) the illusion of a solid object, made (like the "ghost" at the Polytechnic) wholly out of impalpable materials, air, and the prismatic interference of light, ingeniously focused by mirrors upon empty space...."

Alice James' diary was edited by Miss Katherine Loring, and in 1894 she had four copies printed, one for each of the surviving James brothers and one for herself. Henry James urged Miss Loring to refrain from presenting the book to Robertson and promptly destroyed his own copy. He expressed his reasons for these actions in a series of letters to William.

The reasons were that Henry felt his brother Robertson might open the diary up to the public, thus revealing family skeletons - those he was especially anxious to keep in the closet. Fortunately, Miss Loring did not accede to Henry's wishes, and Alice's diary has - though much deleted - been opened up to the public.

In Alice's diary are found two passages proving the intimate knowledge both she and Henry had of William's work in psychology.

November 18, 1889:

William came with H. on August 14 on his way to Liverpool. He told all about his Paris experience where he was a delegate to the Psychological Cong (International Congress of Physiological Psychology) which was a most brilliant success. The French most polite and hospitable, invited William to open the Congress... H. suggested that he might become another case of the great "Williams."

William James' paper, "The Hidden Self," appeared in March 1890. Alice, in the following passage, makes reference to her brother's discussion of Binet's "contractions of the field of consciousness" principle in hysterical persons.

October 26, 1890:

William uses an excellent expression when he says in his paper on the "Hidden Self" that the nervous victim "abandons" certain portions of his consciousness.

It may be the word commonly used by his kind.

In 1895, Breuer and Freud published the complete Studies on Hysteria, which some critics have claimed as the public source for The Turn of the Screw. One of the reviews of this work that heralded it as a new outlook on psychology, was the critical essay by Alfred Von Berger, poet, literary historian and dramatic critic, published on December 2, 1895. This source augments the possibilities of James' acquaintance with Freud's studies.

Henry James might have gained access to this study about the workings of hysterical minds through his brother's interest in the field of psychology; he may have learned of it through Berger's "Surgery of the Soul"; he may have perused "The Case of Miss Lucy R." from Myers' rendering at the Society for Psychical Research's general meeting in April, 1893, or read the translation of it in the SPR Proceedings.

In 1896, William participated in an experiment to satisfy his curiosity about the hallucinatory effects of mescal, and it is interesting that the results of this experiment are recorded in a letter, not to his colleagues, but to his brother Henry. In this letter he uses words such as "mob psychology" and "morbid

mental states," proving Henry's acquaintance with these terms.

On April 17, 1896 he announces the future publication of a volume of "collected things." This volume appeared a year later under the title The Will to Believe, containing a summary of the deductions made by William James in the census of hallucinations in which he interviews men and women who had, when awake, heard a voice, seen a form or felt a touch for which no material presence could account ("What Psychological Research Has Accomplished.")

In 1897 F. W. Myers - the author of the "best theoretic work yet done" on the subject of hallucinations and demoniacal possession - writes to William James:

I have had pleasures lately connected with America. One, a delightful time with your brother at Aston Clinton, where in a long walk together I seemed to be allowed somewhat nearer to him than heretofore...

There doesn't seem to be much room for speculation as to the subject of their talk during the "long walk."

On December 1, 1897 Henry James writes to Mrs. William James: "I have, at last finished my little

book..." The second part of the sentence seems to underline the possessive and endearing connotation of the pronoun. The little book was: The Turn of the Screw.

## THE FANTASTIC NATURE OF MY TROUBLES

Alice James was born on August 7, 1848. Her diary, as well as allusions in family and friend's letters, afford us a picture of her troubled childhood. The first reference to the existence of psychical-physical illness is found in a letter written on November 4, 1866 by William to Alice James:

I expect momentarily her reply with a check, and when it comes we'll take you and Aunt Kate on a tour in Europe and have you examined by the leading physicians and surgeons of that country...

One year later William writes to Henry James, Jr.

To prove to you how well Alice is, I may tell you that today ... she started before eleven for town, where she is to go to ... lunch at a restaurant, alone....

In 1878, while Henry is in Scotland, he writes to Alice saying that he hopes the lack of news from her doesn't point to illness.

Alice spent the summer of 1881 at the Adams Nervous Asylum, a rest home in the suburbs of Boston. In 1882, we learn from a letter from the novelist to Mary Wilkinson, that "Alice after many years of ill-health has been better for the last few months than for a long time." Six months later she became increasingly ill and was being ministered to by Katherine Loring, when her father's death took place, forcing Alice out

of her invalid's bed to make "an harmonious little menàge" together with Henry Jr., who had returned to America to be at his father's deathbed.

On Christmas Day, 1882, Alice is taken to the Loring home in a state of collapse. Two years later she crosses the Atlantic with the Loring sisters, landing at Liverpool on November 4, 1884 and joining her brother in London, while Katherine Loring travels to Bournemouth to install her ailing sister at a clinic in that town.

While in London, Alice is placed under the care of Dr. John Cooper Torry and Sir John Batty Tuke, president of the Neurological Society of the United Kingdom and head psychiatrist at Bethlehem Hospital for the Insane. The English physicians confirmed the diagnosis made by American-doctors that there was nothing organically wrong with Miss James.

In January, 1885, Miss James is at Bournemouth "wretchedly ill, I am sorry to say - not at all the better for a winter in England."<sup>1</sup> In May of that year Henry James is "down at this dull place looking after my poor sister who is wretchedly ill, and who has been for me, these last six months a great anxiety and oc-<sup>2</sup>cupation."

In October, 1885, the novelist leaves for the Continent, relinquishing his sister's care to Miss Loring;

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1- Edel, op. cit., p. 112.

2- ibid., p. 237.

one month later he is summoned to Alice's bedside during one of her attacks of neurasthenia.

1886 finds Alice well enough to move to Leamington where she resides until 1889, leading an invalid's existence with Miss Loring as her nurse. It is in Leamington that Alice begins keeping a diary.

Alice transfers her abode to London in 1890. Leaving her installed, Henry departs for Florence, where he once again receives an urgent summons after one of Alice's "attacks." Henry returns precipitatedly to England, bringing Dr. Baldwin back with him. He too, examines Alice and finds nothing organically wrong.

Finally on May 31, 1891:

To him who waits, all things come! My aspirations may have been excentric, but I cannot complain now, that they have not been brilliantly fulfilled. Ever since I have been ill, I have longed and longed for some palpable disease, no matter how conventionally dreadful a label it might have, but I was always driven back to stagger alone under the monstrous mass of subjective sensations, which that sympathetic being "the medical man" had no higher inspiration than to assure me I was personally responsible for... Sir Andrew Clark ... says that a lump that I have had in one of my breasts for three months... is a tumour... that it is only a question of time, etc.... 1



The diagnosis of cancer brought an inspiring and consoling letter from William on July 6, 1891 in which he advised her to take all the drugs that might alleviate the pain; however, Alice reacted poorly to these drugs, and under William's advice, Dr. Charles Lloyd Tuckey, and early pioneer in hypnotic therapy, was summoned, provoking Alice's comment:

The hypnotic Tuckey, the mild radiance of whose moonbeam personality has penetrated with a little hope the black mists that enveloped us. And now, this vast field of therapeutic possibilities is opened up to me, just at the moment when I have passed far beyond the workings of beneficent laws... 1

In the letter of August 23, 1891 from William to his sister, the psychologist replies to her comment, that this has been the best year of her life.

A letter from Harry, received only a few days later, confirmed me in this impression. He says he is less 'anxious' about you than at any former time, and I think we ought all to be so together now...

This mass of information culled from verbatim quotes offers the following balance: Alice James suffered attacks of neuralgia, sleeplessness, fainting spells as early as her fifteenth year. When she was eighteen, her brother William's expressed wish was to take her

to visit the leading European physicians in the hope of finding an accurate diagnosis for her symptoms. In 1873 she did take such a tour, to no avail; she spent three months at a nervous sanatorium in 1881. She collapses mentally at the end of 1882 and two years later she takes up her abode in England where she is placed under the care of the leading psychiatrists of her time until her death in 1892.

Although the correspondents quoted were intimately concerned with the details of her illness, the best record of her symptoms may be found in her own recording of them in her diary. The number of times she alludes to her symptoms (it amounts to a case of obsessive hypochondria) and the length she allots to a peroration of them, makes it impossible for me to quote the references in their entirety. I will cull but two passages:

Mentally, no fate appalls me, but morally no crawling worm was ever so abject as I am before the convolutions of that next of snakes coiling and uncoiling themselves. What pain remotely approaches the horror of those hours, which may swamp one at any moment, passed, second by second, hanging as it were by a cobweb to Sanity! ..... 1

The fact is, I have been dead so long and it has been simply such a grim showing of the hours behind me as I faced a ceaseless possible horror, since that hideous summer

of '78, when I went down to the deep sea...  
Physical pain however great ends in itself  
and falls away like dry husks from the mind,  
whilst moral discords and nervous horrors  
sear the soul. 1

## Nervous Horrors Sear The Soul

Miss James last entry into her diary, a few hours before she died, is certainly echoed by the governess' feelings as to the "very horror of the immediate presence...it was like fighting with a demon for a human soul."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Silvano Arietti in Interpretation of Schizophrenia defines this illness: "Schizophrenia is a specific reaction to an extremely severe state of anxiety originated in childhood, reactivated later in life."<sup>2</sup>

The governess is the youngest daughter of a poor country parson of an escentric nature; in this sentence we may find a description of Alice James - she was the youngest daughter of a wealthy, itinerant mystic, who was nothing if not eccentric. This is what little we know of the governess' childhood; yet both conditions, the fate of the sibling so placed in the family line, and eccentricity in the father's relations, are conditions that in a disturbed personality might make for a state of anxiety in childhood.

1- Henry, James, "The Turn of the Screw" in The Ghostly Tales of, (N.Y.: Grosset and Dunlap, 1949) p. 332.

2- Silvano, Arietti, M.D., Interpretation of Schizophrenia, (N.Y.: Robert Brunner, 1955) p. 44.

Dr. Arietti includes an observation made in the treatment of a patient whose case history he was unable to obtain:

This case shows how a simple event may induce or unchain a psychosis, when the ground is ready for it, of course. Since we know so little about this patient, we cannot understand the fundamental issues, that is, why he was so vulnerable... in order to understand the vulnerability of this patient we would have to know his detailed life history. 1

Might not, in the governess' case, the meeting of a "figure as had never risen, save in a dream or an old novel, before a fluttered anxious girl" be the reactivation of the anxiety of which Dr. Arietti speaks in his definition of schizophrenia?

In Alice's case, Henry's absence from her bedside seems to reactivate her anxiety, to the extent that she recalls him twice from his travels, "suspending myself like an old woman of the sea round his neck... I have given him endless care and anxiety ... (through) the fantastic nature of my troubles."<sup>2</sup>

The similarity between the tenor of the diaries of Henry James' sister and that of Henry James' creation go much further than the roots of the problem and the final manifestation of it. Alice "went out

1- Arietti, op. cit., p. 326.

2- Alice James, op. cit., p. 149.

again today, and behaved like a lunatic, "sobbed,"  
at la Kingsely, over a farmhouse, a meadow, some trees  
and cawing rooks.<sup>1</sup> While the governess' "fortitude"  
takes a "flight" as she drives up to Bly; "I remember  
the lawn and the bright flowers and the crunch of my  
wheels on the gravel and the clustered treetops over  
which the rooks circled and cawed in the golden sky."<sup>2</sup>

The governess records "the dreadful liability  
to impressions of the order so vividly exemplified...  
There had been this evening after the revelation that  
left me for an hour so prostrate ... a little service  
of tears,"<sup>3</sup> and Alice James writes "As I lay prostrate  
after the storm with my mind luminous and active and  
susceptible to the clearest, strongest impressions ...  
when I broke down first, acutely, and had violent  
turns of hysteria."<sup>4</sup>

In the entry of April 26, 1891 we may find  
a picture of Alice's nurse that is strangely reminiscent  
of Mrs. Gross and the governess' relationship to this  
"plain, wholesome woman":

1- Alice James, op. cit., p. 310.

2- Henry James, op.cit., p. 230.

3- ibid., p. 253.

4- Alice James, op. cit., p. 149.

Given what she is; she is the best little creature in the world, and has fitted herself with most exemplary patience, to all my acute angles - When all the foundations gave way under me... and I clung to her... I had such an impression of... anchoring myself to her long Fra Angelico surface, covering simply half a dozen faithful kindly instincts, uniting me with the simple and the good, so that the blessed peace fell upon me which comes from escaping from the fantastic .... she was to hold out her hand to my necessity ... and give me an ever deeper sense of the exquisite truth that human good outweighs all human evil .... 1

Alice James reflects, just as James' character in The Turn of the Screw the need for physical proximity.

Henry James' sister describes another of the often present predisposing causes of hallucinations, sleeplessness and its effect, exhaustion:

Altho' I have never unfortunately been able to abandon my consciousness and get five minute's rest. I have passed thro' an infinite succession of conscious abandonments and in looking back now I see how it began in my childhood, altho' I wasn't conscious ... of the necessity until '67 or '68 when I broke down first, acutely, and had violent turns of hysteria...2

She also complains that when morphia destroys sleep, it "open the door to all hideous nervous distresses,

1- Edel, Leon ed., The Diary of Alice James, (Scranton, Penn., Dodd, Mead and Co., 1964) p. 201.

2- ibid., p. 216.

discloses its iniquity ... and I touch bottom more  
nearly than ever before."<sup>1</sup>

About hypnotism as a remedy for insomnia, Alice bewails the fact that the "golden solution of the complex riddle" is what "I learned, from experience, twenty-four years ago, was the some-day- to- be-revealed secret of suspending for the time from his duties the individual watch dog, worn out with his ceaseless vigils to maintain the sanity of the modern complicated mechanism."

Once more we see the correspondence between the records of Henry James' creation and that of his sister.

It is also interesting to discover through the diary, the fact that even when Alice was alive, Henry used material obtained from her conversation and experience as a source for his writing. In the entry for April 22, 1891, Alice records the outline of the story of Lady Alexandra Leveson Gower; Henry James entered a similar theme in his notebook of 1888 but the story was not written at the time. Evidently his interest in the theme was reawakened by the anecdote as recounted by Alice, for in August of that year, "The Marriages",

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1- Edell, Leon, ed., op. cit., p. 222.



a tale built around this account, was published.

At one point, Alice expressly states: "H., by the way, has embedded in his pages many pearls fallen from my lips, which he steals in the most un-<sup>1</sup>blushing way."

The Turn of the Screw seems to me to be the pledge made tangible of William's promise to Alice in 1891:

How Harry will miss your conversation when the opportunity for it is gone! Between us we promise to try to work some of it into Philosophy and the Drama so that it shall become a part of the world's inheritance.

## MANY INTENSE ANOMALIES AND OBSCURITIES

The admittedly neurotic is constantly warding off the unconscious in one way or another by phobias, compulsive rituals, hypochondriasis. Although it costs the neurotic tremendous amounts of energy to keep his unconscious where it belongs, he may succeed in doing so for a lifetime. But if the pressure from within or without proves too great, the unconscious surges out, inundates the conscious, and the neurotic defenses give way to psychosis. When the unconscious has finally broken through (psychosis), the patient's blocked wishes appear in the form of delusions or hallucinations. 1

In seeking to establish that the governess is a victim of neurotic symptoms, one has but to turn to Douglas' introduction.

The governess is twenty years old, and on taking service for the first time in her life, is fluttered and anxious; being young, untried, nervous, she has a vision of her prospective employment as one of serious duties, little company and great loneliness, but decides to accept the job, sacrificing herself to the reward of holding the hand of the man for whom she entertains a passion. It is neurotic evidence indeed, to "succumb to the seduction"<sup>2</sup> exercised by a man she has seen but twice.

1- Rosen, John, M.D., Direct Analysis, (N.Y.; Grone and Stratton, 1953) p. 310

2- James, Henry, The Turn of the Screw; N.Y.: New American Library, 1962, p. 293

The governess is in love with the bachelor from Harley Street; anticipating not only the critics', but also the readers' reaction to such a statement, James uses in referring to the governess' feelings towards the bachelor, the very strong word "passion."

One can only explain such a "passion" entertained towards a man she sees only twice, as a reaction to her sequestered background; she has led a "small, smothered life,"<sup>1</sup> she is "privately bred,"<sup>2</sup> she suffers the fate, well expounded by modern students of behavior and by theorists of personality, of the youngest daughter.

Accustomed to the narrowness of provincial outlook, she is "easily carried away"<sup>3</sup> and sets out to fulfill the task her employer has outlined, viewing it as a "magnificent chance"<sup>4</sup> to attract his attention by "giving pleasure - if he ever thought of it - to the person to whose pressure I had responded."<sup>5</sup>

Given all this background material, one can well accept the premise James asks us to build upon; the fact that the governess fell in love, at first sight, with the bachelor at Harley Street.

1- James, Henry, op. cit., p. 308

2- ibid. , p.310

3- ibid., p.301

4- ibid. , p. 326

5- ibid., p. 309

Katherine Anne Porter<sup>1</sup> says, "In her attempt to vindicate herself, she's doing the whole thing really at the expense of the children - I have always believed for the sake of destroying them, of putting them out of the way in some manner or other in order to clear a road to the master."

I believe the children are the road to the master, and the patient's - in this case the governess'-blocked wishes - to provoke a response, to "see the kind light of it in his handsome face"<sup>2</sup> - constitute the pressure from within that impels her to create "the fine machinery I had set in motion to attract his attention to my slight-ed charms,"<sup>3</sup> in other words, her delusions and hallucinations.

Dr. Arieti describes this situation as: "Another frequent occurrence which will make the defense of the schizoid personality, insufficient protection from anxiety, is the unexpected development of a friendship or of some social contact with a person; ... a more meaningful interpersonal relationship..."<sup>4</sup>

The governess' diary begins:

I remember the whole beginning as a succession of flights and drops, a little see-saw of the

1- Porter, Katherine Anne, Tate, Allen, Van Doren, Mark, "A Radio Symposium", The New Invitation to Learning, N.Y. Random House, Inc., 1942, p. 234

2- James, Henry, op. cit., p. 310

3- ibid., p. 354

4- Arietti, Silvano, M.D., Interpretation of Schizophrenia, N.Y.: Robert Brunner, 1955, p. 73

right throbs and the wrong. After rising, in town, to meet his appeal I had at all events a couple of very bad days - found all my doubts bristle again, felt indeed sure I had made a mistake. 1

This note is to be carried throughout the tale, following one of the symptoms of schizoid personalities; "they are very vulnerable; every little event has the power of unchaining a crisis. The life of these persons in general is a series of crises."<sup>2</sup> We see this reaction in both the governess' and Alice James' "case."

"Failure increases his feeling of inadequacy and predisposes him to subsequent failures."<sup>3</sup> This series of failures and a description of how unbearable ideas may give rise to hallucinatory psychoses was first described by Freud in 1894 and the dynamic interpretation of it in a paper written in 1896.

"The defense mechanisms become more and more incapable of coping with these situations ... finally the anxiety is experienced as actual panic, unless<sup>4</sup> other defenses, this time psychotic, are mobilized." The psychotic defenses the governess puts into action, bring on her seizures. It is more tolerable to her -

1- James, Henry, op. cit., p. 230

2- Arietti, op. cit., p. 77

3- ibid., p. 67

4- quoted in Arietti, op. cit., p. 69

in typical psychotic projection to hallucinate the figure of Peter Quint than that of the bachelor of Harley Street.

Compare the description of schizoid symptoms contained in Dr. Arietti's Interpretation of Schizophrenia:

They show an extreme resiliency, and seem able to recover strength, spirits and good humor easily. Generally, however, they do a poor job in covering up the underlying unrest with this gay, shallow and effervescent attitude. When they are in a good mood, they harbor grandiose phantasies. 1

to the end of the first chapter of The Turn of the Screw:

"I had the fancy of our being almost as lost as a handful of passengers in a great drifting ship. Well, I was strangely at the helm!"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Dr. Mira gives us as the general characteristics of the schizophrenic syndrome, "first, to be predominantly intuitive." The governess "feels," "believes," "doesn't know what is that strikes her as ambiguous," "supposes" her way through the story. James himself in the revision of The Turn of the Screw for inclusion

1-Arietti, op. cit., p. 78

2-James, Henry, op. cit., p. 237

3-Mira y Lopez, E., M.D., Manual de Psiquiatría, Buenos Aires; Editorial El Ateneo, 1943, p. 527

in the definitive edition, alters some of the instances where the governess reports things "seen", to a narrative of things felt and intuited.

The second symptom described by Dr. Mira, that of "offering a great symbolic richness and variety," points to an interesting study of the metaphors the governess employs. An exhaustive study of this temper is given further consideration in another chapter; here I will but give a few instances.

In speaking of "space, air and freedom" the governess compares these qualities to the "music of summer and the mystery of nature;"<sup>1</sup> the children were such cherubs that they had no moral bottom to whack; Bly is - and she herself admits it - just "a big, ugly, antique house" but she views it, for a moment, as "a castle of romance out of a story-book."<sup>2</sup>

Another point of correspondence with Dr. Mira's list of symptoms, is "an ambivalent conduct ... the patient laughs and cries, is happy and miserable, loves and dislikes, feels sick and healthy at the same time."<sup>3</sup>

1- James, Henry, op. cit., p. 253

2- James, Henry, ibid., p. 254

3- Mira y Lopez, E., op. cit., p. 536

The governess "catching my pupil in my arms, covered her with kisses in which there was a sob of atonement,"<sup>1</sup> her heart "had stood still with ... wonder and terror."<sup>2</sup> She speaks of "the moment so prolonged that it would have taken but little more to make me doubt if even I were in life."<sup>3</sup> Even Mrs. Gross at one point desperately exclaims: "Lord,<sup>4</sup> you do change!"

The schizophrenic, says Dr. Mira, "oscillates between hypo and hyperactivity, accompanied by changes of mood alternating between insipid, impertinent, gross joy and overwhelming anxiety and distress."<sup>5</sup> The governess replies to Mrs. Gross' "fine bold humor... with a laugh, a little silly doubtless;"<sup>6</sup> her "thrill of joy"<sup>7</sup> alternates with her "wildness of grief;" when the governess fancies the fact that Flora will "make me out to him the lowest creature" she laughs at the thought that her uncle "thinks well of you."<sup>8</sup>

1- James, Henry, op. cit., p. 314

2- ibid., p. 321

3- ibid., p. 318

4- ibid., p. 326

5- Mira, op. cit., p. 535

6- James, Henry, op. cit., p. 247

7- ibid., p. 258

8- James, Henry, ibid., p. 259



Many of the symptoms detailed above and corroborated throughout the governess' testimony, are listed by other psychiatrists treating the schizophrenic syndrome:

Schizophrenia is characterized by the progressive quality of the illness... by the vague, incongruous and strange thought... the patient's laughing and crying without apparent reason, excessive gesticulation, strange postures ... It appears predominantly in young adults.1

A disease usually having its onset in middle life between adolescence and the involuntional period (20-45 years of age) ... The condition is more common in women; deterioration does not take place ....2

Primary schizophrenics generally present the following symptoms; 1) augmented introspection to the point of anxiety for their own worth; 2) realization of the difference between their own interpretation of the relations of their environment; 3) presence of ideas of reference; 4) a fragile contact - though operative and effective - with their environment, allowing, under optimum circumstances, satisfactory relationships in home and work ... 7) purely subjective sensations 8) subconscious projections of shame, sensibility and introspective conduct. 3

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1- Marín, Contreras Ramos, Neurología, Psiquiatría y Neurocirugía; México; Pico Contreras, 1951, 2nd. ed., p. 463

2- Daniel McCarthy and Kenneth Corrin, eds., Medical Treatment of Mental Disease; N.Y.; Lippincott, 1955, p. 543

3- Orlando Battista, Drogas Mentales; México; Herrero Enos., 1962, p. 66

Should we take, one by one, the symptoms detailed by four different psychiatrists dealing in the symptomatology of schizophrenia, we would practically have a check list of the symptoms present in the governess' record of her feelings and sensations.

To sum up, the scant background material as to the governess' life before she came to Bly, points to the existence of childhood experiences conducive to a state of anxiety which breeds neurotic personalities. The emotional upheaval to which she is subjected upon accepting her employment, reactivates this childhood situation and her neurotic defenses are no longer adequate to ward off her unconscious strivings.

The record of her feelings is much more detailed than the background material offered by the author; thus we are able to find symptoms of the schizophrenic personality and through it we see the corresponding deterioration of neurotic adaptation and the unquestionable evidence of the necessity for the appearance of psychotic symptoms, id est, the governess' seizures.

## THE TENDENCY TO HALLUCINATE

Certain conditions promote or facilitate the tendency to hallucinations of any sense. The most important predisposing causes are affective conative conditions such as the influence of excitement and emotional tension, strained attention, strong suggestion and exhaustion. 1

Let us take these predisposing causes one by one and attempt to show that, in the case of the governess, they existed as promoting tendencies for the appearance of hallucinations.

It can be established that, previous to seven of eight seizures, the governess is in a state of "excitement and emotional tension." Before she sees Quint at the window, "I had more pains than one. I was in receipt in these days of disturbing letters from home, where things were not going well."<sup>2</sup>

Previous to her first hallucination of Miss Jessel, at the lake, the governess was "in a stifled suspense, a disguised excitement that might well, had it continued too long, have turned to something like madness."<sup>3</sup>

1- McCarthy, op. cit., p. 543.

2- James, op. cit., p. 247.

3- ibid., p. 258.

The fourth seizure - Quint at the stairs - is preceded by "the affair seems to me to have been all pure suffering," and she is "agitated."<sup>1</sup>

Before seeing Miss Jessel at the staircase, the governess is seen "stealing out" and taking "noiseless turns" in the corridor. Her encounter in the schoolroom with Miss Jessel is preceded by a very upsetting scene with Miles in the graveyard by the church, when she has made up her mind to run "desperately off" and has described her emotional state as "tormented."

Miss Jessel's second appearance at the lake is preceded by a record of "mute alarms"<sup>2</sup> at being unable to find Flora. The governess is excited at the anticipation of being able to prove both to herself and to others the reality of her hallucinations, for this is the only seizure in which an objective spectator is involved.

The governess' last seizure shows us a woman overcome by a sensation of "fighting with a demon for a human soul," and she expresses her excitement in "a moan of joy" and is "infatuated" and blind with victory."<sup>3</sup>

1- James, op.cit., p. 341

2- ibid., p. 365

3- ibid., p. 400

The Hypocrisy of Work

The second conative condition listed by Dr. McCarthy, is that of strained attention; in several of the hallucinatory experiences, just preceding the moment of perceiving the apparitions, the governess is engaged in some activity that affords this precipitative condition.

Before seeing Miss Jessel at the lake on the first occasion, the governess' eyes are "attached at this juncture to the stitching in which I was engaged."<sup>1</sup> Previous to the appearance of Quint at the staircase, she sat "reading by a couple of candles"<sup>2</sup> and before his last materialization, the governess "achieved a few loops of my knitting."<sup>3</sup>

As to the remaining seizures, the governess claims at one point in the story; "I had always my hypocrisy of 'work', behind which, now, I gained the sofa. Steadying myself with it there as I had repeatedly (italics mine) 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."<sup>4</sup>

1- James, op. cit., p. 327

2-ibid., p. 341

3-ibid., p. 397

4-ibid., p. 392

The Dreadful Liability of Depressions

Where hallucinations are persistent and strong, the natural inhibitions and control may be overcome or exhausted... This phenomenon occurs most frequently when the mind is active, fatigued and in a state of anticipation...<sup>1</sup>

The governess' self-suggestion invites the manifestation of the ghosts in several of the seizures. Her first encounter with Quint is the result of her thinking "someone would appear" and the "sense that my imagination had, in a flash, turned real."<sup>2</sup>

Hallucinations are perceptions formed without any readily apparent external sensory stimuli. In the psychoses... (the dream), this more socially acceptable reorientation to an anxiety-ridden reality is rejected; here elemental wishes break through into hallucinatory and delusional behaviour with only a thin veneer of displacements, condensations, projections and other defensive symbol-associations...<sup>3</sup>

Miss Jessel's figure at the lake follows upon the "conviction I, from one moment to another found myself forming as to what I should see straight before me and across the lake as a consequence of raising my eyes."<sup>4</sup>

1- McCarthy, op. cit., p. 543

2- James, op. cit., p. 310

3- Masserman, Jules, Principles of Dynamic Psychiatry; Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co., 1946, p. 72

4- James, op. cit., p. 394

"I waited and waited," and her wait was rewarded by the appearance of "something indefinably astir"<sup>1</sup> which took the form of Peter Quint at the staircase landing. The governess "expected to come upon Quint" and thus her expectation is not in vain; nor does it go unrewarded when "with revulsion, recalling that it was exactly where more than a month before... I had seen the specter of the most horrible of women,"<sup>2</sup> and Miss Jessel materializes at the governess' desk in the school room.

In so-called anticipatory illusions and hallucinations, a person in an intense emotional state - of fear for example - expects intentionally to see or hear the object that incites the panic; the result is that the perception, expected from one moment to the next with clearness, appears in a projected or hallucinatory manner....<sup>3</sup>

The governess, in her last seizure, is "prepared for the worst" and true to her expectations, Peter Quint - the demon - appears. The evilness of Quint "suits" the governess "only too well;" "by which I mean that it suited exactly the particular deadly view I was in the very act of forbidding myself to entertain."<sup>4</sup>

1- James, op. cit., p. 356

2- ibid., p. 365

3- Noyes, Arthur, M.D., Psiquiatría Clínica Moderna; México; Prensa Moderna Mexicana, 1951, p. 66

4- James, op. cit., p. 270

It May be Imagined Whether I Slept

Throughout the tale, the governess records that she has slept little, due to excitement and anxiety; she "is weary with vigils" and at last is able to sleep<sup>1</sup> only to "sit up straight as if a hand had roused me."

She spends her nights prowling, sleeps very little, is constantly watching and waiting for something to happen, claims at different moments in the story to exercise "my inexorable, my perpetual society" on children that are always restless, watching them "like a gaoler with an eye to possible surprises<sup>2</sup> and escapes."

This is in accord with the symptoms described by Dr. McCarthy of the schizophrenic temperament:

The person who tends to develop attacks is the active magnetic personality; he is liable to mental and physical exhaustion from overwork ... lack of rest and sleep, and emotional shock. When a mental break develops in this type of personality, acute excitement is the rule....<sup>3</sup>

Doctors Eugene R. Bliss, Lincoln D. Clark and Charles D. West, of the University of Utah, have found in interviewing patients suffering from psychotic

1- James, op. cit., p. 345

2- ibid., p. 359

3- McCarthy, op. cit., p. 516



disturbances, that they also suffer from grave insomnia.

"This lack of sleep, when it is combined with anxiety and isolation, may be a potential causator of hallucinations."<sup>1</sup>

In seizures three, four, five and seven, there is definite evidence that the governess has not slept before experiencing the hallucinations. I slept little, it gave me a second sleepless night, it may be imagined whether I slept, I had not gone to bed, you may imagine the general complexion from that moment of my nights, I repeatedly sat up till I didn't know when; these quotes by no means exhaust the report she makes throughout the tale of her insomnia.

As to anxiety, we have already run through a record of the governess' anxious states; and isolation is one of the motives that the bachelor expressly presents in their interview for the difficulty in obtaining a governess for his wards.

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1- Quoted in Battista, op. cit., p. 77

## BEWILDERMENT OF VISION

A great many hallucinations may be recognized by the fact that they cannot be described in such detail as a perception, says Dr. Ropp.<sup>1</sup> The governess' inability to express her sensations may be seen throughout the tale. After the first seizure, she says "There came to me thus a bewilderment of vision which, after these years there is no living view that I can hope to give."<sup>2</sup> In attempting to describe the object of her second hallucination, she can only mutter, "He's like nobody."

Dr. Bleuler describes the statements obtained from a great number of patients observed, and finds "the surprising characteristic of a difficulty of explaining their sensations during the acute state of hallucination, in normal language."<sup>3</sup>

In the governess' description of her sensation at the lake when she first encounters Miss Jessel is a rapid succession of the above-named "surprising characteristic." She says: "Nothing was more natural than these things should be the other things that they absolutely were not."<sup>4</sup> It is superfluous,

1- Ropp, Robert, Drugs and the Mind, (Mexico: Ed. Continental, 1960), p. 45.

2- James, op. cit., p. 242.

3- Bleuler, op. cit., p. 187.

4- James, op. cit., p. 341.

after reading this statement, to say that the governess can scarcely articulate.

Whenever she comes to a description of what the horrors looked like, where they seemed to come from, or into what they disappeared, she invariably uses the term "indescribable," or some akin statement.

"The hallucinating patient often uses the expression 'it appears' to be so, or 'it seems' to be, indicating that actually he realizes that he is feeling, or seeing, or interpreting situations differently from others." James himself, in his corrections for the New York edition of The Turn of the Screw, went through the text and added over and over these expressions, or variants of them, actually indicating his desire for a more ambiguous interpretation of his character's experiences, thus corroborating a later scientifically proven fact, by mirroring a reality he had vicariously taken part in.

Often the problem is not at all one of understanding our common language, but of misunderstanding. In other words, the personal problems of the patients make them give special meanings to what we say, or viceversa. 2

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1- C. John Campbell, M.D., Manic-Depressive Disease, Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1953) p. 161.

2- Arietti, op. cit., p. 444.

That poor Mrs. Gross misunderstands what the governess says most of the time is evident even to the governess.

To Contaminate ... To Corrupt

At one point in the tale, the governess realizes that "my big word left her at a loss," and goes on to explain her big word with another expression that is probably just as much beyond the housekeeper's vocabulary.

"Sometimes an exaggeratedly pedantic phraseology is employed, in which polysyllabic words are often used without any regard for their precise meaning."<sup>1</sup>

Pedantic phraseology indeed, in speaking of Miss Jessel being "infamous" when, by definition, infamous signifies - in its primary meaning - of bad report, and earlier in the story the governess reports that "no disconcerting legend, no perturbation ... had ever, within any one's memory, attached to the kind old place. It had neither bad name nor ill fame."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the governess employs this word in its second meaning, "causing or producing infamy," yet even this second meaning is qualified by Webster. The entire second acceptance is "causing or producing infamy; scandalous to the last degree." Surely Mrs. Gross has not been able to

1- Hart, op. cit., p. 53.

2- James, op. cit., p. 243.

grasp the governess' meaning, nor does the governess employ the word with "any regard for its precise meaning."

The schizophrenic may use a pedantic, high-sounding, fatuous, uncommon tone... his style of expression is generally extravagant, complicated and artificial... on occasions the patient avoids the creation of a neologism, the constrained use of a known word...1

The governess "style and tone" would certainly fit Dr. Mira's description of the schizophrenic use of language.

Critics of this point and of James' style in general, will argue that most of James' production is wordy and uses pedantic phraseology; this may to a certain point be true, for James is famous for his compact sentences, and a highly refined vocabulary that demands the reader's complete attention. But, first person narratives are always in the peculiar style with which the author wishes to characterize his creations; characterization by language is one of James' most heavily - relied-upon techniques.

That Kind of Measure Must Have Left Me

Early in her account the governess warns us: "The great question, or one of these (incidentally, what are the other questions?), is afterward, I know,

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1- Mira, op. cit., p. 520.

with regard to certain matters, the question of how long they have lasted,"<sup>1</sup> and after the second seizure, "I can call it time, but how long was it? I can't speak to the purpose today of the duration of these things. That kind of measure must have left me."<sup>2</sup>

That the loss of the measure of time is another psychotic symptom is proven by Dr. Balkeni's findings<sup>3</sup> in her study with the Thematic Apperception Test; she found that the schizophrenic does not distinguish the passage of time. Also, in a study by doctors Bliss, Clark and West, it was found that mental alterations were accompanied by an impossibility to judge the passage of time.<sup>4</sup>

Parallel are the descriptions found in the reports of investigators of hallucinatory drugs: "Time meant nothing to me. Under normal conditions I would have found this humiliating, but not on this occasion. I could establish proper perspective neither of distance nor time."<sup>5</sup> "However, my sense of time became distorted:

1- James, Henry, op. cit., p. 243.

2- ibid., p. 248.

3- Balkeni, E.R., "A Delineation of Schizophrenic Language and Thought in a Test of Imagination," in Journal of Psychology, 16: 239, 1943.

4- quoted in Battista, op. cit., p. 77.

5- Ropp, op. cit., p. 145.

time slowed down or accelerated - or seemed even to  
be abolished."<sup>1</sup>

### Gust of Frozen Air

The governess experiences three distinct sensations paralleled in several of the seizures and described by her as 1) the absence of sound, present in every seizure but the fifth; 2) a feeling of cold, in hallucinatory experiences two, four, six, seven and eight; and 3) an intense reaction immediately following such experiences.

Several doctors studying the physical reactions of schizophrenics have found that one of the metabolic peculiarities present in these patients is a tendency to extreme cold. A few of the instances of reports of this nature will suffice:

Schizophrenia is a mental and physical illness; some of its manifestations on the body are as important as the mental symptoms. The body's internal equilibrium is out of kilter; the extremities of the schizophrenic patient are cold and cyanosed, indicating the existence of disturbances in the autonomous nervous system that regulates the distribution of blood. 2

1- Stoll, W. A., "Lysergsanse-diathylamid, ein Phantastikum aus der Mutterkorngruppe," in The Relation of Psychiatry to Pharmacology, (Baltimore: Waverly, 1957).

2- Ropp, op. cit., p. 141.

<sup>1</sup>  
Dr. Shattock who has studied intensely the vascular conditions of schizophrenics, found that, at room temperature cyanosis of the extremities was present in 43 per cent of 220 female psychotics and that the average temperature of the hands and feet of female schizophrenics was significantly lower than that of female affective psychotics.

Dr. Contreras Ramos lists the following physical symptoms present in schizophrenic patients he has treated: vertigo, hysteriform and/or epileptiform crises, pupilar dilatation and extreme cold in hands and feet.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Arietti condenses the results of the work of various investigators in the field of physical symptoms in schizophrenia and summarizes:

An alteration which has interested many authors is the exaggerated tendency towards vasoconstriction found in all vessels... Abramson found excessive vasoconstriction in schizophrenics exposed to cold temperatures. Jung and Carmichael, Minski, and others have found vasomotor disturbances leading to cyanosis.... The vasoconstriction which is found in many schizophrenics seems to have the main purpose of preventing dispersion of heat... The fact that several authors have found these symptoms, including the hypoplasia of the

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1- M.F. Shattock, "The Somatic Manifestations of Schizophrenia, A Clinical Study of Their Significance," in Journal of Mental Science 96: 32, 1950.

2- Contreras Ramos, op. cit., p. 493.



heart, diminishing or disappearing at remission, seems a strong indication that these symptoms are functional, not based on a congenital defect. 1

Incidentally, Alice James speaks of the added<sup>2</sup> endowment of a cardiac complication.

Investigators in the field of experimental psychiatry claim that hallucinogen drugs produce in neurotic and normal individuals "model psychoses,"<sup>3</sup> and many of the symptoms found in records of patients experiencing spontaneous hallucinations are paralleled under the drug. Some of these symptoms are the loss of a sensation of time and fears of insanity; for example the following description of the Swiss chemist, Dr. Hoffman: "I lost all control of time; space and time became more and more disorganized and I was overcome<sup>4</sup> with fears that I was going crazy."

In the prologue to the published case history from which I have selected passages to corroborate the sensations of cold and the absence of sound in the governess' seizures, Dr. Sandison writes: "In review, this book bears the stamp of authenticity, and its

1- Arietti, op. cit., pp. 391-5

2- Alice James, op. cit., p. 207

3- Harry Pennes, E., "Clinical Experiences with New Hallucinations," in Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 1957.

4- quoted in Ropp, op. cit., p. 148.

pages reveal situations and material which are very familiar to psycholytic therapists."<sup>1</sup>

The patient describes her sensations during her first experience with LSD: "My teeth began to chatter. Why? Because I was cold. Suddenly, unexpectedly I was very cold. Through my chattering teeth I told Dr. M. that I was freezing and would like a blanket."<sup>2</sup> A comparison of this patient's experience in a model psychosis - which later produced hallucinations - to the record of the governess' description is fascinating: "As I met him, I felt myself catch my breath and turn cold"; "I flashed into ice"; "a gust of frozen air."

The patient's second encounter with LSD brought the following sensations: "I felt I was being swept down into some nameless heavy atmosphere where there were no words or sounds. I saw that gray-black limbo."<sup>3</sup> The governess: "I can hear again, as I write, the intense hush in which the sounds of evening dropped," "but it was all done in a silence by this time flagrantly ominous."

Another interesting point Dr. Arietti brings

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1- Constance Newland, Myself and I, (N.Y.: Signet, New American Library, 1962) p. 15.

2- ibid., p. 50.

3- ibid., p. 70.

of the general feeling of "something in the air" which, beside pointing up his magnificent ability of reproducing the "feel" and the atmosphere as well as the tone of the setting in which these encounters takes place, reproduces once more a schizophrenic symptom.

The hallucinations of the various senses frequently combine with one another; thus one sees and/or hears a man, and feels his influence. 1

The governess "became aware that, on the other side of the Sea of Azof, we had an interested spectator... I began to take in with certitude, and yet without direct vision, the presence, at a distance, of a third person."<sup>2</sup> She repeatedly describes the "feeling" of the ghosts' influence: "The faint sense of there being something indefinably astir in the house," "there were times of our being together when I would have been ready to swear that, literally, in my presence, but with my direct sense of it closed, they had visitors."

The "states of the air, conditions of sound and stillness, unspeakable impressions of the kind of ministering moment" which heralded the apparitions, are present at every moment in the story, interspersed with the contrast in light of the moments when she is

1- Bleuler, op. cit., p. 187.

2- Henry James, op. cit., p. 259.

free from her persecutors, or planning for their next presentation.

Restless Reading into Facts

"In the process of demonstrating something," says Dr. Arietti, "the patient chooses only those possibilities which lead to the conclusion he has anticipated and wished."<sup>1</sup>

The governess demonstrates the practice of using only that which she needs to support her premises and turn them into established facts, throughout the story. When she reports to Mrs. Gross that Miles has been "expelled," and the headmaster's regret that Miles cannot be kept at school any longer is converted into "that can only have one meaning,"<sup>2</sup> she builds an entire case upon this false premise.

Our preceptress manages, after one night of "raking it over,"<sup>3</sup> to "read into the facts"<sup>4</sup> - with her peculiar focus, naturally - to give her preternatural communications all the meaning they are to receive in "subsequent and more cruel occurrences."<sup>5</sup> In other words, by the time Quint has made himself apparent to her for the second time, she fully expects to extend

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1- Arietti, op. cit., p. 214.

2- James, op. cit., p. 243.

3- ibid., p. 248

4- ibid..

5- ibid.

her acquaintance with her supernatural persecutor.

A much more eloquent instance of this "reading into facts" is the governess' filling in of the blanks which James, with artistic dexterity, has conveniently scattered throughout ambiguous passages.

Dr. Bleuler has described this schizophrenic system of zerfahrenheit: "one can see the sudden interruption of the train of thought ... with the peculiarity that it is not only the verbal symbol that is missing, but the proper meaningful link ... and strange association of meanings arises."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Bumke has pointed out another symptom which is present at the onset of the psychotic break, that of the loss of elasticity in the trend of thought, in which the 'stream of consciousness' becomes rigid and uninfluenced by the objections of the interlocutor.<sup>2</sup> Parallel to this phenomenon, Dr. Ghrule points out the excessive adhesion to the same subject.

Examples of this obsessive return to the subject may be seen in the governess' exclamation that, in spite of "rigid control .. yet how often and how passionately, for a week, we came back together to the subject!"<sup>3</sup>

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1- Mira, op. cit., p. 514.

2- ibid., p. 515.

3- James, op. cit., p. 352.

As Dr. Arietti points out, "these patients may speak exclusively about their delusional complexes .... They remain fanatically and exclusively interested in their complexes and refuse to talk about anything else."<sup>1</sup>

Fantastic interest indeed, that which prompts the governess to repeat to Mrs. Gross "over and over", "to recapitulate", "to indulge in this review", "to re-enumerate", "to quaver out again the reasons", "to be obliged to reinvestigate the inconceivable communion to which she was a party."

To Keep Up the Work of Demons

The governess informs Mrs. Gross that Quint's and Miss Jessel's intentions towards the children are to "ply them with that evil still, to keep up the work of demons."<sup>2</sup>

This declaration may also be traced to typical schizophrenic logic; as Dr. Arietti points out:

Logical reinforcement of delusional and paleological material at times reaches fantastic heights.... In past centuries, psychotics explained their hallucinatory phenomena in terms of magic, sorcery, spiritism, etc.<sup>3</sup>

1- Arietti, op. cit., p. 447.

2- James, op. cit., p. 285.

3- Arietti, op. cit., p.333.

and Dr. McCarthy echoes:

Often hallucinations are strong and force themselves constantly upon the attention of the patient. He may develop the belief that he is the victim of some demoniacal or abnormal force. 1

This symptom is described by many other psychiatrists, such as Dr. Hart and Dr. Mira:

The patient has some secret desire which is repugnant to the personality, perhaps because it is incompatible with the individual's general principles or trends of thought. The mind therefore refuses to treat the desire as part of itself, and projects it into some other real or fictitious person, who then becomes an enemy striving to achieve the patient's downfall. 2

The delusion of persecution is the most frequent among the delusions...it gives form to the fear that something is trying to punish the patient for evil thoughts. 3

Thus we find in the governess the necessary reinforcement for her hallucinations in a manner that is acceptable to her time and that would find an echo in the simple superstitious mind of the housekeeper.

1- McCarthy, op. cit., p. 543.

2- Hart, Bernard, The Psychology of Insanity, (N.Y.: The Macmillan Co., 1948) 4th Ed., p. 134.

3- Mira, op. cit., p. 146.



## MAD AS THAT SEEMS

The governess records that Mrs. Gross believes her testimony without "directly impugning my sanity" and the reader cannot help but wonder if there has existed the feeling of an indirect impugnation.

Speaking of hallucinating patients, Campbell records, "Their speech often pertains to 'crazy people', denials of insanity and other related subjects."<sup>1</sup>

The following are quotations from the governess' manuscript: "There was but one sane inference," "I was queer company enough," "I began to watch them in a stifled suspense, a disguised excitement that might well, had it continued too long, have turned to something like madness." There are many others, always pertaining to allusions of insanity.

"Schizophrenic patients are usually aware that they are sick," says Dr. Arietti;<sup>2</sup> the governess repeatedly speaks about "my agitation," "my delusion," "my obsession," "my equilibrium," "my tension"; "I go on, I know, as if I were crazy," "Yes, mad as that seems."

"The patient is confused, disturbed, and afraid that he is becoming insane. It is almost as if he were fighting against this tendency to become mentally ill.

1- Campbell, op. cit., p. 162.

2- Arietti, op. cit., p. 340.

A little later he is afraid that people will recognize that he is becoming insane.<sup>1</sup> By chapter twelve, the governess is evidently at this stage of her illness, when she questions Mrs. Gross as to the inference that Flora and Miles are mad; "And if I am myself, you mean?"

"Schizophrenics who are recovering start to doubt the reality of their hallucinations... generally, however, the schizophrenic has no insight into the pathological nature of his hallucinations."<sup>2</sup> This pattern is closely followed in the observation the governess makes at the end of the tale:

I seemed to float not into clearness, but into a darker obscure, and within a minute there had come to me out of my very pity the appalling alarm of his being perhaps innocent. It was for the instant confounding and bottom-less, for if he were innocent, what then on earth was I? <sup>3</sup>

#### The Expiatory Victim

These patients, at times, feel that they are or<sup>4</sup> may become responsible for all the evils of the world," reads like the scientific description of the governess'

1- Arietti, op. cit., 327.

2- ibid., p. 253.

3- Henry, James, op. cit., 335.

4- Arietti, op. cit., p. 339.

lamentation:" 'I don't do it!' I sobbed in despair: 'I don't save or shield them! It's far worse than I dreamed. They're lost!'"

"The patient feels free to attribute to himself those attitudes and roles that he wished to give to himself in the past, but could not, because of the checking influence of the surrounding world."<sup>1</sup> Now the governess can, adding one more symptom to the growing list, give herself the role of martyr, heroine and saint all rolled into one heroic young woman.

I was in these days literally able to find a joy in the extraordinary flight of heroism the occasion demanded of me. I now saw that I had been asked for a service admirable and difficult; and there would be a greatness in letting it be seen-- oh in the right quarter! - ... I was there to protect and defend the little creatures in the world the most bereaved and the most loveable... We were cut off, really, together, we were united in our danger. 2

Dr. McCarthy calls this type of schizophrenics the leaders without the real ability to lead, but who push themselves forward with dire consequences to themselves and to others.<sup>3</sup> Dire consequences indeed: of the ship at whose helm she has fancied herself, the governess

1- Arietti, op. cit., p. 303.

2- Henry, James, op. cit., p. 258.

3- McCarthy, op. cit., p. 332.

has managed to destroy Miles, severely injure Flora and in general annihilate the household which had been placed in her charge.

Liking to Feel Her Close to Me

At various points in the story Henry James presents the governess' need for physical contact. When she isn't grabbing the housekeeper by the arm, she has her "literally, well in hand," or is reaching out to feel her close; this too, is paralleled in schizophrenic patients, who are always very much in need of physical closeness.

The patient is very much in need of closeness, even in a physical sense... 1

The therapeutic assistant should always be there, near the patient, as a person on whom the patient may depend whenever he needs to; he should provide concrete availability. By this I mean that the patient must be able to rely on him, not as an image of a distant potential or magic helper, but as a person who is there in physical proximity. 2

Yes, both Mrs. Gross and the children in her charge, play the "therapeutic assistant" role in the governess "case".

1- Arietti, op. cit., p. 437.

2- ibid., p. 468.

### The Vacant Mooring-Place

The last point I wish to discuss, as far as schizophrenic patterns are concerned, is that of so-called negative hallucinations. Dr. Thomas Cranfill in his discussion of The Turn of the Screw points this hypothesis out, and I have found corroboration in Dr. Bleuler of the existence of this unusual, but possible occurrence.

In turning to the incident of Miss Jessel's second materialization by the lake, we find the plot interrupted by an unusually extensive - for James - description of the natural setting. Even a slight acquaintance with James' production will convince the reader that every word included in his narrations has a bearing on the direction the path his tales are to lead us on; there is no superfluous vocable in James' writing.

Therefore we must assume that there is a point to the minute description of the "lake"; this point, according to Dr. Cranfill is to demonstrate that the boat Flora is supposed to have rowed across to meet Miss Jessel, is at the habitual mooring place, and the governess does not see it. (See Chapter IX of An Anatomy of The Turn of the Screw for Cranfill's discussion of this incident.)

Dr. Bleuler in his Textbook of Psychiatry informs us that "negative hallucinations - or not to perceive an object accessible to our sense - are rare occurrences in pathology, but they are easily produced

in a state of hypnosis through suggestion." <sup>1</sup> Shades of the "hypnotic Tuckey" in Alice's diary?

In reviewing the symptoms with which I have dealt in this chapter, that the governess presents throughout The Turn of the Screw, we find that: she presents neurotic symptoms (her life seems to be a series of crises, she is very nervous) which due to precipitating factors (her passion for the children's uncle, the great loneliness she is subjected to, the inner pressure for a job well-done) turn into manifest psychotic symptoms.

The psychotic symptoms which the governess presents are: an oscillation between hypo and hyperactivity; anxiety for her own worth (alternating between a feeling of guilt (the expiatory victim) and a feeling of total accomplishment of a unique responsibility (the martyr); a realization of the difference of her interpretation of others; a subjective preoccupation with her sanity; and intense need for physical contact.

At the onset of the psychotic break, the symptoms seek an outlet to relieve the pressure of emotional upheaval: the materialization of ideas of reference into external "reality". Thus the ghosts are brought into the picture by her hallucinating mind. The outlet

1- Bleuler, op. cit., p. 65.

for pressure sought by the governess is predisposed by the conditions of emotional tension, strained attention, strong suggestion and exhaustion.

## GHOSTS VIVISECTED

The proof that both the governess, and her critical defense attorneys, the apparitionists, give of the reality of her testimony as valid objective fact, versus that of the non-apparitionists, that of the subjective creation of psychotic impulses, is her definitive description of Quint, and Mrs. Gross' identification of the horror.

The recognition scene, of which apparitionists have made so much, is based on descriptions that have no factual nor exclusive bases. The governess sketches in a picture of Quint at the tower only after she has seen him a second time, at the window.

The facts the governess supplies are; "He's like nobody," "he has no hat," "he gives me sort of sense of looking like an actor ... I've never seen one, but so I suppose them."<sup>1</sup> "He's not a gentleman... (he's dressed) in somebody's clothes."<sup>2</sup>

Are any of these characteristics enough to draw a picture on? Such scant information, supplied piece-meal, according to the reaction provoked by each statement, would certainly be denied the title of evidence.

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1- James, Henry, op. cit., p. 320

2- ibid., p. 321



After giving the primordial fact upon which the supposed identification is based - that the apparition wore no hat - the governess records: "Then seeing in her face that she already, in this with a deeper dismay, found a touch of picture, I quickly added stroke to stroke."<sup>1</sup>

As to the only definite characteristics of the apparition which the governess "sketches" in, we know that Flora has played cicerone on the tour of Bly; "step by step and room by room and secret by secret."<sup>2</sup> Knowing the governess' "morbid curiosity," can one wonder if she has questioned Flora about her predecessor and the master's valet?

It may be objected that the governess has made it a point throughout the story, never to mention the names of the previous servants; however, at the lake, upon the governess' insistence that Flora sees Miss Jessel,<sup>3</sup> the harassed little girl answers, "I never have," suggesting that she must have been queried on the subject earlier.

Alexander E. Jones offers the hypothesis that "if the governess had a normal amount of feminine 'clothes sense', it would be quite natural for her to detect a

1- James, Henry, op. cit., p. 320

2- ibid., p. 302

3- ibid., p. 382

lack of harmony between the intruder's apparel and his general personality." <sup>1</sup> Can we really suppose a girl from a small vicarage town, with a sequestered upbringing, who has never seen an actor, to possess "clothes sense?"

So much for the logical interpretation on which an acquittal of the impugnation of the governess' sanity stands.

As for the modern scientific explanation of the "portrait instantly recognized," we must turn to a description of schizophrenic thought, supplied by psychiatrists.

Like dreamers, at times the patients often hallucinate only what matters to them; they can see a part of a body and then rather imagine the person to whom it belongs than perceive him. <sup>2</sup>

In dreams and hallucinations, the individual may perceive things which actually do not exist; in these cases, the images are made up, in a creative way, with elements which were actually perceived from the external world. <sup>3</sup>

From this we can suppose that the governess, in seeing a dimly perceived shadow, expecting to come upon the master, and needing to project this expectation,

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1- Jones, Alexander E., "Point of View in the Turn of the Screw," PMLA, LXXIV (March, 1959) p. 114

2- Bleuler, Eugene, Textbook of Psychiatry; N.Y.: The Macmillan Co., 1939, 6th edition, p. 187

3- Arietti, op. cit., p. 247

has given roundness to an insubstantial image by filling it in with characteristics culled from her previous experience. This might explain how the governess has formed Quint, but how does she manage to give a description of this apparition which Mrs. Gross can recognize.

In explaining the disturbances of schizophrenic thought which might clarify the "recognition scene," psychiatrists overflow into several chapters of description which I will attempt to summarize.

Whereas the person employing Aristotelian logic accepts identity only upon the basis of identical <sup>1</sup> predicates. In transposing Von Domarus' principle to lay language, it is necessary to explain the terms.

Paleologic is a reversion to primitive logic and represents the peculiar form of thought employed by some normal persons in association of ideas, but especially in schizophrenic trend of thought. A predicate is that which, by definition, concerns the subject.

That ideas associate is evident; but in what manner are ideas associated? In normal individuals, the association takes place in two predominant manners:

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1- Von Domarus, E., "The Specific Laws of Logic in Schizophrenia," in Language and Thought in Schizophrenia; Collected Papers, Univ. of Calif. Press, 1944, p. 194

the law of similarity and the law of contiguity. The first law states "that if two mental representations resemble each other, that is, if they have one or more characteristics in common, the occurrence of one of them tends also to elicit the occurrence of the other."<sup>1</sup> The second law proposes that "when two mental processes have been active together or in immediate succession, one of them on recurring tends to elicit the recurrence of the other."<sup>2</sup>

In the schizophrenic frame of reference, ideas still tend to associate by similarity, but by a similarity connected by a predicate of verbal quality. In other words, the governess supposes that Quint looks like an actor, although she has never seen one, because she associates the term actor with evil. Evil is practically synonymous - to a parson's daughter in the 1850's - to anyone connected with the theater.

The housekeeper, in turn, simple plain wholesome woman that she is, associates actor, not a gentleman and evil through their predicates of quality to the man who, in her view, embodied these characteristics so intensely. Also, by the law of contiguity,

1- Arietti, op. cit., p. 255

2- ibid.

she supposes that if an evil spirit dwelled at Bly, it would be that of Quint.

Interestingly enough, it was William James who, in his Principles of Psychology, stated that association by similarity is generally found in a larger percentage in gifted individuals, while association by contiguity occurs most often in non-gifted and non-educated individuals.

Thus we see that Mrs. Gross' "recognition" of Quint from the governess' description is not acceptable as indubitable proof of the ghost's identity. The basic premise - that the governess, upon seeing Quint, perceives external reality - is subject to doubt; therefore the assumptions based on this premise are inaccurate.

The housekeeper "recognizes" Quint from the governess' description by a complicated mental process that is rather common and in legal terms might be labeled circumstantial evidence.

## MORE THAN ORDINARY SPEECH

The reader's interpretation may differ from the author's and be equally valid - it may even be better. There may be much more in a poem than the author was aware of. The different interpretations may all be partial formulations of one thing; the ambiguities may be due to the fact that the poem means more, not less, than ordinary speech can communicate. 1

This may be applied to all literature, not only to poetry; it is in the metaphoric language that the reader may get a glimpse into both his and the author's "deep well of unconscious cerebration."<sup>2</sup>

This view, applied particularly to The Turn of the Screw offers us an interesting focus of the main character's mental patterns as well as a more analytical insight into James' conscious and subconscious aim in writing this story.

I have dealt at some length with the language the governess employs in disclosing her symptoms; one chapter has been exclusively devoted to her preoccupation with sanity; another chapter deals with her neurotic manifestations through the language she employs of obsessions, gruesome fancies, infernal imagination; moreover I have pointed out her grandiose phantasies of being at the helm of a great drifting ship, of being a

1- T. S. Eliot, Selected Prose, "The Music of Poetry", Middlesex, England, Faber and Faber, 1953, p. 55.

2- Edel, Leon, ed., Ghostly Tales of Henry James, quoted in the introduction, N.Y.: Grosset & Dunlap, 1949, p. 216.

sister of Charity.

In the metaphoric language James' creation employs, there are besides unavoidable evidence of the governess' experiences before, during and after each hallucination, several instances of James' intention.

The governess' sensual manifestations are of primordial importance in a critical analysis: her eyes are constantly subjected to exercise, therefore it is interesting to note the metaphor with which the record opens: "I remember the whole beginning as ... a little see-saw;<sup>1</sup>" is the governess merely referring to the metaphorical object, or is she questioning her visual reproduction? Again and again we find a confusion of the senses, such as when the "overwhelming presence ... filled the room like the taste of poison."<sup>2</sup> Does the ghost present itself in a visual, sensual or taste hallucination? This confusion is repeated several times, as when she speaks of "a sound ... that I drank like a waft of fragrance."<sup>3</sup> Does she hear, taste or smell this sound?

James goes to elaborate pains to let us know that Mrs. Gross doesn't know how to read - we learn of her illiteracy when the governess attempts to show her the letter from Miles' school-master and it is reconfirmed

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1- Edsel, Leon, ed., The Ghostly Tales of Henry James, "The Turn of the Screw", N.Y., Grosset & Dunlap, 1949, p. 230.

2- ibid., p. 336.

3- ibid., p. 332.

when the housekeeper informs the governess that she will ask the bailiff to write a letter for her to the children's uncle. Yet, at one point, the governess records that Mrs. Gross "could see what I myself saw - as one woman reads another."<sup>1</sup>

In listing the figurative language the governess employs one can divide the metaphors - not taking into account those already mentioned - into two great divisions of context: aggressive and sick. In showing her aggressivity, the governess runs the gamut from "attacking the missive"<sup>2</sup> to "fighters not daring to come close,"<sup>3</sup> passing through such similes as viewing herself as a "gaoler" "marshalling" the children, avoiding the "danger of rebellion,"<sup>4</sup> by "girding her loins" and evading the "glitter of a drawn blade,"<sup>5</sup> The metaphors of sickness include her visions of Miles "as some wistful patient in a children's hospital;"<sup>6</sup> her feeling of "a sick swim at the drop of my victory,"<sup>7</sup>

1- Edel, Leon, op. cit., p. 287.

2- ibid., p. 234.

3- ibid., p. 331.

4- ibid., p. 292.

5- ibid., p. 303.

6- ibid., p. 336.

7- ibid., p. 236.



or a "curiosity that deepens to pain."<sup>1</sup>

Another Interesting metaphorical direction as to James' intention in presenting the ghosts, is at the end of the tale, when Miles screams: "Peter Quint - you devil!" Apparitionists claim that this exclamation is directed wholly to the ghost (the one Miles cannot see) but I join the files of the non-apparitionists in claiming that the dash indicates that the second part of the sentence is addressed to the governess. In the following paragraph, Henry James supports this claim in saying that this exclamation was "the supreme surrender of the name (Peter Quint) and his tribute to my devotion (you devil)."<sup>2</sup>

That the governess realizes her assumptions and inferences of the situation she is experiencing are not objectively normal, is attested to by her constant references to the "monstrous", "unnatural" or "revolt-<sup>3</sup>ingly against nature" character of her hallucinations. Not only does she realize that if Miles "were innocent, what then was I?" but she is constantly seeking justifica-<sup>4</sup>tion: "I was neither cruel nor mad - I was justified;"

1- Edell, Leon, op. cit., p. 237.

2- James, Henry, op. cit., p. 337.

3- ibid., p. 326.

4- ibid., p. 314.

"it justifies me,"<sup>1</sup> "I was tranquil and justified."<sup>2</sup>

We see the typical displacement of importance found in unbalanced people, in the governess' self-debate, the Sunday before Miles' death. She faces the dilemma: should she leave or stay? When weighing pro and con arguments, she doesn't balance what she has constantly felt to be the main motive for her actions - protecting the children from the ghosts; she doesn't worry about what will happen to the children when she is gone, but is merely concerned with getting "off without a scene, without a word."<sup>3</sup> The factor that turns the scales towards a decision to remain is merely the "great question of a conveyance."<sup>4</sup>

The extent of the governess' unbalance is proven by the metaphor James employs at the close of chapter XXII. Miles and the governess "continued silent while the maid was with us" and it occurs to the governess that she and Miles are "silent, as some young couple who, on their wedding-journey, at the inn, feel shy in the presence of the waiter."<sup>5</sup> Immediately

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1- James, Henry, op. cit., p. 322.

2- ibid., p. 241.

3- ibid., p. 298.

4- ibid.

5- ibid., p. 328.

after she has recorded that a maid is waiting their table, and she has written down the association this brought forth in her mind, as to a waiter at a wedding-journey inn, the governess records: "He turned round only when the waiter (*italics mine*) had left us." Her association is thus recorded as an objective fact, although it is objectively erroneous!

## CONCLUSION

My endeavor in this paper to prove, that the ghosts presented to us by Henry James in The Turn of the Screw, are the phantoms produced by the governess' diseased mind, is a three-pronged approach. James consciously intended to present the record of a woman's hallucinations; family papers prove that Alice James suffered a type of mental illness that, in all probability, manifested itself in hallucinating symptoms. Henry James was intimately cognizant of these symptoms, and through them developed an interest in reading the scientific literature of the time - available to him through his brother's work - and thus was able to base the presentation of those symptoms on medical findings.

In the second chapter I have supplied proof through quotes from his letters that, although James denied his absorbing interest in the tale I have analyzed, it was an attempt to disguise his true feelings concerning the subject with which he dealt in The Turn of the Screw.

In the third chapter I have proven that the material existent before the writing of the nouvelle was, if not as extensive as that available on the subject of schizophrenia nowadays, sufficient, together with close personal observation, to afford an artistic

craftsman such as Henry James adequate tools for the veracious carving of his oeuvre. I wish to recapitulate what this scientific material was: Kahibaum's study of auditory hallucinations and persecutory delusions in 1874; William James' Principles of Psychology in 1890; the publication of F. W. Myers' papers in the SPR Proceedings, as well as his book on hallucinations in 1892; Kraepelin's study of dementia praecox, later termed schizophrenia, in 1893; F. W. Myers' reading of Freud and Breuer's "Preliminary Communication" and its subsequent publication in the SPR Proceedings in 1893; Breuer and Freud's Studies in Hysteria in 1895; Freud's "Defense Neuro-Psychoses" in 1894, his "Further Remarks on the Defense Neuro-Psychoses" in 1896. William James' experiment with hallucinogens in 1896, his Lowell Institute Lectures on "Abnormal Mental States" in 1896-7 and the publication of The Will to Believe (including "What Psychological Research Has Accomplished") in 1897; not to mention the extensive work done earlier by the pioneers in the study of mental abnormalities, who had been William James' teachers, Charcot and Janet.

The fourth and fifth chapters deal exclusively with Alice James' symptoms - what little is available in published form - and the fifth chapter with the

difficulty of corroborating these symptoms exoterically.

The subsequent chapters deal with the manifestations of schizophrenia as viewed through the governess' manuscript. I present the corroboration through quotes from The Turn of the Screw of the following symptoms: neurotic manifestations of anxiety, tension, blocked wishes, ambivalent conduct, emotional upheaval; precipitative conditions of hallucination such as excitement, strained attention, suggestion and insomnia; use of paleologic and paleosymbols in the descriptions, reading into facts, converting speculation into certainty, fanatical interest in delusions, fantasies of demoniacal possession; inability to describe sensations, use of pedantic phraseology, loss of measure of time, sensations of cold and absence of sound; denials of insanity and excessive preoccupation with sanity, delusions of grandeur, need for close physical contact, lies about the hallucinations, possible existence of negative hallucinations. An impressive list indeed!

The governess closely follows the sequence of stages found in schizophrenia as it progresses: first, a period of intense anxiety and panic; second, a period of confusion, when ~~everything seems~~ strange and crazy; and third, a period of psychotic insight.

One point remains to be cleared up, if this sequence of stages of the progression of the governess' illness is accepted. How, if the governess is a schizophrenic, can she become "the most charming woman" Douglas has ever known, twenty years later? Dr. Arietti, although qualifying that the course of each case is unpredictable, declares that "it has been found that a certain group of symptoms and factors tend to occur more frequently in patients who recover."<sup>1</sup> Conscious anxiety, depression and the ability to lie about the delusions, are some of the favorable prognostic criteria; all these criteria are found in the governess' testimony.

The last chapter presents a critical analysis of the figures of speech employed by the governess - in an attempt to show James at work in his purely literary medium.

If such an impressive confrontation of facts has not sufficed as proof for the annulment of the apparitionist point of view of The Turn of the Screw, I can but join William James in saying:

Some minds would see a marvel in the simplest hypnosis - others would refuse to admit that there was anything new even if one rose from the dead.... Of these minds one pursues idols of the tribe, another of the cave. Both may be right in respect to a portion of the fact. I myself have no question that the formula of dissociated personality will account for the phenomena I have brought

<sup>1</sup>- Arietti, op. cit., p. 334.

before you. Hypnotism is sleep. Hysteria is obsession, not by demons, but by a fixed idea of the person that has dropt down - Janet's phrase suffices here. But to say that is one thing and to deny any other range of phenomena is another.

Whether supernormal powers of cognition in certain persons may occur, is a matter to be decided by evidence. If they can occur, it may be that there must be a chink.... So alternate personality, the tendency for the self to break up, may, if there be spirit influences, yield them their opportunity ... and if there were real demons, they might possess only hysterics. 1

but with the certainty derived from the results of fifty years of research into the abnormal states of mind that demons - and ghosts - possess only hysterics, the pitiful mentally ill who suffer hallucinations.

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1- Ralph Barton Perry, The Thought and Character of Wm. James, in 2 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1936) Volume II, p. 169.



APPENDIX

THE HOUGHTON LIBRARY  
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9 August 1965

Miss Norma Kriegerman  
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Dear Miss Kriegerman,

I am sorry to tell you that the James family many years ago restricted the papers that they placed in this library so that they may not be consulted by any student working toward an advanced degree. I am afraid this precludes your use of any unpublished material, although of course anything that you can find in print is fair game.

Very truly yours,

W. H. Bond

W. H. Bond  
Librarian

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