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AN ANALYSIS OF THE GHOST MOTIF
IN SOME NINETEENTH AND
TWENTIETH CENTURY SHORT STORIES

By
Elizabeth Poplin

Submitted as an Honors Paper
in the
Department of English

THE WOMAN'S COLLEGE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
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I

GHOSTS IN THE GALLERY: AN INTRODUCTION TO
THE GOTHIC SPECTER

At the lowest point of its descent to inartistic ugliness, the Gothic tale¹ was a gallery crowded with witches, warlocks, lycanthropes, ghouls, ghosts, and devils. Among these horrors that were exhibited in violent, glaring contrast, one motif has survived-- the ghost.

The world from which it comes, that world about which so much is written from outside its realm and nothing known from within its precincts, has always lured the story-teller to its portals. The problem of the author who traffics in the supernatural is to ensnare the credulity of the reader: to make him see, hear, feel, and even smell that of which he doubts the existence. The unrestrained imagination of the artist envisions two worlds, the material and the spiritual. Man lives in parts of each of them. In each there is a segment over which the predominating influence of strange forces must be acknowledged.

The average man, however, lives out his life unmolested

1/ Gothic tale is here used to designate not only the novel which was a definitely recognized kind of fiction from the appearance of Walpole's Castle of Otranto (1764) to the publication of Maturin's Melmoth, the Wanderer (1820) but also the tale dealing with medieval materials and with ghostly effects published in the annuals, gift books, and periodicals of the later nineteenth century.

by inexplicability in the normal orb of the material world. He knows as little of the abnormal orb of that same world as he knows of the preterhuman sphere of the spiritual world. Tucked in a corner of the spiritual world's human sphere rendered familiar through long occupancy, he probably even doubts the existence of those divisions of the two worlds whose manifestations refute the laws governing his own. Of what their boundaries are and where they overlap the edges of his own, these parts that lie so close and yet so far from his habitat, he is so ignorant that a sudden intrusion of the abnormal into his part of the material world or of the preterhuman into his part of the spiritual world frightens him. Disbelieving in the existence of these contrasting segments, he searches for explanations for the inexplicable in the parts that he knows, trying to comprehend that which cannot be understood.

In trying to portray the supernatural realm for his readers, the author is describing a world unknown to himself except as he is not hampered by disbelief. His imagination, flying high above the regions where the physical body can follow, is attune to receive and amplify the most tenuous indication of a preterhuman presence. The Gothic romancer motivated by one drive, that of provoking the

intellectual indulgence of fear in his reader, was not the first to take advantage of the wraith's peculiar charm to garnish a tale. The ghost roams at large through classical mythology, Christian hagiology, primitive epics, medieval legends, and Elizabethan drama. Most modern ghostly fiction, however, is descended from the Gothic romance rather than from the supernatural elements found in the other types of literature mentioned.² The increasing complexity, the fine subtleties that the short story of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have given to the ghostly tradition are difficult to comprehend without some knowledge of the "naive supernaturalism"³ of the Gothic tale to which later ghost stories revert.

2/ Dorothy Scarborough, Supernatural in Modern English, New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917, p. 6.

3/ A Literary History of England, edited by Albert C. Baugh, New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1948, p. 1192.

Alfonso, the robust haunter of The Castle of Otranto,⁴ was the first Gothic ghost. His odd addiction to appearing in parts as well as in his gigantic size will fix him in the reader's gallery of ghosts. He was a terror! His helmet with its agitated sable plumes, crashing alone into the castle courtyard, was sufficient to cause servants to foam at the mouth. A glimpse of his leg and foot at the top of a stair-case made the hair of another viewer stand on end. When he collects himself and appears in toto "dilated to an immense magnitude" and says, "Behold in Theodore the heir of Alfonso!" at the climax of the novel, he is awesome enough (in size at least) to have been the sole progenitor of all the specters in the extravagant fiction which poured from⁵ prolific pens between 1790 and 1814.

- 4/ The author of this paper has found no reference to a Gothic Romance published earlier than The Castle of Otranto; moreover, Walpole, fearing ridicule because the type of tale he had written was so different, published his novel as a "Story Translated by William Marshal, Gent. From the Original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto Canon of the Church of St. Nicholas at Otranto." An elaborate translator's preface relates how 'the following work was found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England. It was printed at Naples, ... in the year 1529'" Montague Summers, The Gothic Quest, London, The Fortune Press, n. d. p. 182. Walpole's novel was really published on Christmas Eve, 1764. Miss Birkhead assigns this book and author "the honour of having introduced the Gothic Romance and of having made it fashionable." Edith Birkhead, Tale of Terror, London, Constable & Company, Ltd., 1921, p. 16.
- 5/ A Literary History of England, p. 1192.

The ghosts in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels are in the line of descent from Alfonso, but the lineage has been modified by an infiltration of basic rationalism. With the publication of her Sicilian Romance (1790), the "mistaken" ghost makes its first appearance. In this case the wraith whose presence gives rise to "disquieting rumors of the supernatural" is a live woman "maliciously concealed in the uninhabited wing of an abbey." All the suspense built up by lurking shadows, flickering lights, fluttering tapestry, and unaccountable groans is subsequently relieved by being traced to natural causes. Mrs. Radcliffe can explain everything and insists on doing so. If one can hold the mystery in mind long enough, he will discover that the ghostly clanking of chains which froze the blood in chapter two was caused by rats behind the arras!

At this point the Gothic romance divides into two branches: the tale of suspense (like Mrs. Radcliffe's), which depends for part of its effect on the instinct of curiosity, and the tale of terror, which works solely on the primitive instinct of fear. "Fear is an intellectual indulgence,

6/ Birkhead, op. cit., p.41.

provoke it,"⁷ said M.G. Lewis and Charles Maturin, both writers of the terror tale. Their main object was to evoke the sensation of imaginative terror, stimulate it, and intensify it. Evoked by these masters, the ghostly visitant proved as late as 1820 that there were still notes of horror unsounded. Perhaps the greatest degree of notoriety has been accorded to Lewis's bleeding nun, Beatrice. And among a group of recreants such as fill the pages of The Monk, this is no niggardly renown! According to Beatrice, she "would fain repose in her grave;" but stern commands force her ghost to stalk the antique galleries in memory of her broken vows while her mouldering bones lie unburied in a nearby cave. The enthusiasm with which literary horror-mongers received this apparition can well be imagined. Hundreds of novels were written in imitation of The Monk. But this popularity was fatal to Beatrice's individualism, and she is doomed to haunt the pages of sub-literary romances forever--- a pitiable stock figure.

With the exception of the ghosts in Beckford's Vathek, a mad book whose Oriental sensuousness is unrivaled, the remaining story of the Gothic specter is quickly told. After Maturin, the last of the real

7/ "Supernatural in Nineteenth Century Fiction," The Living Age, Vol. 238, August, 1903, p. 261. This article is reprinted from the Edinburgh Review.

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 "Goths," the species became conventionalized. Gothic romancers agreed upon the constitution of a ghost. In most cases the apparition was a vapory projection of the body through which the hero's sword could plunge without resistance. The exception, of course, is Walpole's muscular wraith; but even Alfonso adhered to the restriction that a ghost must be recognizable with reference to his previous personality and apparel. How else would the tormented know his tormentor and recognize that though his crime goes unpunished by man, God's justice allows him no peace? Not only the state of materialization of the Gothic ghost but the manner of haunting his victim followed a fixed and well-nigh inflexible pattern. Along with frightening the guilty, ghosts in the terror romances consoled the innocent, revealed secrets, petitioned for burial of their bones, and gave portents of the future.

A singular instance of ghostly prophecy is told by Prosper Mérimée in his Vision of Charles XI.⁹ In a black-draped chamber of state this unhappy king of Sweden witnessed an execution amid a large assemblage of black-robed specters. During the vision, the

8/ Birkhead, op.cit., p. 93.

9/ Golden Book, IV, no.23, November, 1926,
 pp. 685-688

dissevered head of the apparition rolled to the feet of Charles, dyeing his shoe with its blood. After this frightful experience, one of the phantoms solemnly assured Charles that this blood would not be shed during his reign, but five reigns later. The ghost terminated its speech in well-worn ghostly phraseology with "Woe, woe, woe...." When the extraordinary assemblage had vanished, the bloodstain remained upon Charles's slipper.

Gothic ghosts had a full repertory of tricks to play on their victims. Standing beside the bed, rustling the curtains of the chamber, and extinguishing candles were among their favorite pranks. Although there were some ghosts most excessively fond of the sound of their own footsteps flying through vaulted chambers made to resound with their shrieks and groans, many relied solely on the fixed look to pierce the heart and freeze the blood of mortals. The old hag in Scott's Tapestried Chamber¹⁰ only looked at General Browne, and that esteemed officer swooned like an eighteenth century heroine. Gracious heaven! What a countenance! In recalling it the general said that "upon a face which wore the features of a corpse were imprinted the traces of

10/ Short Stories of Yesterday, an anthology selected by F.H. Pritchard, New York, F.S. Crofts & Co., 1930, pp. 71-86.

the vilest and most hideous passions which had animated her while she lived." And she came so close! Striding over to the bed where he lay, she "squatted herself down upon it," advancing her diabolical countenance within a "half yard" of the General's "with a grin which seemed to intimate the malice and derision of an incarnate fiend."

For the most part, however, Gothic visitants haunted mortals from a respectful distance; and if they had any desire to come nearer or to touch them, it was restrained. There were great limitations on the habits of the Gothic specter. No choice of locality was allowed him, and his lot usually fell to inhabit the cavern or apartment of his bloody demise. In the anonymous tale Emma's Well¹¹ the haunted spot is a spring which surged up to drown the murderer as he dug his victim's grave. Twelve or one o' clock, a time scrupulously observed in most Gothic stories and novels, was favored for the presentation of ghostly groans and chain-rattling. For really maximum effectiveness along with the lateness of the hour, a raging tempest or another form of inclement weather was desirable.

11/ Included in the Golden Gift, compiled by Emily Percival, New York, Phillips, Sampson and company, 1853, pp. 15-25.

All of this atmosphere is provided in The Old Manor House¹² before the ghost of Mary, the murdered serving maid, appeared to her mistress, Lucy:

It was on a winter evening, and the moon had a wild and watery look. The wind came driving against the old gable with a loud noise and whistled through every chink, and open seam. The tall chimneys bellowed like thunder; the leaves whirled round in eddies, below every angle of the building; and the clouds drifted from east to west, like mighty armies flying from a field of battle...When the turret clock struck twelve there came suddenly a great slap against the wainscot.

This is Gothic preparation for the ghostly entrance at its best--or worst. Only one detail is lacking:¹³ the candle that burns dimly and makes the apartment look dreary and desolate. Now the stage having been set for it, the ghost glided in without the door's being opened. (No one had to open doors for Gothic ghosts!) It took a seat in a chair opposite the bed. During the ensuing interview, the ghost maintained the strictest decorum. It did not speak a word, only moved its head mournfully from side to side, and kept its eyes fixed upon Miss Lucy. Indeed, it seemed

12/ Delta, Literary Souvenir, reprinted in The Annual, a selection from the Forget-me-nots and Keepsakes and other annuals of the nineteenth century, edited by Dorothy Wellesley, London, Cobden-Sanderson, n. d. pp. 148-171.

13/ At the approach of a supernatural visitant fires and candles always burn blue, grow dim, or sink out entirely. This common portent can be noted in Shakespearean drama (Julius Caesar and Richard III) as well as in the Gothic terror tale.

to wish Miss Lucy to speak to it; but she could not speak for weakness and fright. If many Gothic specters were like this one, pale, unhappy spirits, dressed in their last mortal garments, content to approach mortals only through the avenues of sight and sound, dependent on the dark midnight hour, sullen weather, and a tapestried or wainscotted chamber for their supernatural effect, one can readily see how much of Gothicism was "full of sound and fury"--which eventually frightened nobody.

Two realizations on the part of the romantic writer put an end to the multi-volume nocturnal ramblings of pallid or bloody phantoms and produced a new form, the short tale. The first realization was that it was possible to compress into five pages as much fearful sensation as was heretofore contained in five volumes¹⁴ and, indeed, to maintain better the sensation of fear. A shorter work, they learned, had "totality," an immense force whose advantage Poe, having a precocious understanding of human psychology, recognized. (A long and exciting work is a paradox since the highest excitements are the most transient; therefore, Poe postulated that brevity is a necessary component of Art. The idea of brevity is incorporated in Poe's theory of composition, and he exemplified it

14/ Birkhead, op. cit., p. 185.

through the medium of his own stories and poems.

The second realization was that it was not necessary to forsake the artistic in order to find the supernatural. Gothicism became an extreme of agony; for the romancers tried to convey through events those essentials of mysticism which must always be ineffable. They used the written word with grotesque extravagance. The reaction from the concrete expression of the preternatural is reflected most vividly in the ghostly motif in fiction where there is a "shift from a belief in evil spirits that come to plague us from the outside to a consciousness of terrors inside us that merely take possession of our minds."¹⁵ Ghosts haunt not only the body, but the soul. We are not much frightened by the apparition that hurls ancient curses at us from the end of a tortuous hallway. But transport us into the region of the sinister so that we gradually have a conviction that this practical existence of ours--with its streets, its houses, its woods, hills, and waters--may have deep and, possibly, terrifying holes in it, and there he walks again--the Ghost.

The apparitions in later English and American fiction fall into several classes, dependent upon the

15/ Edmund Wilson, "Treatise on Tales of Horror," New Yorker, XX, May 27, 1944, p. 78.

motive of the author engaged in literary commerce with the Supernatural World. Writers of supernatural stories are motivated by all the literary passions, from the esthetic search for the Beautiful to an excuse for portraying horrors surpassing those they have catalogued in this world. In accordance with the purposes covered by such a range of motives as raising questions and possibilities, terrorizing, arousing wonder, and suggesting transcendent truths, the ghosts evoked may be humorous, diabolical, occult,¹⁶ or symbolic manifestations.

As a vehicle for humorous exploits in the natural world or pseudo-scientific ramblings between the two spheres, the ghost has had various advocates, notably in recent years, Frank R. Stockton and H.G. Wells. The lighter treatment of the ghost often resolves into comic banter.¹⁷ For example, even Stockton's The Transferred Ghost, one of the cleverest drolleries of the supernatural, is delightful only at the first reading. Its effect is ephemeral because it is based on a "trick." A terrified young suitor, lacking

16/ The use of the adjective occult with the noun manifestation is not an attempt at oxymoron. Occult is used in the sense of mysterious; hidden because beyond the power of human comprehension.

17/ Oscar Wilde's Canterville Ghost and the "hoax" ghosts in some of Washington Irving's tales are notable exceptions.

courage to propose, melts his lady's heart by shouting out to the ghost a sentence which the lady thinks is meant for her. No one having read the story once would be moved to renew the experience. The power to recapture the imagination being considered one of the proofs of the artistic success of a story, The Transferred Ghost fails to provide the means through its treatment of material for recapturing the reader's fancy.

Many of the quasi-scientific treatments of ghostly themes follow one of two formulas. Either the story seeks to conform supernatural forces to the laws of natural phenomena, as Wells's Inexperienced Ghost does, or the story invents new "scientifically" plausible "laws" to explain the preternatural elements, as in The Crystal Egg, by the same author. The short story of supernaturalism on this pseudo-scientific level is prey to the basic antipathy between scientific and imaginative truth. This is not to deny absolutely that scientific truth may not "collaborate with, subserve, and even throw light upon imaginative truth; but it is to say that the scientific prepossession may seriously impede the imaginative insight."¹⁸

Because of the flaws in artistic conception and

18/ Robert B. Heilman, "The Freudian Reading of The Turn of the Screw", Modern Language Notes, LXII, no. 7, November, 1947, p. 444.

execution here indicated, the chance of an author's attaining supreme artistry by approaching the supernatural in either a humorous or quasi-scientific manner is greatly lessened. This paper will treat only the occult, the diabolical, and the symbolic story, and will discover them to be true expressions of literary excellence.

II

The Ghost as an Occult Manifestation

Some excursions into the Unseen World are made by those writers whose quest for the mysterious leads them beyond the normal human pale of experience. They seek an intuition of what is beyond the scope of ordinary understanding. The story resulting from this approach to supernatural elements is purely occult. It defeats attempts at explanations on a quasi-scientific basis and denies that the inexplicable elements which it contains are "great cloudy symbols" of things other than themselves. The best examples of the supernatural story on the occult level are to be found in a group of tales by Edgar Allen Poe which he called Arabesques. The term was originated by Sir Walter Scott, but Poe created his own shade of meaning for it.

Among the Arabesques is the story Ligeia¹ which which has been selected for examination because it marks supreme artistry in the treatment of the presence of the supernatural as an occult manifestation. In Ligeia Poe's most obvious method is a bold assumption of the impossible and an attempt to prove it logically by means of the plot. The assumption, contained in some lines by Joseph Glanville, is that the human will if strong enough can overcome death:

1/ Edgar Allen Poe, Complete Stories and Poems, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1946, p. 222-233.

And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.

In order to prove this proposition a character must be created whose possession of such a will would be quite believable. Ligeia was such a person. Only out of the mind of Poe, a mind perpetually leaning so far over the verge of actuality that it is difficult to tell whether he is looking at phantoms in the abyss or travelers on the highway, could the Lady Ligeia, that enigmatic combination of spiritual and actual, emerge. Ligeia! Listen to her name--Ligeia. Its timbre alone, not its connotation, because for the average reader it will have none, sings of "otherness." And that feeling initiated by the lady's name deepens with every sentence added to her lengthy portrait which rapidly grows into a picture of a more than earthly woman.

Interest is quickened by an immediate confession that the narrator had never known Ligeia's paternal name nor the reason why he did not know it. With suspicions of her "otherness" thus aroused, Poe moulds the image, first, by a description of Ligeia, with particular attention to her beautiful eyes and an emphasis on their strangeness of expression; second, by a description of a portion of her character, the will; and last, by bringing to light her rare learning. For

the effect of the story, that is, the belief into which the reader is beguiled, it is imperative that the impression of Ligeia which reaches the reader duplicate² that in the mind of the author. The sheer word length devoted to her portrait is an index to its position of importance in the effect Poe preconceived for his story.

Poe's choice of words in describing Ligeia as a living woman in the opening paragraphs is for one purpose: to create a picture of earthly beauty so close to the beauty found in another world that the line of demarcation between human and preterhuman is obscured and may be crossed unawares. The effect is ghostly. "Emaciated," "opium dream," "strangeness," "marble hand," "airy and spirit-lifting vision," "lightness and elasticity of her footfall," "irregularity," "shadow," "face more wildly divine than the phantasies which hovered about the slumbering souls of the daughters of Delos"--all follow each other in rapid succession and with unmistakable intention. Poe's efforts to describe Ligeia's divinity culminate in the metaphor of the fabulous Houris of the Turk--"the beauty of beings either above or apart from the earth." This figure, carrying the image of eyes seen in another world, is an especially apt vehicle on which to convey the "strangeness" of the quality of Ligeia's eyes which moved her lover so profoundly.

In speaking of Ligeia's character, the emphasis

2/ Almost one-third of the whole story is descriptive of Ligeia.

placed on intensity of volition in thought, action, and speech, foreshadows for us the two struggles in which we are to see her engaged and prepares us by the "wild words which she habitually uttered" for the terrible symbolism of her poem which is all of a piece with the story.

The paragraph on Ligeia's knowledge which closes the description and returns to the narration feeds that suspicion of her "other worldliness" which is growing in us with such statements by her husband as this one:

I had never known her at fault...upon any theme of the most...abstruse of the erudition of the Academy.

He suggests that she has traversed "all the wide areas of moral, physical, and mathematical science"; and he feels that she might lead him beyond temporal knowledge to the possession of a wisdom "too divinely precious not to be forbidden." The implication of his feeling is that Ligeia already possessed that knowledge which held--could it be?--the secret of life.

This is Ligeia. Beautiful beyond all idea of beauty except Beauty as an Idea, possessor of an immense knowledge, victim and master of inestimable passions. She is no longer a human being; she is almost a superhuman being. This spiritualization

of reality accomplished in describing the living Ligeia is one half of Poe's method of extending the precincts of the actual so near to the realm of the preternatural that there is no line of demarcation easily recognized in changing from reality to spirituality, from normality to abnormality. Another example of the spiritual effect Poe achieved by this device is the haunting quality--almost amounting to a ghostly personality--created by the fantastic magnificence of the chamber in which Ligeia comes alive again. The other half of this device is an acute ability to materialize the spectral so that the fact of its presence is hardly discernible. This materialization of the spectral makes Ligeia live again.

Poe builds up by his words and allusions a picture of her, who, even while living, seems to have traversed the region between the two worlds. As the portrait is finished, a feeling of her superhuman quality has been aroused sufficient to make the reader exclaim that if ever mortal could perform the impossible, Ligeia is that mortal. Would Poe have us believe that she could live forever? We are ready to concede that, but we recoil in terror from the frightful excesses of emotion which the lady displays on her death-bed. What is it that affects us so unutterably about her vehement desire "for life--but for life"?

"O God!" half shrieked Ligeia, leaping to her feet and extending her arms aloft with a spasmodic movement..."O God! O Divine Father!--shall these things be undeviatingly so?--shall this Conqueror be not once conquered? Are we not part and parcel in Thee? Who--who knoweth the mysteries of the will with its vigor? Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will."

In this scene Poe attempts to set the final seal against any question regarding the vigor of Ligeia's will. As she breathes her last sighs, the wild words come mingled with them. We are delivered up to our emotions by the force, depth, and intensity of Ligeia's will. This fierce, almost unholy, struggle with the Shadow to retain life anticipates sufficiently her exertion to recapture it.

Poe's permanent literary mood, literally as well as figuratively, is derived from the graveyards of humanity; and so the narrator of Ligeia while married to the "fair-haired and blue-eyed Lady Rowena" lives with the image of his beloved, entombed Ligeia:

My memory flew back (oh, with what intensity of regret!) to Ligeia...Now, then, did my spirit fully and freely burn with more than all the fires of her own. In the excitement of my opium dreams (for I was habitually fettered in the shackles of the drug), I would call aloud upon her name,...as if, through the wild eagerness, the solemn passion, the consuming ardor of my longing for the departed, I could restore her to the pathways she had abandoned--ah, could it be for ever?--upon the earth.

The dead, not the living, bride has control of his life.

The medium through which he gazed at the living was dyed in some dark tint by a combination of opium and contemplation of the dead:

I had become a bounden slave in the trammels of opium, and my labors and my orders had taken a coloring from my dreams.

In this mad dotage of grief the chamber of Rowena was furnished. In the description of the decor of this room Poe creates another trap for our emotions. And again reality is so subtly spiritualized that we are baffled to separate the forms of this world from the fantasies of the other.

The phantasmic furnishings all articulate strange sentiments to the emotions whose cause still eludes, while they yet affect, the senses:

...the sole window...a single pane, and tinted of a leaden hue, so that the rays of either the sun or moon passing through it, fell with a ghastly lustre on the objects within.

...ceiling of gloomy-looking oak...

...a huge censer...so contrived that there writhed in and out of the perforations, as if endued with a serpent vitality, a continual succession of particolored fires.

...sarcophagus...with their aged lids...

...the couch--the bridal couch--with a pall-like canopy above...

But in the drapery of the chamber a note of sheer terror is struck:

The material was the richest cloth of gold. It was spotted all over, at irregular intervals,

with arabesque figures, about a foot in diameter, and wrought upon the cloth in patterns of the most jetty black. But these figures partook of the true character of the arabesque only when regarded from a single point of view. By a contrivance now common, and indeed traceable to a very remote period of antiquity, they were made changeable in aspect. To one entering the room, they bore the appearance of simple monstrosities; but upon a farther advance, this appearance gradually departed; and, step by step, as the visitor moved his station in the chamber, he saw himself surrounded by an endless succession of the ghastly forms which belong to the superstition of the Norman, or arise in the guilty slumbers of the monk. The phantasmagoric effect was vastly heightened by the artificial introduction of a strong continual current of wind behind the draperies--giving a hideous and uneasy animation to the whole.

In a hall such as this, under the combination of Ligeia's powerful will and her lover's opium-fed longing for her to be alive again, the body of Rowena sickens and dies.

There are as many definitions of Ghost as there are ghost stories; each manifestation of an apparition embodies the idea on which the story turns. The definition formulated in Ligeia is that of a vapory projection of the actual body which in life remains attached to the body by the will, a connection which must be permanently severed at death³ or Poe's assumption would not have been of the supernatural. This definition fits the ghost of Ligeia as her lover becomes conscious of her in the chamber for the first time:

3/ Scarborough, op. cit., p. 119.

A sob, low gentle, but very distinct, startled me from my reverie. I felt that it came from the bed of ebony-- the bed of death.

Poe's description of the drama of revivification is almost poetry. Beginning with the first low but distinct sob of life from the corpse, the rhythms of the sentences pick up the tempo of returning life as Ligeia's struggles come to a climax and the "ghastly ceremonies" which confine her body and her spirit are loosened and fall away. Those distinguishing features mentioned in climactic sequence to convince the reader of her reality are, paradoxically, in the same sequence in which Poe marshalled them to create the illusion of "other worldliness" in the beginning of the story. First, her height; second, her hair; and finally, her eyes:

These are the full, and the black, and the wild eyes--of my lost love--of the Lady Ligeia.

She lives!--and not only for her lover.

To draw a specific definition of the occult story from Ligeia would be a futile attempt to reduce artistry to a mere formula, at which point, if we succeeded, the art of the story would be destroyed. There are, however, tendencies of style and material which can be underscored. In this type of supernatural tale the appeal is made to the "faculty of wonder."⁴

4/ Arthur Hobson Quinn, American Fiction, New York, D. Appleton-Century Company, 1936, p. 80.

The emotion to be aroused is that of terror, the same mood in which the changes in Lady Rowena are made. The theme of the occult tale must be a singular one heightened into the strange and mystical. The tale must inspire unusual sentiments merely by force of the material itself as the lines from Joseph Glanville in the story inspire an unaccountable sentiment in the lady's lover merely by their "quaintness."

Many and various are the methods Poe used to evoke a series of unusual conditions of mind. Terror, horror, disgust, apprehension, even compassion--he evokes them all. In Ligeia, however, he is chiefly intent on beguiling belief in what happens and affecting the emotions by the mood he has created. Three of Poe's most characteristic methods--most characteristic because most frequently employed--are brought into play in Ligeia where in combination they operate with heightened effectiveness: (1) deriving horror from an excess of something which alone is not horrible, as the teeth in Berenice and the will in Ligeia; (2) assuming an impossible premise and proving it logically; (3) extending the precincts of the actual until the point at which spiritual becomes material and material almost spiritual is lost or obscured.

The same motif⁵ as that in Poe's story, a woman's return to life, is employed by Helen Hull in Clay-Shuttered Doors.⁶ The aura of the terrible secret behind Thalia Corson's re-entrance pervades the whole story, creating the occult tone. The secret is hidden from human comprehension subjectively in the mind and objectively in the story by the closed bedroom door. Yet the drama which the occult force sets in motion is played out before the reader's very eyes, giving him the feeling that his familiar pattern of existence begun with eggs and bacon at eight o' clock in the morning may be shattered at any moment by an unknown force, and that the pieces may fall into a strange design before dinnertime. The narrator of Miss Hull's story, baffled, frightened, unable to attach the drama to which she is a witness to anything else in her experience, expresses that feeling:

This affair won't add to itself. It stays unique and smooth, sliding through the rest of life without annexing a scrap of seaweed.

- 5/ Mary Heaton Vorse also has written a story of a woman's return. The Second Wife describes the gradual change of a living woman into the personality of the first wife through the immortal force of her predecessor's jealousy. Harper's Monthly Magazine, vol. 124, February, 1912, pp. 462-470.
- 6/ Uncommon People, New York, Coward-McCann Inc., 1936, pp. 1-21.

Just as for Ligeia so for Miss Hull's main character, we might ask, "What's in a name?" "Nothing," may be the opinion of those who, like Juliet, believe that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet; but Ligeia and Thalia by any other names would lose a part of their distinguishing essences. Thalia strikes the same responsive chord in the mind that Ligeia does. Since it cannot be connotative, is it, perhaps, a strange intellectual, rather than sensory, form of onomatopoeia? "Thalia." The singular and the unusual are immediately suggested by the sound itself. It is the name for a goddess. With as much ease as Poe says "Lady Ligeia," the modern Mrs. Thalia Corson could become Lady Thalia; and yet to keep the reader from being quite so sure, see with what ease her husband calls her "Tally"! We concede her to the familiar twentieth century, but the author does not convince us that there was never any thing to explain.

Both Ligeia and Clay-Shuttered Doors, it has been stated, are stories of "return." The question to follow, then, is this one: Does the same force that conquered the Conqueror for Ligeia reanimate Thalia too? From the nouns and adjectives in the opening paragraph used to describe Thalia, Helen Hull's story recalls its thematic predecessor. "Langorous fragility," "thin wrists and throat," "elusive face with its long eyelids" almost evoke Ligeia for those

familiar with both stories. Here, however, the resemblance ceases. Miss Hull builds up no picture of a second woman whose vehement desire for life, "but for life" could be matched by a will powerful enough to obtain it. Instead, she paints this picture:

There are, I have decided, two ways with love. You can hold one love, knowing that, if it is a living thing, it must develop and change. That takes maturity, and care, and a consciousness of the other person. That was Thalia's way. Or you can enjoy the beginning of love and, once you're past that, you have to hunt for a new love, because the excitement seems to be gone. Men like Winchester, who use all their brains on their jobs, never grow up; they go on thinking that preliminary stir and snap is love itself. Cut flowers, that was Winchester's idea, while to Thalia love was a tree.

I decided that Thalia probably knew more about Winchester's affairs than gossip had given me...He had always been conventionally discreet, but discretion would be a tawdry coin among Thalia's shining values.

Thalia was too fine; he couldn't grow up to her...She must, years ago, with her sensitiveness, have discovered that Winchester was stationary so far as love went and, being stationary himself, was inclined to move the object toward which he directed his passion.

Thalia loves a husband who possesses her without loving her. We even see him include her in the "smug, owning look" he gives his carefully appointed drawing room. Her return to him is a loving response to what she mistakes for love in him at last. She is the victim of her own feeling for a husband by whom she is desired

only as she is an asset to his current business strategy. The voice of his fear at her dying and leaving him in the middle of a "deal" and his self-desire to have her live because she is his reached her across the great space rather than his love. She explains her mistake to the narrator, Mary:

Love? That's a strange word...Love has no power. It never shouts out across great space. Only fear and self-desire are strong.

The doctor points out to Winchester what Thalia thought she heard:

"But you called to her, and she thought you wanted--her."

She still wants to believe Winchester needs her--that she is a part of the life for which she returned:

"I shall not go anywhere until your deal goes through. Then--"

"We entertain the lords at dinner, . . . It makes a wife almost necessary."

"Yes, I'll invite Mary. Then she'll see that you don't want to dispense with me--yet."

But the cost in suffering for Winchester becomes too great:

Her face and throat had the taut rigidity of pain so great it congeals the nerves.

"This," she said, "is the last time. I can't endure it."

What drama has transpired behind Thalia's closed door we have been left to imagine from the first time

it closed after her, immediately following the accident. With her husband's bargain "sealed and cemented" forever and a toast for herself, the force which brought Thalia back is spent and her slight hold on life slips:

"I can never get in again! Never! The black agony of fighting back--"

The little doctor makes a hurried entrance. The door closes for the final drama. When it opens again, we dare one glance and are relieved to see only "pale hair shining against the pillow." The secret contained in the closed room is bequeathed to a sealed coffin.

The whole story is a delicate balance between what we readily believe, the human existence, and what we shudder to acknowledge, the existence of the preterhuman. At the scene of the accident, the fact of Thalia's death is stated unequivocally by the little doctor:

"Death was instantaneous. A blow on the temple."

And yet as we gasp, we hear Thalia's living voice:

"You called me, Win?"...She was standing against his shoulder. "You did call me?"

But the voice is "blurred and queer"; the face, "husklike."

Who believes in Thalia's reality? No one really doubts, it seems, except the terrier, Nug. And here the author makes use of one of the oldest ways of

detecting the alien presence of the preternatural known to the story-teller.⁷ In the small dog's sensibility to something terrifying about the mistress who adored him, a real note of horror is sounded:

The dog was terrified at her. He crawled on his belly out of the room.

Then a rational note:

"Now she must have been cruel to him if he acts like that."

But the dog is sent out to the country, and Fletcher adds that the dog has a "queer notion about her."

"She doesn't like him," Dorothy explains simply.

The balance between suspicion of the unnatural and natural explanation set up in so many details of the story is maintained through the contrast in the reactions of the two children to their parent. Thalia's son, Fletcher, is frozen in a kind of panic at the sight of his mother:

Was the boy afraid of her?
Dorothy wasn't---...She cried, "See me,
Mother, look at me!"

As if to preclude any chance of misinterpretation, the author mentions the contrast again:

Dorothy was as plump and unconcerned as ever, but Fletcher had a strained, listening

7/ The sensitiveness of animals to occult influences is a theme that runs through many supernatural tales. Edward Bulwer-Lytton achieves an atmosphere of grave conviction for his exhibition of horrors in The Haunted and the Haunters with such a small touch as the collie who dies cowering in an agony of abject fear.

effect and he looked too thin and white for a little boy.

An undisturbing sentence like this one, "She was thin, but she had always been that," is followed by this dramatic touch:

I caught at Thalia's arm...She drew away, and her arm, under the soft flowing sleeve of full blue stuff, was so slight it seemed brittle. I thought suddenly that she must have chosen that gown because it concealed so much beneath its lovely embroidered folds.

"You aren't well, Thalia. What is it?"

As the story moves along, these references that explain themselves but yet leave the real question unanswered become more frequent. The narration and dialogue become an interlaced mesh of them, crossing and recrossing one another:

Off guard, she had relaxed into strange apathy. Was it the firelight or my unaccustomed Chartreuse? Her features seemed blurred as if a clumsy hand trying to trace a drawing made uncertain outlines.

Something clicked in my thoughts, a quick suspicion, drawing a parallel between her conduct and that of people I had seen in the East. Was it some drug? That lethargy, and the quick spring into vitality? Days behind a closed door.

The recurring waves of lethargy through which Thalia struggles to maintain her vitality call to mind Ligeia's several lapses into deathlike pallor during her efforts to enter the body of Rowena. The reader who has witnessed Ligeia's struggles knows instantly what Thalia means when she says: "It is hard to get back in."

The moment in the dim room when she makes this statement is a strange one, but Thalia's reference is unmistakable.

Unlike Poe, in Clay-Shuttered Doors Miss Hull creates no Ligeia, more than human, who would be capable of "getting back in." Her method is rather to show you Thalia from the moment of the accident amid the events of urban life through actions, conversations, and observations which offer the narrowest distinction between the preternatural and the natural explanation. Walter de la Mare explained this method when he wrote:

The evidence on the one side and
on the other is softly falling like
unperceptible dust into the scale pans.
But, finally, surely, that on the
preternatural side should waver gently downwards. 8

The author succeeds in maintaining this delicate balance so successfully that the reader experiences a part of the impact of Winchester's shocked incredulity to hear the little doctor saying not that Thalia is dead, but that "she died--months ago."

The extreme diversity in treatment which the same incident can receive at the hands of two authors is proved again in a further comparison of Ligeia and Clay-Shuttered Doors. Both are stories containing occult elements, stories in which the ghostly presence is

8/ They Walk Again, with an introduction by Walter de la Mare, New York, E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1942, p. 17.

is treated as a mystery beyond ordinary knowledge. Both have the same dark motif--the re-entrance of a woman whose connection in the normal, human part of the material and spiritual world has been permanently severed by her death. The motif is dark because neither Poe's nor Miss Hull's narrator can personally see through to the meaning of the returned one. Despite these similarities Helen Hull's way is not Poe's way any more than Defoe's would have been Scott's if they both had been given the same story material. The dramatic intensity of Poe's story comes to fruition with Lady Ligeia's return to life. Whether she lives a "normal" life thereafter or whether she survives for only a climactic moment is not a part of the effect Poe preconceived for his story. Ligeia returned. Finis. The story leaves you as it should leave you. In the Hull story, dramatic intensity derives from the incidents in Thalia's life after her return. She lives, but...and as Hamlet said, "There's the rub..."

According to the bent of the author's imagination, the mysterious qualities of his ghost, which make him an occult manifestation, may be mysteries of origin, nature, or purpose. All three or any combination of the three may be exploited in dealing with the hidden things of the mind if terror is inextricably

interwoven as the emotion to be aroused and if the material pricks the faculty of wonder. Without the inclusion of a revenge ghost no discussion of the supernatural visitant would be comprehensive. It is paradoxical to find the revenge ghost whose purpose is stated in his name among the ghosts who are considered occult manifestations. Henry James and Rudyard Kipling, however, wrap the meaning of their vengeful specters in Sir Edmund Orme⁹ and The Phantom 'Rickshaw¹⁰ in a darkness or obscurity that can be resolved under no other classification than that of the occult specter. Although the haunted in both stories die, their deaths alone do not seem to constitute the element from which the ghosts derive their terrible pleasure. Contrary to the practices of most revenge ghosts, Sir Edmund does not even haunt the person of Mrs. Marden, the woman who wronged him, but concentrates his powers of intention¹¹ on being perceived by Mrs. Marden's daughter. In The Phantom 'Rickshaw it is Jack Pansay's determination,

- 9/ Henry James, Ghostly Tales of Henry James, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1948, pp. 141-173.
- 10/ Rudyard Kipling, The Phantom 'Rickshaw and Other Stories, New York, Standard Book Company, n. d., pp. 7-44.
- 11/ Intention is used here in the archaic sense of "intentness."

rather than any determination expressed by the ghost, that he shall die. This is the enigma. The purpose of the ghost in each story is revenge, but from what hidden depths of revenge do the ghosts' designs for the lives of their victims arise?

In the Kipling story it is a meaningless flirtation, in the James story a cruel, but understandable refusal of a young man's hand that brings the occult forces into the lives of Jack Pansay and Mrs. Marden. The reader must decide for himself as the haunted ones and their societies did whether retribution is being exacted for folly or sin.

Society plainly made up its mind in favor of folly on the part of its two errants, since neither Mrs. Marden nor Jack Pansay received a more tangible rebuke than the transitory labels of "coquette" and "blackguard." To be pointed out as a coquette at one ball before the incident is replaced by a fresher piece of scandal has its drawing power in the salon, and to be called a blackguard by a fellow officer who secretly envies your "conquest" is not offensive; and so Society awarded its tokens of ephemeral infamy and promptly forgot the reason.

Unhappily it was not thus with either the offender or the offended. Jack Pansay in The Phantom 'Rickshaw

confesses:

"I was the offender and I knew it. That knowledge transformed my pity into passive endurance, and eventually, into blind hate..."

Light and shade are beginning to be fantastically intermingled in his life. His hopes, doubts, and fears are divided between the vividly alive Kitty Mannering whom he "honestly, heartily" loves and the vision of pale Mrs. Wessington who dies loathed by every fiber of his frame--her former lover. With the callousness of those who have transferred their affections, he speaks of his pleasure in having the "inexpressible burden of her existence" removed from his life:

"I went Plainsward perfectly happy."

The phantom 'rickshaw first makes its appearance¹² at the happiest moment of Pansay's life--the day he measures Kitty for her engagement ring. Pansay's reaction at seeing the 'rickshaw of his former mistress--now dead as well as discarded--is an expression of irritation and disgust at having an unpleasant relationship exhumed from the graveyard of dead loyalties. These emotions are swallowed up in unutterable horror, however, when his fiancée's horse passes through both men and carriage as if they had been thin air. From

12/ Mrs. Marden in the James story tells the suitor that her ghostly visitant, Sir Edmund, first appeared at her daughter's debut which, if she were like most mothers, would have been the happiest moment of her mature life.

that moment Mrs. Wessington, now dead, regulates the life which, living, she could not control. Pansay does not fight the apparition, which easily survives Dr. Heatherlegh's attempts towards curing Pansay under the "Eyes, Brain, Stomach" theory.

From Simla society and his fiancée, Pansay could get no better exchange of sympathy for his "ghostly Light o' Love" than "D. T." or "fits" until observation of his several lengthy conversations with the empty air made "insanity" society's final appraisal.

For a story about which the author wrote that "some of it was bad and much was out of key", The Phantom 'Rickshaw makes an impression of artistic unity much of which is secured by the regular appearance of the apparition. The Unseen, the four jhampanies in black and white livery pulling a yellow-paneled 'rickshaw with its golden-haired occupant, touches the imagination in an unforgettable manner. Repetition of this image in almost the same words at its every appearance has much to do with effecting the story's single tone, but our remembrance is secured by the unique form of the apparition. The doctor's words to Pansay apply as aptly to the haunter as to the haunted:

"You're too interesting a phenomenon to be passed over."

In any story "one may see ghosts of men and women but

surely never of coolies and carriages. The whole thing is absurd. Fancy the ghost of a hillman!" And fancy too "a woman eight months dead with a card case."¹³

Kipling intends that the extravagance of this detail and the coincidence connected with the death of Mrs. Wessington's coolies will communicate the ghostly thrill. Following immediately a scene in which the apparition has completely unnerved Pansay, the attitude expressed by the two men talking together in the dusk makes us shudder with its irony:

"Told me he never used a dead Memsahib's 'rickshaw. 'Spoilt his luck. Queer notion, wasn't it? Fancy poor little Mrs. Wessington spoiling anyone's luck except her own!"

The author allows Mrs. Wessington only that measure of the preternatural which allows her to become a ghost in Pansay's mind, and of that amount of power to depict the supernatural he convinces us. In calling the patient, almost pathetic ghost of Mrs. Wessington "The Horror," "It," and "The Thing," however, Kipling is begging the question of the mystery. The technical laziness of seeking to create an emotion of terror by calling a

13/ In the whole of the description of the specter, which precedes this detail, Kipling has recourse to one of the devices of the Gothic writer discussed in the introduction to this paper: "that a ghost must be recognizable with reference to his previous personality and apparel." The purpose is also the same: that the tormented know his tormentor.

ghost "The Horror" is "out of key" with the rest of the story, but it is a single jarring note.

The point of view¹⁴ and the level of the story are other factors which contribute to its singleness of tone. Kipling selects the point of view of the one person we cannot doubt--the person to whom it happened. The one who can say, "I know. I lived it. I felt it." Then by placing the recital of his emotional experience in the form of a "manuscript" written by the haunted one himself, Kipling divorces Author from Story and presents the Reader with "documentary" evidence which defies skepticism. The level of this story is the sick bed of Pansay on which he recalls the series of past events. His eye is always fixed on the feverish procession passing at the foot of his bed. As the story comes to us, it is one of a man who insisted upon dying because he believed himself to be haunted.

Any number of ghosts have appeared to those whose mental attitude prepared them to be receptive to supernatural visions; but on the day Mrs. Wessington's 'rickshaw first appears to Pansay, he emphasizes

14/ My own definition of these terms: Point of view--from whose consciousness the story is narrated. Level of the Story--from what vantage point the narrator looks at the action. Is he on the stage of the drama, a participator, or a little withdrawn, an observer? Is it told while the action takes place or recollected in absence?

that "whatever my doctor says to the contrary--I was then in perfect health, enjoying a well-balanced and absolutely tranquil spirit." But specters that exact their vengeance in mental anguish, like the desires that goad us, rise from deeper places than the consciousness. Knowledge of this fact, and its effect is subtly managed by Kipling and yet is inescapably impressive:

My mind had been full of Mrs. Wessington all afternoon; every inch of the Jakko road bore witness to our old-time walks and talks. The bowlders were full of it; the pines sang it aloud overhead; the rain-fed torrents giggled and chuckled over the shameful story; and the wind in my ears chanted the iniquity aloud.

The highest point of emotion in the story is reached when Pansay demands that the apparition put back its hood and tell him what it all means:

...the hood dropped noiselessly, and I was face to face with my dead and buried mistress...

"Agnes," I repeated, "for pity' sake tell me what it all means."

Mrs. Wessington leant forward with that odd, quick turn of the head I used to know so well, and spoke.

What was said during that weird interview Kipling leaves to our imagination, but not without a terrible hint.

We see Pansay's mind crowded with tortured thoughts of his future relations with the dead woman:

Could it be possible, I wondered, that I was in this life to woo a second time the woman I had killed by my own neglect?

Shall I return to my old lost allegiance in the next world, or shall I meet Agnes, loathing her and bound to her side through all eternity?

Shall we two hover over the scene of our lives till the end of Time?

From what portion of unimaginable terror Pansay's last punishment will be selected we can only imagine.

In the James story Mrs. Marden's punishment is to watch the ghost of her jilted lover, Sir Edmund Orme, follow her oblivious daughter. This "pale and preoccupied" woman, while not haunted herself, is tortured by the fear that one day Charlotte will see "him."

James, like Kipling, chose the most mundane of settings--a British resort town--where the appearance of the ghostly amid the "great, friendly, fluttered, animated, many-colored" commonplaceness of mid-Victorian Brighton would strike an especially gruesome note. A twinkling sea and a breezy atmosphere place a Jamesian ghost at no disadvantage, however; and in the bright sunshine of the Parade, the dark little drama begins.

Sir Edmund Orme is played out on three levels in

contrast to the single "haunted" level at which The Phantom 'Rickshaw takes place. The Mother is frightened, the narrator curious, and the daughter unaware--in the beginning. The struggle of the mother to protect her daughter from the consequences of sins which, except under retributive justice which visits the iniquities of the mother on the daughter, would have fallen on her own head forms the plot of the story. In hope of appeasing the ghost, Mrs. Marden tries to advance her daughter's marriage--to the right young man. When the narrator discloses to her that he has seen the "presence," her emotions are a strange mixture of dismay and relief:

"You saw him, you saw him!" she panted...

"Of course I saw him, and so did you."

"It didn't follow. Did you feel it to be inevitable?"

I was puzzled again. "Inevitable?"

"That you should see him?"

"Certainly, since I'm not blind."

"You might have been. Everyone else is."

"I knew you would, from the moment you should be really in love with her! I knew it would be the test--what do I mean?--the proof."

Sir Edmund Orme as a ghost has a peculiar shading. James has created no other like him. He is not the simple "revenge mechanism" of The Romance of Certain Old Clothes nor yet the supreme incarnation of Evil--Peter Quint--which James later created in The Turn of

the Screw. He is rather a fusion of the elements of both "white"¹⁵ and black magic. This unique blend arises from the different things he represents to the two people who see him. To Mrs. Marden he is a fear-inspiring symbol. He is her curse, the "unnamable." He terrifies her. To Charlotte's suitor he is a "guardian angel." Sir Edmund's appearance assures him of his importance in Charlotte's life. He welcomes the presence of anything so extraordinary:

So far from dreading another encounter with the "perfect presence" as she called it, I was affected altogether in the sense of pleasure. I desired a renewal of my luck; I went around the house as quickly as if I expected to overtake Sir Edmund Orme; I opened myself wide to the impression...I ended by feeling that he was on my side, watching over my interest, looking to it that no trick should be played me and that my heart at least shouldn't be broken.

James's device to secure authenticity for his story is the mechanical one used by Kipling in Phantom Rickshaw that of introducing the story as a document

15/ The "white" magic idea, embodied in Sir Edmund's being a guardian angel of the suitor, is given expression in the specter's appearance for the first time inside the church. It was popular belief that ghosts could not enter holy places; that churches were sanctuaries from the power of evil spirits. Sir Edmund's power to appear inside a church adds to the enigma concerning his nature and purpose--the enigma that makes him an occult manifestation. While reading for this paper the author has encountered no other instance of a ghost's entering a church.

he has obtained. In the paragraph preceding the "statement" James disclaims any responsibility for the preternatural nature of its contents:

I can't, I allow, vouch for his having intended it as a report of a real occurrence-- I can only vouch for his general veracity.

The manner in which the ghostly presence of Sir Edmund enters the story preserves the fidelity of its point of view. Since everything in the story is presented through the mind and senses of the narrator, the apparition must remain outside the narrative until the narrator becomes aware of him as a presence. The activity of some strange force is demonstrated several times through Mrs. Marden's reactions. The first time is on the Parade:

"Ah!" she suddenly panted in the next breath, rising to her feet and staring at her daughter...She stood a few seconds, the queerest expression in her face; then she sank on the seat again and I saw she had blushed crimson.

The narrator's awareness of "something" is reflected in these words: "Mrs. Marden, who had had some shock that escaped our detection, recovered herself."

The second time that Sir Edmund appears to her, she spills tea on the narrator, blaming him for her own unsteady hand:

I had begun to stammer a defense of my hand when I noticed her eyes fixed on me with an intense appeal. It was ambiguous at first and only added to my confusion; then suddenly

I understood as plainly as if she had murmured, "Make believe it was you--make believe it was you."

The third time, as the narrator attends Charlotte to her door, he directs "a wistful disconcerted gaze at one of the windows of the house":

It fell on the white face of Mrs. Marden, turned out at us from the drawing-room. She stood long enough to show it was she and not the apparition I had come near taking it for...

Sir Edmund "haunts," but he is not seen or mentioned in the story until the narrator becomes the suitor and sees the apparition for himself and the story.

In Sir Edmund James employs in a fore-shortened manner the same dramatic principle, "successive aspects each treated from its own center," on which he built his long novels. The story emanates from the consciousness of the characters in regard to one another and to situations. A growing awareness of one or two characters gives a centralizing point of view to the story. Mrs. Marden's "growing awareness" of the narrator's "growing awareness" proceeds from an early stage in their acquaintance:

From the first of her seeing me she had been sure there were things I shouldn't escape knowing.

---And leads to a community of nervous interest:

I might have said to myself that she was a little wrong in the upper story; but that

never occurred to me. She struck me as hopelessly right.

Her "awareness" that he is "aware" comes to a climax in the church, when Mrs. Marden is sure that the narrator has seen "Him":

She pushed Charlotte forward and suddenly breathed to me: "Did you see him?"

"The gentleman who sat down here? How could I help seeing him?"

Mrs. Marden explains her fear of Sir Edmund:

"I had thought the whole thing out. I had had time to in those dreadful years while he was punishing me in my daughter."

"Hardly that," I objected, "if Miss Marden never knew."

"That has been my terror, that she will; from one occasion to another, I've an unspeakable dread of the effect on her."

This fear makes the intensity of her warning, "Don't notice him--never!" so poignant.

His presence in a room, however, exerts an abnormal power over the actions of the narrator which almost compels acknowledgment:

I speak of him as a personage, because one felt, indescribably, as if a reigning prince had come into the room. He held himself with something of the grand air and as if he were different from his company. Yet he looked fixedly and gravely at me, till I wondered what he expected. Did he consider that I should bend my knee or kiss his hand? He turned his eyes in the same way on Mrs. Marden, but she knew what to do. After the first agitation produced by his approach, she took no notice of him whatever; it made me remember her passionate adjuration to me. I had to achieve a great effort to imitate her, for though I knew nothing about him but that he was Sir Edmund Orme his presence acted as a strong appeal, almost as an oppression...

He looked again strangely hard at me, harder than anyone in the world had ever looked before; and I remember feeling rather cold and wishing he would say something. No silence had ever seemed to me so soundless.

At this point in the story, neither the narrator nor the reader knows the history of the ghost although both have seen him. To build up the same degree of "real impatience, sharper curiosity, and even the first short throbs of a certain sacred dread" in the reader that is built up in the suitor, James directs the narration to prevent Mrs. Marden from disclosing the identity of "him" until the last part of the story. The waiting, however, is not barren of dramatic hints, such as "a man I wronged." James "baits" the reader by having Mrs. Marden begin the story of the apparition several times. Each time she is skillfully interrupted.

Since the case is one of retributive justice-- that of visiting the sins of the mother on the child, Mrs. Marden cannot save her daughter if Charlotte emulates her mother's coquettish conduct. On her deathbed, Mrs. Marden seeks to appease the apparition by marrying her daughter to the suitor who truly loves her in time to prevent her from trifling with "an honest man's just expectations." But the final purpose of the ghost of the jilted lover is not to be thus thwarted. Unknown to Mrs. Marden, Sir Edmund has already forced himself into the circle of Charlotte's

awareness. Charlotte's suitor senses a difference in the woman he loves:

There was something different in her, different from all the past. She had recognized something, she felt a coercion. I could see her uncontrollably tremble.

As Charlotte gives her hand to her suitor, Sir Edmund Orme bends menacingly over Mrs. Marden. Charlotte sees him, and in the awful moment of her "awareness," Mrs. Marden's soul is snatched away by the sinister figure.

This climactic scene obscures the finest facet of the ghost's revenge. Charlotte, too, dies in the next year. James obscures the flash of understanding that would come from this knowledge by making the disclosure at the beginning of the story. There is no clue then to its significance which is derived from the drama subsequently played out. Charlotte dies in childbirth, we are told in the "document" which introduces the story; but after an acquaintance with Sir Edmund, we wonder if her death is natural. And we are supposed to wonder.

III

The Ghost as a Diabolical Manifestation

The second distinctly artistic view of the Supernatural World is the one that reveals the sphere governed by the devil and its inhabitants actuated by his powers. The author whose treatment of supernatural material embraces this view can exact a "turn of the screw" upon the reader's emotions in excess of the number possible in treating the ghost as a mysterious or occult manifestation. Those ghosts were once human and may possibly retain some of their human sympathies; but the diabolical specter has never had any human feelings. His malevolence does not proceed from any reasonable dislike, but only from inherent fiendish prejudice against humanity. In the Supernatural World imagined in this manner a God may govern Nature, but diabolical spirits direct and confound the affairs of men.

The belief that preternatural manifestations such as ghosts proceed from some diabolical design had its origin in ancient Persian myths,¹ but the daemonic spirit has printed the mark of the cloven hoof on the folk-lore of all peoples, stamping it deeply into the Christian ideology of the Middle Ages. That the idea of diabolical specters was current during Elizabethan times can be inferred from lines in two of Shakespeare's tragedies. Brutus accosts the

1/ Scarborough, op. cit., p. 131.

approaching ghost of Caesar in this manner: "Art thou some god, some angel, or some devil...?" In similar manner Hamlet wonders if the ghost of his father is a "goblin damned." Although the devil and his allies have been impressive figures in all forms of literature, his most fiendish manifestations appear in some of the Gothic romances. In Charles Maturin's novel, Melmoth, the Wanderer, for example, the devil is a crude, effective force for arousing terror. At various times the short story reflects the diabolism found in the Gothic tale. In this tradition is Robert Louis Stevenson's Thrawn Janet,² as shuddering a tale of terror as the literature of the short story can boast.

In writing Thrawn Janet Stevenson succeeded in creating the kind of story Scott hoped to achieve in Wandering Willie's Tale³--one fulfilling the expectation of horror raised by the old story-teller's boast before he began to narrate:

"I whiles make a tale serve the turn among
country bodies; and I have some fearsome anes,
that make the auld carlines shake on the settle,
and the bits of bairns skirl on their minnies
out frae their beds."

All the elements for such a recital of terror are present in Scott's story, but his carefully framed sentences fail to convey the promised emotion. It is Thrawn Janet, not

- 2/ Robert Louis Stevenson, Selected Writings of Robert Louis Stevenson, edited with an introduction by Saxe Commins, New York, Random House, 1947, pp. 735-744
3/ In Redgauntlet.

Wandering Willie's Tale that proves the superiority of the Scotch dialect for spookiness over anything in plain English.

The plot is bounded--it begins and ends--by the effect on the minister who is as pitiful a victim of the diabolism described in the story as the old witch-wife, Janet M'Clour. Every year on the anniversary of his dreadful encounter with Thrawn Janet, Reverend Murdock Soulis preached the same terrifying sermon on the devil. To describe the effect of this sermon on the congregation, Stevenson paraphrases the words of Scott's old story-teller:

The children were frightened into fits and the old looked more than usually oracular.

Justification for "the appalling nature of the matter of the sermon" is amply provided by the incidents in the rising action and climax which show the dreadful drama to which Reverend Soulis was witness.

This story of the devil's entry into the dead body of an old woman is such a tale as might occur to an old villager "warmed into courage over his third tumbler." Janet M'Clour, housekeeper for the minister, bears the stigma of being in league with the devil. To save herself from the righteous wrath of the "guidwives of Ba'weary" she renounces the devil and his works in answer to the minister's direct question. From that moment, however, she is fearfully altered. The minister leads her back to the manse "scrieghin' and laughin' as was a scandal to be

heard." On the next morning she appeared as one who had suffered hanging. Sometime later the minister encounters the Black Man in a papal cemetery. Following him, he sees the devil enter the manse. Upon being asked, Janet denies having seen him. A month later the minister finds Janet dead in her room--hanged from a single nail by a darning thread! Locking the door to her room, he retreats downstairs. From above in the room where the corpse is hanging, he hears footsteps. He runs out of the manse; the corpse follows him. In desperation the minister calls for the help of Heaven, and the Horror is struck down where it stood.

The structural emphasis on heightening and intensifying terror and the merging motifs of the ghostly and the diabolical approach the formula for the Gothic tale of terror of the 1790's more closely than do most supernatural short stories written during the late nineteenth century. Not only his selection of plot and material but his method of handling the supernatural elements related Stevenson to the schools of Mrs. Radcliffe and "Monk" Lewis. Although Stevenson never falls into the natural improbabilities⁴ of the one nor descends to the crude

4/ Mrs. Radcliffe explained away the supernatural elements in her novels by natural means; however, the means often bordered on the preterhuman. For instance, a Marchioness who has not seen her daughter since the child was two recognizes her at the age of seventeen without a moment's hesitation! Birkhead, op. cit., p. 42.

barbarities of the other, yet there is more than a vestige of Gothicism in the dark texture of Thrawn Janet.

The diabolical motif is presented in the fate of Janet M'Clour whose body is inhabited by the devil and in the effect on the mind of the minister who finishes his life "without relative or servant or any human company in the small and lonely manse." The witch is deprived of life, but the minister is deprived of a greater privilege--the enjoyment of life. The most frequently used device for bringing diabolism into a story is the one employed by Stevenson: an agreement (made previously or during the course of the action) between the devil and a mortal.

The terrible consequences befalling those who enter the devil's service or receive benefits from his power have their background in such infamous bargains as that of Dr. Faustus but descend more recently from Ambrosio's agreement in Matthew Gregory Lewis's novel The Monk. Ambrosio vows himself to the fiend on condition that he be released from the Inquisition. He is borne away to the wilds of the Sierra Morenas where the mocking spirit tells him, "You shall not quit these mountains. Fool that you were to confide yourself to a devil!"⁵ The condition of release has been fulfilled; no more will be granted. The wretched monk is then hurled into the abyss. Back of the horrible fate of Janet M'Clour lies

5/ Readings in English Prose of the Eighteenth Century, edited by Raymond M. Alden, Cambridge, Massachusetts, The Riverside Press, 1911, p. 690.

a knowledge of the "crude enginery of diabolism"⁶ which in the Gothic novel took the form of devils hurling their vassals from mountaintops. Once a mortal is committed to the devil's power there is no reprieve. To pronounce the name of God then brings swift and dire retribution from His enemy. Janet prays "For Christ's sake" to be saved from the women who beset her and denies in the Lord's name any liaison with the Black Man. Her horrible transformation begins immediately. A similar appeal to the power of Heaven precedes Ambrosio's death. On hearing the devil pronounce his sentence, Ambrosio "sank upon his knees and raised his hands toward heaven." The fiend gave him a look of fury, darted his talons into "the monk's shaven crown," and sprang into the air.

The ghostly motif unites with the diabolical in the figure of Janet M'Clour. The argument may be raised that Janet is not a ghost in the more usual sense of the term. Whenever this accusation is made, its basis can rest only in the French idea of ghost expressed by a word which English has adopted: revenant,⁷ a returned one. This limits the true ghosts to those who have died and been sepulchered and only then come back to haunt their former fellows. What a narrow concept is this! And of

6/ Scarborough, op. cit., p. 138.

7/ Present participle of French verb revenir, to return. One who returns from the dead; a ghost. A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles, edited by Sir James A. H. Murray, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1914, VIII, p. 595.

what delicate extremities of horror would ghostly literature be robbed if only the ghosts of those escaped from a tomb could rise from its pages.

The question, then, of Janet's belonging among the revenants depends upon what transpired with her between her denunciation of the devil and her appearance next day in the altered condition described by Stevenson:

...wi' her neck thrawn,⁸ and her heid on ae side, like a body that has been hangit, and a girn on her face like an unstreakit corp.

For our purposes in defining a ghost, Janet is dead. The story proves the point since she "lives"--continues were a better word--only to serve the Black Man for a dwelling place. A ghost by any definition is a preterhuman entity. To be so acknowledged, then, a human being must lose all features of humanity. If this change can be effected without conventional death and burial, the supernatural phenomenon of the "living ghost" results with what power to terrify, Thrawn Janet illustrates; and the story gains dramatic intensity by so much.

Stevenson's descriptions of her show that she has lost the essential feature of humanity--life--even though she preserves the nominal semblance:

...there was Janet comin' down the clachan--her or her likeness, nane could tell...

8/ Thrawn: crooked, misshapen. Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, fifth edition, Springfield, Massachusetts, G. & C. Merriam Co., 1948.

...she couldnae speak like a Christian woman, but slavered and played click wi' her teeth like a pair o' shears; and frae that day forth the name o' God cam' never on her lips. Whiles she wad try to say it, but it michtnae be...they never gave that Thing the name of Janet M'Clour, for auld Janet, by their way o't, was in muckle hell that day.

...and there was Janet washin' the cla'es... Syne she turned round, an' shawed her face; Mr. Soulis had the same cauld grue as twice that day before, an' it was borne in upon him what folk said, that Janet was deid lang syne, an' this was a bogle in her clay-cauld flesh...She was... croonin' to hersel', and eh! Gude guide us, but it was a fearsome face. Whiles she sang louder, but there was nae man born o' woman that could tell the words o' her sang; an' whiles she lookit side-lang down, but there was naething there for her to look at.

In Stevenson's plot structure there is a kind of austerity of events that heightens and intensifies the possibility of arousing terror. There are only five incidents leading to the climax: Janet's renunciation of the unholy alliance, her transformation into the semblance of one hanged, the minister's encounter with the Black Man and Janet's denial of his presence in the manse, the minister's discovery of Janet's corpse, and his final encounter with her ghost and its destruction. The rising action is swift and its terror intensified by the effect of a Gothic device originated to prepare the mind for extraordinary events--description of strange humors in Nature as embodied in wind, storm, and cloud.

Stevenson derives atmosphere for his story by employing weather sympathetic to a mood in which anticipation of an unusual event is foremost. This method of arousing

terror has been used repeatedly; however, Stevenson uses it with a difference. To play upon the nerves of readers with suspicions and forebodings was part of the ordinary routine in the Gothic novel and tale.⁹ An inexhaustible supply of foul and stormy weather was one of the most utilitarian "props" in a remarkable collection of properties bequeathed to the genre by its early advocates among whom was Anne Radcliffe. To add to the horror of her heroine's journey in the Mysteries of Udolpho and to set the mood for her subsequent adventures, Mrs. Radcliffe characterizes her description of Emily's approach to Udolpho by the sighing of trees, thunder, and sudden flashes of lightning. The gloomy, terrible forces surrounding Emily call up images "equally gloomy and equally terrible" in the girl's imagination. The weather in Thrawn Janet forsakes the violence that rends trees in the Apennines for an eerie calmness on Black Hill which oppresses the reader and is fraught with expectation of the dreadful.

Stevenson's weather is rather an ominous in-gathering than a furious onslaught of the forces of wind and cloud and rain:

9/ Passages describing wild weather and romantic scenery were repeated with but little variety again and again in Gothic fiction. The style of the descriptions became so conventionalized that one novelist, Mrs. Charlotte Smith, instead of depicting the terrors of a particular night merely said in Emmeline, "'Twas such a night as Ossian might describe" --and her readers knew what that implied! Montague Summers, The Gothic Quest, London, The Fortune Press, n. d., p. 47.

About the end o' July ther cam' a spell o' weather, the like o't never was in that countryside: it was lown an' het an' heartless; the herds couldnae win' up the Black Hill, the bairns were ower weariet to play; an' yet it was gousty too, wi' claps o' het wund that rummled in the glens, and bits o' showers that slockened naething. We aye thocht it but to thun'er in the morn; but the morn cam' an' the morn's morning, and it was aye the same uncanny weather, sair on folks and bestial.

Stevenson makes a careful point of the heat of the weather intensifying the chill which attacks the minister when he sees the Black Man and later, Janet M'Clour. The chill is one of the spirit, not the body. "Het as he was" when Reverend Soulis encountered the Black Man, "he took a kind o' cauld grue in the marrow o' his bones." He experiences the same feeling upon his return to the manse which he had seen the devil enter:

And there was Janet M'Clour before his een, wi' her thrawn craig, an nane sae pleased to see him. And he aye minded sinsyne, when first he set his een upon her, he had the same cauld and deidly grue.

In setting the scene for the climax of the story, "the nich o' the seventeenth o' August, seventeen hun'er' an' twal'," Stevenson plays with a truly Gothic touch in emphasizing the darkness of the night as being of a darker quality than usual. In the Gothic novel at its height any night hiding in its dark folds a dreadful adventure for the hero or heroine was a night of "uncommon" darkness:

...it fell as mirk as the pit; no a star, no a breath o' wund; ye couldnae see your han' afore your face,...It had been het afore, as I hae said, but that night it was hetter than ever...and even the auld folk cuist the covers frae their beds and lay pechin' for their breath.

This breathlessness is literally and figuratively the "calm before the storm." The first gust in the tempest rising to the climax comes as the devil leaves Janet's body:

...a wund gaed reishing round the fowes quarters
o' the house;¹⁰ and then a' was ance mair seelent
as the grave.

At the climax, the storm breaks, marking symbolically the release of the witchwife's body from its thralldom to the "deil":

...the thunder followed, peal on dirling peal,
the rairing rain upon the back of that;...

The devil is gone; the weird spell of his power is broken. The narrator says that "sinsyne the deil has never fashed us in Ba'weary;" however, Reverend Soulis is not released from his terror:

...Lang, lang he lay ravin' in his bed; and frae
that hour to this, he was the man ye ken the day.

- 10/ The rushing of wind associated with the Devil is another "tag" of Gothicism. In stories of the devil and his allies which embody the medieval conception of them, the Evil One arrives and departs in a rushing wind. "...borne upon sulphurous whirlwinds Lucifer stood before him..." is from the The Monk. Readings in English Prose of the Eighteenth Century, p. 685.

IV

The Ghost as a Symbolic Manifestation

Not all avenues of approach to the Supernatural lead the author through the dark corridors of the Occult or thrust him into the presence of the Devil. The mind active enough to achieve an intellectual relation with the Supernatural World finds it an annex to this world, easily entered, and not a separate habitation which no truth from this world can penetrate. The portals of the preternatural are not closed against the entrance of imaginations seeking to illumine human nature by means of another light--the light from another world.

If the author's intention is to present a truth about human nature which can transcend two worlds or to derive an added knowledge of humanity from an experience with the other world, the product of the relationship between himself and supernatural material is likely to be just such a story as Markheim.¹ This story of Stevenson's, in contrast to Thrawn Janet, aims at something other than provoking terror to entertain the reader--the level of the diabolical story. The level to which Stevenson raises the supernatural element in Markheim, the ghostly visitant, is a symbolical one. Janet M'Clour is the center of a machination designed by the powers of the other world with

1/ Selected Writings of Robert Louis Stevenson,
pp. 719-734.

one purpose: to terrify. Markheim's visitant has a meaning beyond a representation of the Supernatural World and a purpose more subtle than the deputation to haunt a mortal.

Markheim, who has murdered an antique dealer, is searching for his money, the object of the crime, when he is interrupted by a stranger. "The stranger tests the murderer by offering him a way of escape, by suggesting further crime to him, by showing him relentlessly what the consequence of each act will be, till in despair Markheim, realizing that his life is hopelessly weak and involved, decides to surrender it rather than to sin further. Step by step the nameless visitor leads him, Markheim, shuddering back from the evil that is suggested, thinking that the stranger is a demonic tempter, till at last the transfigured face shows him to be the nobler angel."²

In a different setting, twentieth century New York City, for instance, Markheim might be only a psychological study of the struggle in a man's mind between the two parts of his personality. But set as it is in the London of a century ago, it becomes an overt experience belonging to the world of the spirit. The drama played out behind the closed shutters of an antique shop is "insulated." The sounds which recall

2/ Scarborough, Supernatural in Modern English Fiction, p. 120.

us to the normal, human existence are almost absorbed, certainly deadened. Stevenson has created Hawthorne's "stage a little apart from life" on which such a dialogue as the one between Markheim and the visitant is entirely credible. And yet the story is not so far removed from life that the author loses the effect to be gained from the contrast and interaction of the two worlds. Through quick impressionistic sentences the world of thoroughfares and parties and people comes to us:

The ticking of many clocks among the curious lumber of the shop, and the faint rushing of the cabs in a near thoroughfare, filled up the interval of silence.

We learn immediately that it is Christmas outside. The dealer chuckles, "You come to me on Christmas Day..." Markheim replies that he seeks a Christmas present for a lady. The feelings of good will and gaiety which the holy season arouses are strangely incongruous with what Markheim feels before he murders the dealer: "Terror, horror, and resolve, fascination and a physical repulsion..."

In this story, where tone is more important than incident, two sentences suffice to tell of the method of the dealer's murder whereas three pages are devoted to an outline of what goes on inside Markheim's mind. Stevenson creates a picture through Markheim's conversation with the dealer of what kind of man the visitant has to win from evil. Cunning and deceit are reflected in the fluency of

the excuse for disturbing the old shopkeeper on his holiday:

I seek a Christmas present for a lady... and certainly I owe you every excuse for thus disturbing you upon so small a matter. But the thing was neglected yesterday; I must produce my little compliment at dinner; and, as you very well know, a rich marriage is not a thing to be neglected.

Only man mortally afraid of what horrors a self-examination would reveal could exclaim with Markheim's emphasis, when suddenly confronted with an innocent hand mirror: "I ask you...for a Christmas present, and you give me this--this damned reminder of years, and sins, and follies--this hand-conscience!" The irony of Markheim's last speech to the dealer gives the unpleasant, inhuman feeling of the cat playing with the mouse:

"It is very pleasant to stand here talking; and life is so short and insecure that I would not hurry away from any pleasure--no, not even from so mild a one as this. We should rather cling, cling to what little we can get, like a man at a cliff's edge. Every second is a cliff, if you think upon it--a cliff a mile high--high enough, if we fall, to dash us out of every feature of humanity. Hence it is best to talk pleasantly. Let us talk to each other; why should we wear this mask? Let us be confidential. Who knows, we might become friends?"

The last stroke of the portrait is laid on as the murderer looks his victim "hardily" in the face:

At best, he felt a gleam of pity...But of penitence, no not a tremor.

The feat of the visitant, securing the repentance of such a man as Markheim, seems preterhuman.

In his use of Time which plays such an important part in one world and is unknown in the other, Stevenson shows a real grasp of effect:

Time which had closed for the victim had become instant and momentous for the slayer.

There are many voices of Time in the shop. They remind Markheim that although Time seems to stand still where he has arrested life with his dagger as a horologist with interjected finger arrests the ticking of the clock, outside Time is hurrying, hurrying toward the discovery of his crime. A sense of Time underscores the dramatic intensity of the whole story.

Behind the shop's drawn curtains the reader, like Markheim, is apt to forget the outside world. And for a time we are absorbed in the world of unknown presences which Markheim senses around him from the moment of the crime. But twice during the story with the interpolation of one sentence, Stevenson brings all of London before us:

...the passage of a lad's feet, heavily running on the pavement, broke in upon these smaller voices and startled Markheim into the consciousness of his surroundings.

...now, in all the neighboring houses, he divined them sitting motionless and with uplifted ear--solitary people, condemned to spend Christmas dwelling alone on memories of the past, and now startlingly recalled from that tender exercise; happy family parties, struck into silence round the table, the mother still with raised finger; every degree and age and humor, but all, by their own hearts, prying and hearkening and weaving the rope that was to hang him.

From the moment of the murder the whole shop comes alive with unseen presences. Stevenson peoples the narrative with shadowy personalities. Markheim is "beleaguered by moving shadows". The hallucination that he is not alone, which seizes so strongly on Markheim's credulity, is Stevenson's overture to the entrance of the supernatural element into his story. To seize our minds with the same strong hold is his purpose in the repetition of Markheim's fear and the images which haunt him:

The light...showed dimly on the threshold of the shop. And yet, in that strip of doubtful brightness, did there not hang wavering a shadow?

...he could surely hear a stir of delicate footing--he was surely conscious, inexplicably conscious of some presence...and now it was a faceless thing, and yet had eyes to see with; and again it was a shadow of himself...

...he seemed to hear...the steps of another foot withdrawing up the stair. The shadow still palpitated loosely on the threshold.

The sense that he was not alone grew upon him to the verge of madness. On every side he was haunted and begirt by presences. He heard them moving in the upper chambers;... feet fled quietly before him and followed stealthily behind.

The visitant is the embodiment of all these seen, yet unseen; heard, yet unheard presences. Stevenson has adequately prepared for his entrance. The shock experienced when the Presence puts his head casually in at the door is not raised by his appearance. It comes rather with the

realization that we have been anticipating his coming.

The supernatural element as well as the real interest of the story lies in Markheim's visitant. Who is this specter? Our first clue comes as Markheim gazes at him:

...the outlines of the newcomer seemed to change and waver...and at times he thought he knew him: and at times he thought he bore a likeness to himself; and always, like a lump of living terror, there lay in his bosom the conviction that this thing was not of the earth and not of God.

Is he Markheim's Conscience? Markheim assigns him a less noble position. "What are you?" cried Markheim: "the devil?" Each successive sentence of their conversation as it leads Markheim closer to moral redemption discloses a nobler figure for his visitant until there emerges from the appearance of Evil the incarnate Conscience, the embodiment of man's nobler self, that has led him through the labyrinth of self-examination to the knowledge of the soul's truth. The theme, therefore, represented by the visitant, treats of the quality of evil.

Evil in this story is not merely negative--a cessation from good; it is active destruction of good. A statement of the theme is put into one of the apparition's speeches:

"Evil, for which I live, consists not in action but in character. The bad man is dear to me; not the bad act, whose fruits, if we could follow them far enough down the hurtling cataract of the ages, might yet be found more blessed than those of the rarest virtues."

Markheim's visitant, who comes in his likeness, is Good which looks evil, yet by his approach turns Man toward Good. He enters Markheim's presence as a devil and retires a kind of "Puritan Almighty"³ who has scourged Markheim's soul and led him through temptation to repentance. The visitant literally goads him into losing his life in order to save his immortal spirit.

Part of Stevenson's command of the supernatural nature of the story is his ability to keep the reader as uninformed and unsuspecting of the visitant's true nature as is Markheim. Simultaneous with maintaining the appearance of an evil spirit, the visitant performs the office of a guardian angel. Stevenson's means of accomplishing this seemingly impossible combination of tasks takes the form of a dialogue wonderful for its ambiguity:

"I care not in the least by what...you may have been dragged away, so as you are but carried in the right direction."

Markheim, of course, thinks the visitant indicates the direction of Evil.

"I have no objection to a death-bed repentance," observed the visitant."

This invitation to a life of crime redeemable at the last minute for a sneaking entrance into heaven does not appeal to Markheim to whom a remnant of high ideals

3/ Henry Seidel Canby, Short Story in English, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1909, p. 325.

remains, although he is a weak man. He recoils from the scorn which he believes he detects behind the visitant's professed belief in the efficacy of a death-bed repentance. This part of the conversation holds the visitant's first victory. From this point the dialogue moves relentlessly toward the climax. The visitor refuses to let Markheim see himself with any other than the unwinking eye of Truth. He refuses to be convinced or let Markheim be convinced that he has learned an unforgettable lesson from this crime. By his own answer to one simple question he is shown that "the future curve of his life leads only downward":⁴

"I will propound to you one simple question...and as you answer, I shall read to you your moral horoscope...are you in any one particular, however trifling, more difficult to please with your own conduct, or do you go in all things with a looser rein?"

"In any one? repeated Markheim, with an anguish of consideration. "No," he added, with despair, "in none! I have gone down in all."

Markheim seems to accept the verdict. "I behold myself at last for what I am." But there is one final test. The doorbell rings, announcing the maid's return. The demeanor of the visitant alters. In the best tradition of the devil and his allies, he offers Markheim a last minute reprieve. The quality of evil whose relation

4/ Henry Seidel Canby, loc. cit.

to the story is thematic is further illuminated by the words with which Markheim renounces temporary safety for moral salvation:

"My love of good is damned to barrenness; it may, and let it be! But I have still my hatred of evil..."

Markheim has traversed the final, difficult passage. All semblance of evil vanishes from the visitant outwardly, shadowing forth symbolically the inner change in Markheim:

The features of the visitor began to undergo a wonderful and lovely change; they brightened and softened with a tender triumph; and even as they brightened, faded and dislimned.

Markheim does not note the transformation in his visitor, but he feels the nature of the change in himself. "Life, as he thus reviewed it, tempted him no longer; but on the further side he perceived a quiet haven for his bark." "With something like a smile" he pronounces to the maid at the door the words that will save him morally forever:

"You had better go for the police... I have killed your master."

In a Poe story, William Wilson,⁵ which also treats the quality of evil on a symbolical level, Good is not merely cessation from Evil, as it appears to be in Markheim, but active participation in the Good. Wilson's double, the unexplained visitant in the story, symbolizes Conscience--a Good which by its method of approach turns Man to a more violent embrace of evil. Poe's interest

5/ Complete Poems and Stories of Edgar Allan Poe, pp. 277-292.

is not in arousing wonder by the aura of weirdness proceeding from the material itself--the level of the occult story, Ligeia. His interest is in portraying the tense and tragic story of a man pursued by his double; a symbol in his life whose meaning he does not comprehend. He is dogged, thwarted, exposed by this double till in desperation he kills him, only to realize that he has slain a part of himself.

The two adjectives, tense and tragic, used to describe Poe's story are not applied indiscriminately. Tenseness and a sense of tragedy develop simultaneously throughout the narration. The tenseness originates and is increased by the action which is more overt than is usual in a Poe story. The action is of two kinds: that which forms each of the four major incidents, internal action; and that which pervades the whole narrative with a sense of being pulled toward some decisive action terrible enough to climax all that has preceded, external action. The tenseness built up by the action in internal incident is illustrated by the scene in which the narrator discovers the identical likeness between the features of the sleeping William Wilson and his own:

Close curtains were around it (the bed), which...I slowly and quietly withdrew, when the bright rays fell vividly upon the sleeper, and my eyes at the same moment, upon his countenance. I looked;--and a numbness, an iciness of feeling instantly pervaded my frame. My breast heaved, my knees tottered,

my whole spirit became possessed with an abjectless yet intolerable horror. Gasping for breath, I lowered the lamp in still nearer proximity to the face. Were these-- these the lineaments of William Wilson? I saw, indeed, that they were his, but I shook as if with a fit of ague, in fancying they were not.

The tense sensation of waiting for something more clamitous to happen which leads the reader on from one incident to another toward the inevitable conclusion is more difficult to cite specifically, but Poe seems to make part of each sentence contribute to this feeling:

...first ambiguous monitions of the destiny which afterward so fully overshadowed me.

It was the pregnancy of solemn admonition in the singular, low, hissing utterance; and above all, it was the character, the tone, the key, of those few, simple, and familiar, yet whispered syllables, which came with a thousand thronging memories of by-gone days, and struck upon my soul with the shock of a galvanic battery.

A sense of impending tragedy grips the mind of the reader from the violent, self-derogatory outburst of the narrator in the opening paragraph and can be illustrated by these words from that passionate pronouncement:

...and a cloud, dense, dismal, and limitless, does it not hang eternally between they hopes and heaven?

The story might well be entitled "The Tragedy of William Wilson" since it conforms to Aristotle's definition of tragedy:

An imitation of an action...with incidents arousing pity and fear...(involving) a man

not pre-eminently virtuous and just,
 whose misfortune, however, is brought
 upon him not by vice and depravity but
 by some error of judgment...⁶

The effect which Poe preconceived for his story was the incitement of sympathy--pity exceeded his hopes--for the main character. He lets the narrator voice his design:

I long, in passing through the dim
 valley, for the sympathy--I had nearly
 said for the pity--of my fellowmen.

To this end Poe shows us Man a prey to "circumstances beyond human control," Man dogged not by the ghost of a person safely dead, but by the living ghost of what he should be--himself.⁷ In this story we witness a rare instance in which Poe's purpose is to raise as normal an emotion as compassion. And yet our compassion is tinged with terror at the element of fatality which prevades Wilson's life. The sharpest perception of the supernatural comes in the sickening conviction that he was borne to this fate--irrevocably.

Wilson's story is that of a man from whom "all Virtue has dropped as a mantle," leaving naked Evil--but evil to be pitied. The burden of the plot, as stated by Poe, is to relate "what chance-what one event brought this evil thing to pass." But according to definition,

6/ Aristotle's Poetics, edited by W. Hamilton Fyfe, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1940.

7/ The theme of a man haunted by a figure of himself is also used in a Kipling story, At the End of the Passage. Kipling's character sees his ghost standing on the veranda, and when he goes in to dine, he finds himself sitting at the table.

a tragedy must have a "succession of unhappy events." Poe's story does have such a succession. But even though there are several incidents in the plot its focal point is the final, irrevocable transgression, the murder of the other William Wilson, which leaves the murderer lost forever. With each incident, however, the narrator arrives closer to that "oasis of fatality"-- the murder. The four incidents are then a part of the single preconceived effect, having intrinsic interest. Each is a tense moment contributing to the sense of impending tragedy which excites sympathy and terror simultaneously.

The first incident at the academy pictures the "intolerable horror" of William Wilson at the unmistakable degree of his double's likeness to himself. The second incident is a scene of debauchery at Eton where Wilson fled after his startling discovery at the academy. He is interrupted "in the act of insisting upon a toast of more than wonted profanity" by the figure of a youth who whispered only two words in his ear: "William Wilson." The third scene at Oxford differs from both the scene that precedes and the scene that follows it. The vile act of which William Wilson is guilty is not interrupted, but exposed. Wilson had effected the total ruin of young Lord Glendenning by resorting to a gambler's tricks at cards, but his double prevented him from enjoy-

ing his despicable triumph by telling his friends to examine the linings of his cuff. In the last incident at a masked ball in Rome, William Wilson had just caught a glimpse of the gay, beautiful young wife of his host whom he is seeking with an "unworthy motive" when he again hears the whisper. This is too much! Terror, supine submission, weakness, helplessness are swallowed up in rage. The man who has been admonisher, destroyer, thwarter of every scheme in his life shall not dog him unto death! Dragging the other William Wilson into a small adjoining antechamber, Wilson stabs his double.

Like all tragic heroes William Wilson has some "passion or limitation" which effects his downfall. His is a passion for all passions. Poe prepares for the excesses of vice in Wilson's career which insure his final tragedy by several references to their cause:

I am a descendant of a race whose imaginative and easily excitable temperament has at all times rendered them remarkable; and, in my earliest infancy, I gave evidence of having fully inherited the family character. As I advanced in years it was more strongly developed; becoming, for many reasons, a cause of serious disquietude to my friends, and of positive injury to myself. I grew self-willed, addicted to the wildest caprices, and a prey to the most ungovernable passions.

In truth the ardor, the enthusiasms, and the imperiousness of my disposition, soon rendered me a marked character among my schoolmates...

The origin of William Wilson's double and, therefore, the origin of the story rests on a series of coincidences.

As the story progresses, they are disclosed. That the two boys possess the same Christian name and surname is "little remarkable" in comparison with the coincidences that follow. They were born on the same day; they entered the academy on the same day; yet the narrator says that "Wilson was not, in a most remote degree, connected with my family." The narrator subsequently discovers that "we were of the same height, and I perceived that we were even singularly alike in general contour of person and outline of feature." This "exquisite portraiture" of coincidence goes on to color even their voices, and Wilson's "singular whispers" grows into the very echo of the narrator's own.

The first high point in this progressive enumeration of coincidences too unnatural to lack a fatal design comes in the scene in which the narrator views what can no longer be the result of "meaningless imitation" of his gait, voice, habits, and manner. In the second, third, and final incidents the intervening double and William Wilson are dressed identically. This feat approaches the supernatural because of the singularity in design of the clothing which the double duplicates:

...white kerseymere morning frock, cut in...
novel fashion...

...an exceedingly luxurious cloak of rare furs...
of...fantastic invention...

He was attired, as I had expected, in a costume altogether similar to my own; wearing a Spanish cloak of blue velvet, begirt about the waist with a crimson belt sustaining a rapier. A mask of black silk entirely covered his face.

The final unmistakable coincidence of identity belongs to the climax:

A large mirror--so at first it seemed to me in my confusion--now stood where none had been perceptible before; and as I stepped up to it in extremity of terror, mine own image, but with features all pale and dabbled in blood, advanced to meet me with a feeble and tottering gait.

Thus it appeared, I say, but was not. It was my antagonist--it was Wilson, who then stood before me in the agonies of his dissolution...Not a thread in all his raiment--not a line in all the marked and singular lineaments of his face which was not, even in the most absolute identity, mine own!

In this story Poe abandons logical proof of an impossible premise for a bolder form of sophistry. The premise that there could be two men so identical and the conclusion that they are parts of the same individual are both supernatural; but by making the coincidences on which the premise of the story rests so astounding as to become abnormal and preter-human, Poe, having secured "a willing suspension of disbelief" for them, has moderated to the point of credulity by comparison and the supernatural quality of his climax and conclusion.

For a complete understanding of Poe's story it is necessary to approach the principal enigma boldly by asking, "Who is the double?" The narrator says that "...again and again in secret communion with my own spirit, would I demand the questions, 'Who is he?--whence came he?--and what are his objects?' But no answer was there found." No answer was to be found within himself because he was divided against himself. The narrative abounds in clues which leave

no doubt as to the identity of the other William Wilson when they are analyzed. One of the most obvious of these clues is a twice-repeated statement. "I fled in vain."⁸ Everyone flees in vain from his inner self, his conscience. A concomitant idea, that man and his inner self were united at some dim time of beginning, is expressed by the narrator in the sensation connected with his double which affects him strangely:

I cannot better describe the sensation which oppressed me, than by saying that I could with difficulty shake off the belief of my having been acquainted with the being who stood before me, at some epoch very long ago--some point of the past even infinitely remote.

Through two narrative threads, Poe develops in the mind of the reader the association of the other William Wilson with the Conscience of the narrator. Wilson's actions are overt expressions of the behavior of a conscience, and the narrator's reactions to them are the reactions of a man to his conscience. Throughout the story, the sentences describing the actions of Wilson are couched in terms which indicate, symbolically, the behavior of Man's conscience. When Wilson is first introduced into the story at the academy, his attitude toward the narrator's ascendancy is that of a conscience:

My namesake alone...presumed...to refuse implicit belief in my assertions, and submission to my will --indeed, to interfere with my arbitrary dictation in any respect whatsoever.

8/ Poe's italics.

His competition, resistance, and interference in Wilson's life is as pointed and also as private as a conscience:

intended effect, he seemed to chuckle in secret over the sting he has inflicted, and was characteristically disregarding of the public applause which the success of his witty endeavors might have so easily elicited.

...he might have been supposed actuated solely by a whimsical desire to thwart, astonish, or mortify myself; although...he mingled with his injuries...a certain affectionateness⁹ of manner.

Advice which is the form of much of Wilson's early interference is a quality characteristically associated with consciences. Instead, however, of those suggestions leading to the errors and follies that usually pass for advice among those of immature age and limited experience, Wilson finds in his double a keen moral sense.

The singular defect which identified Wilson to the narrator upon every occasion and which identifies him as Conscience for the reader is his voice. The double had a weakness "which precluded him from raising his voice at any time above a very low whisper." Thus Poe makes use of one of the most conventional symbols of Conscience, its whisper.

To further our identification of the "whisper of conscience" with the whispering voice of Wilson's double, Poe has his voice assume the same part in the story that a conscience would assume in Man's affairs. In the second, third, and final incidents of the story the whisper executes both the offices of a thwarting conscience. It intervenes so that the proposed deed is

9/ Poe's italics.

abandoned before being concluded (as in the profane toast); or it spoils the fruits of a vile act by immediate exposure at its conclusion (as in the gambling scene with Glendenning).

Aside from the actions of the double, which coincide with the offices of a conscience, Poe has another device to insure identification of the double as Wilson's conscience. The device is Wilson's own reaction to him which is the rebelliousness of a self-willed man possessed of a hypersensitive conscience:

I secretly felt that I feared him, and could not help thinking the equality which he maintained so easily with myself a proof of his true superiority; since not to be overcome cost me a perpetual struggle.

The intercession of Wilson's double in behalf of Good becomes as a result of its form and method, "impertinent supervision", the agent for driving Wilson to a more violent embrace of evil. Hitherto awed into supine submission to this imperious dominion by the "elevated character, the majestic wisdom, apparent omnipresence and omnipotence" of his double, William Wilson first begins to "murmur, to hesitate," then to resist actively his control. The power of the double like that of a conscience diminishes in the face of determined resistance to its admonitions. The moral fibers supporting the life of Wilson's double, like those of a conscience, lose their strength:

And was it only my fancy which induced me to believe that with the increase of my own firmness, that of my tormentor underwent a proportional diminution?

The climax, in which the double is dragged "unresistingly" from the ballroom and stabbed, is the symbolic outcome of this resistance to the voice of his conscience and the natural outcome of a desperate resolution to be no longer intimidated by an individual who is his double:

It was Wilson; but he spoke no longer in a whisper, and I could have fancied that I myself was speaking while he said: "You have conquered, and I yield. Yet henceforward art thou dead--dead to the World, to Heaven, and to Hope! In me didst thou exist--and, in my death, see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered thyself."

Modern psychology, perhaps, might call both this story and Markheim studies in schizophrenia, the "split" personality; but the authors were not in command of the terms of our high-pressure insanities nor were they burdened with the knowledge of the circumstances contributing to them in the degree that we recognize them today. William Wilson and Markheim may be considered precursors of the present stories of abnormal personality, but they have no taint of the "case study." A psychological interpretation could be imposed upon the material presented, but such an interpretation will always remain external to the symbolism in which the meanings of the stories are to be found. The visitants are no more the apparitions of brains diseased by psychoses than they are naked horrors of supernaturalism. Both these manifestations, the psychological and the occult, are beneath the level of the imaginative gaze of Poe and Stevenson as they wrote

William Wilson and Markheim.

In these stories Man and his visitant are more subtle than the "haunted and the haunter", but less abnormal than the sundered personality. Suggesting rather than boldly stating their symbolism, Stevenson and Poe show Man visited by a preterhuman presence, a force external to his world and his understanding, the symbol of a faculty internal to himself.

A symbolic treatment of the Supernatural World involving a representation of ideas other than those directly under its dominion seems antithetical. The problem of Good versus Evil treated in William Wilson and Markheim lends itself with ease to use in conjunction with supernatural backgrounds because both ideas have been so closely related to the other world by popular belief in beneficent and malevolent spirits. Evil has been especially characteristic of preternatural forces since the early time in which the supernatural sphere was considered the home of devils rather than ghosts. But the imagination of the author who envisions the Supernatural World and its appearances in this world as symbolical materializations will not be confined. His ideas may range even further than those of Stevenson and Poe from the conventional connotation of the influences emanating from the other world.

The Supernatural World can be a world of beauty which arouses delicate sentiments as well as a world of horrors

which excites unnatural emotions. This declaration is poignantly, enchantingly proven by Kipling's short story 'They'.¹⁰ From the moment that the narrator's car touches the turf of the "great still lawn" stretching before that "dreaming house-front," we are in an atmosphere preterhuman --but innocuous.¹¹ The child-ghosts are the very essence of childhood, preserving all of the little bit of deviltry that is a natural part of children's composition. And Kipling knows these shy ones so well! Was there ever a detail so telling as "the utterly happy chuckle of a child absorbed in some light mischief"--or "the set of little shoulders told me that fingers were on lips"?

The theme is probably the most delicate one that could be selected to be woven into a plot with a supernatural thread: the opening of the senses through love and grief. By making the woman who loves "them" a blind person so that she cannot see the ghost-children, Kipling removes the possibility of doubt that anything other than her Love has permitted her to see "them." Miss Florence has been admitted to a part of the special world usually opened to mortals by only two roads, neither of which she has traveled--bearing or losing.

- 10/ Rudyard Kipling, Traffics and Discoveries, Garden City, New York, Doubleday, Page & Company, 1920, pp. 281-310.
- 11/ The personated child-ghost is a creation of late nineteenth century supernatural literature. Only two Gothic novels contain references to ghostly children: James Hogg's The Wool Gatherer and Charles Maturin's The Albigenses. In neither of these novels are the children individualized; they appear only in groups and very briefly. Scarborough, op. cit., pp. 287-289.

Miss Florence is the person in the story in which the two worlds, material and spiritual, meet and merge. She is the symbolic figure of Love, that emotion which in its most selfless and therefore purest form exists without reason external to itself. Miss Florence loves "them" for no reason. She cannot love them for their origin. She has not borne; they are not hers. She does not love them for their form; she cannot see them. She does not love them for future hope of possession; she can never have more of them than she already possesses. She is the beautiful--yet pathetic--embodiment of the idea that "Love is blind." And yet she proves by her physical blindness which does not exclude her from a sensory perception of the spiritual world that Love's blindness is not without perception.

She knows how the narrator came to "House Beautiful." He thinks he is a trespasser and that his visits depend on an "if"--"if you will let me come again." Miss Florence knows that he has the "right" to come and that his visits are the result of that right. She tells him that he will come again. Through parenthood he has won the right to see and hear and touch these little ones.

The "other-worldliness" of the House and its inhabitants are subtly suggested by Kipling with a geographical clue. It is the realistic sort of proof the presence of which would suffice for making the spiritual actual and the absence of which causes conviction that the existence of House Beautiful rests on a more tenuous basis than actuality.

As the narrator begins to retrace his route on the map, he can find no trace of the place, nor can he find any allusion to the title in the "old county Gazeteer, generally so ample." A neighbor, "a deep-rooted tree of that soil," can help him no more than to give him the "name of a family which conveyed no meaning." In Kipling's England this was a serious indictment.

The dramatic appeal to the emotions is lost in most ghost stories when the reader "finds out" or supplies himself with a satisfactory explanation to cover the supernatural element in a story. This happens because the ghost story on the purely occult or on the diabolical level appeals only to the faculties of fright, wonder, and curiosity. These emotional states are fleeting and, if not supplied with new material, soon die. Only a more severe fright and a fresh enigma can sustain these emotional expressions. The appeal of 'They', however, being addressed to more delicate feelings through a fanciful blend of reality and spirituality that has more than a suggestion of symbolism, does not diminish after the sentence, "Then I knew," which marks the point where the elusive thread begins to unravel. Perhaps it is because this process is never quite completed in the story that 'They' continues in our thoughts. The threads in the story implying the presence of the supernatural cross each other in a pattern of such intricacy that it is impossible to follow every ply even as they unwind and to say, "This crossed here; this, here." A little of the unexplained,

the unaccountable, remains as in the strange scene with Mr. Turpin in which "the grip of some almost over-powering fear" pulls taut for a moment the delicate thread of the narrative.

The last scene convinces us of the enchantment of the place. The narrator resolves to come no more. He feels that it would be wrong. His presence might keep "them" from coming to Miss Florence. His sacrifice, unknown to the blind woman who pities him whom she once called lucky, assures Miss Florence of the continued companionship of the ghost-children. The sweet, yearning voice, calling, "Children, oh children," will not lack for an "answering shout behind the yews."

V
The Turn of the Screw: A Synthesis

Since there can be no objective form for the Supernatural World, it is presented as each author sees it. Like a diamond of many facets, hiding all shades of meaning in its crystalline depths, the subject of the supernatural gives off a spark of a different hue each time it is struck by the light of imagination. In its flash appear mysteries too frightful to be pursued to their resolution which, therefore, the writer of occult stories only half-reveals. In its sparkle the terrorist marks designs unconceivable from an origin other than the diabolical, and the symbolist sees the true colors of virtues, vices, and emotions whose extremities touch both worlds.

A mental prospect of the supernatural from which a view of the whole spectrum of these interpretations could be caught would be a story combining the shades of the occult, the diabolical, and the symbolical. A synthesis of this kind would form a "whole" of high artistry in the presentation of supernaturalism. In attempting such a story the artist is immediately plunged into the chaos of elements presented by three levels of materialization while constrained to select those maintaining the short story's singleness of tone. To return to the figure,

the interpretation derivable from the content of the story must afford the variety of the spectrum while its narration, its form, retains the integrity of one hue! With "cold artistic calculation" Henry James set out to write such a story, one that would be "an excursion into chaos while remaining...but an anecdote."¹ The product of his effort was The Turn of the Screw in which all that occultism, deiabolical design, and symbolism can contrive combine to form a masterpiece of dreadful suggestion. In 1898, when James published this novelette, people had been shuddering from reading ghost stories for centuries. In writing this tale, however, James had in mind a new shudder. All writers are intent on securing belief for the supernatural elements in their stories. So is James. The difference between the effect James seeks and that sought by other writers lies in the conception of the goal of the story. Having set out separately to frighten, teach, bewilder, arouse questions, or hold spellbound, the authors chose material to further the several purposes represented by their selective goals. James's goal, however, was a collective one and one that could be bluntly stated. Of his purpose in writing The Turn he says:

1/ Quoted in "Remarks from a Preface" reprinted from Preface to The Aspern Papers from The Art of the Novel by Henry James, with an introduction by Richard P. Blackmur; copyright 1934 by Charles Scribner's Sons. Mark Shorer, The Story, New York, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950, p.567.

"I meant to scare the whole world with that story."²

The whole world of readers ranges from those easily caught (slight fun for an author of James's subtlety) to those excessively fastidious concerning the story that obtains a momentary suspension of their disbelief. But by paying out the thread of the narration in the manner of an "amulette"³ to catch those not easily caught, James's gossamer net catches imaginations at every depth.

At various times it has been written that The Turn is a remarkable example of the objective ghost story, a study in abnormal psychology, and a tale of innocent children caught in the terrifying forces of diabolism. That this story represents "so many things to so many people" is evidence that the author succeeded in the creation of the absolute of supernatural evil which it would require to frighten minds on all three levels represented by the divergent views just noted.

The sensation of the ghostly in The Turn is achieved without recourse to the conventional expedients for attaining this result. The clumsy paraphernalia which accrues to the ghost from the time of the Gothic romance is totally lacking. The spirits of Miss Jessel and Peter Quint are quite unencumbered by sheets and

2/ Attributed to Henry James by William Lyon Phelps. Quoted in Ghostly Tales of Henry James, edited with an introduction by Leon Edel, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1948. p. 426.

3/ James's word.

clanking chains. The usual media of ghostly communication --the shriek or groan--could not have been wrung from them at any price. They appear silently; and their presence, a reading of the story will prove, is enough.

"Presences" is the correct name for what Miss Jessel and Quint are. Neither the governess who sees them nor Mrs. Grose who is made to acknowledge their presence ever calls them ghosts. Of course, the children, who counterfit an unawareness of them, do not call them ghosts. They are "hovering, prowling, blighting" presences, agents who cause the air at Bly to reek with evil. That this effect was James's intention is clear from the following statement: "I recognize that they are not ghosts at all, as we now know the ghost, but goblins, elves, imps, demons." Miss Jessel and Quint do not haunt the house of Bly in the vulgar sense in which a house may be haunted. James was more interested in the effect to be achieved from an obscure situation than in that to be secured by outlining details in the foreground action. Bly is haunted in the more refined sense in which the existence of the haunters is determined by the pressure of a sympathetic imagination. The existence of this sympathy is at once the key and the enigma of this ingeniously contrived supernatural romance. Does the malign influence of the ghosts proceed from the children's apperception of their presence or from an hallucinatory world of the governess, the reality of which she forces upon her charges?

James treats his ghosts from three angles, each of which contributes to their reality: that of the governess whose realization of the evil motive in their appearance comes during her second encounter with Peter Quint; that of the children, who deny their presence but are so glaringly changed by their influence; and that of Mrs. Grose, a "magnificent monument to the blessing of a want of imagination," who does not see the presences but recognizes them through the governess's observations, which are consistent with her own knowledge.

The first faint stirring of the evil spirits is heard by the young woman on the very night of her arrival at Bly:

There had been a moment when I believed I recognized, faint and far, the cry of a child; there had been another when I found myself just consciously starting as at the passage, before my door, of a light footstep.

And yet the response in her mind is so slight as to be entirely forgotten and not remembered even when she is confronted with the strange man on the tower and later the face at the dining room window. That the governess thinks of him only as a living human being like herself with a rational explanation for his conduct is made clear by the grounds on which she objects to his being there: his presence is a breach of social etiquette or a gross liberty. She "bridled" with the sense that if there was an "insane, unmentionable relative kept in...

confinement" her office demanded that she should not be ignorant of such a person. Proof that she considered his being there a violation of social etiquette is found in the care she takes to assure herself that she "had not been practised upon by the servants nor made the object of any 'game'." Her final decision concerning the man on the tower is that "we had been, collectively, subject to an intrusion; some unscrupulous traveller, curious in old houses, had made his way in unobserved, enjoyed the prospect from the best point of view, and then stolen out as he came."

In the conversation between the governess and Mrs. Grose after the man's appearance at the dining room window, James creates the terror of the young woman's awakening to the dread knowledge of the unhuman quality of her visitor. Mrs. Grose has already identified the man as Quint from the governess's description. The young woman asks, "What became of him?"

She hung fire so long that I was still more mystified. "He went too," she brought out at last.

"Went where?"

Her expression, at this, became extraordinary.

"God knows where! He died."

"Died?" I almost shrieked.

She seemed fairly to square herself; plant herself more firmly to utter the wonder of it. "Yes, Mr. Quint is dead."

On the human quality with which the ghost, Quint, was once associated, because the governess did not know that he was other than a human intruder, James continues to build the reality of his apparition. When he appears for the third time, only one note of the unnatural allies him to the hideous world he has just quitted. This unnaturalness is the lack of communication or sympathy between the ghost and the governess. Even between two strangers caught in such proximity as woman and ghost are caught, there passes some token conceding the other's presence. A comparison of the first and third encounters with Quint will illustrate:

We were too far apart to call to each other, but there was a moment at which, at shorter range, some challenge between us, breaking the hush, would have been the right result of our straight mutual stare.

The "right result" was prevented by distance, preserving the illusion of Quint's right to participate in the natural world. The third "interview"--a connotative word which James used intentionally--derives its hideousness from its total reality while lacking the medium for an expression of that which makes communion between two human beings possible: sympathetic acknowledgment of the presence of each other:

...hideous just because it was human, as human as to have met alone, in the small hours, in a sleeping house, some enemy, some adventurer, some criminal. It was the dead silence of our long gaze at such close quarters that gave the whole horror, huge as it was, its only note of the unnatural. If I had met a murderer in

such a place and at such an hour, we still at least would have spoken. Something would have passed, in life, between us; if nothing had passed one of us would have moved.

It is not through this sensitive, extremely perceptive woman that James identifies his ghosts, but rather through the unwilling, practical-minded Mrs. Grose. From the description by the governess, she immediately recognizes them as former employees at Bly, Miss Jessel and Peter Quint. The governess, having no previous knowledge of them, is thus free from the charge of having invented them. This point of objectivity is carried in two scenes of dialogue between Mrs. Grose and the governess and underscored by this later reference:

...I...asked her how, if I had "made them up," I came to be able to give, of each of the persons appearing to me, a picture disclosing, to the last detail, their special marks--a portrait on the exhibition of which she had instantly recognized and named them.

The shading which rounds out the figures of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel comes from the scenes involving Miles and Flora. We watch them, of course, with the sensitive eye of their governess. In the first encounter with Miss Jessel by the lake, Flora shows the ripening seeds of that awareness of evil which leads to the destruction of her innocence and beauty so evident soon afterward:

...her incomparable childish beauty had... quite vanished...she was literally, she was hideously, hard; she had turned common and almost ugly.

The means of accomplishing her destruction are nebulous in the first scene, but all the essential elements are present. The design involves a method to overcome the distance between the ghosts and the children. Miss Jessel appears across the lake, suggesting that the child come to her. Flora, playing on the other side, had picked up a "small flat piece of wood, which happened to have in it a little hold that had evidently suggested to her the idea of sticking in another fragment that might figure as a mast and make the thing a boat." The governess is aware of the sinister design:

"They're only seen across, as it were, and beyond--in strange places...; but there's a deep design, on either side, to shorten the distance and overcome the obstacle; and the success of the tempters is only a question of time. They're only to keep to their suggestions of danger."

"For the children to come?"

"And perish in the attempt!"

In the second encounter with Miss Jessel, Flora does take a boat, crosses the lake, and enjoys the company of her former governess for at least an hour before she is found. Her subsequent conduct illustrates to what utter destruction she has been enticed. During Mrs. Grose's spontaneous burst of emotion at seeing her little charge unhurt, the governess saw Flora's face, serious now,

peering at her over the woman's shoulder. When the child speaks it is "as if she had got from some outside source each of her stabbing little words." In the knowledge of the meaning of the recurring imagery of light used to describe the special quality of the innocence and beauty which had belonged to this child, the comment on Flora's expression assumes its full significance--"The flicker had left it." It is replaced by a "quick, smitten glare." What a hard, ugly, powerful light is seen in the little girl's face when we remember that Quint's look is described with the verb, "to glare." How irretrievably lost must be her former rosy glow. With this expression on her face, Flora becomes "the very presence that could make the governess quail," the embodiment of the evil intent, blazing on the face of Miss Jessel. She is utterly lost; Miss Jessel triumphs. Her triumph, however, does not end in gaining Flora. Mrs. Grose does not see Miss Jessel and throws the weight of the whole dreadful scene and its consequences for little Flora on the governess:

...with this hard blow of the proof that her eyes were hopelessly sealed I felt my own situation horribly crumble, I felt--I saw--my livid predecessor press, from her position, on my defeat,...

Flora, living, is lost to Miss Jessel; and Miles, dying, to Peter Quint. The same realization of her defeat visits the governess just before Miles dies:

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 bottomless, for, if he were innocent, what then on earth was I?"

In the struggle with the other presence the governess sacrifices Miles to his own fear. He interprets her exultant "There, there!" (by which she means to show him that the "white face of damnation" is gone from the window) as a direct answer to passionate demand, "Where?" In the instant that she gained him, he "uttered the cry of a creature hurled over an abyss." Miles's death is the consummation of all Quint's evil suggestions from strange, high places--the top of the tower, outside the window. Stripped of Jamesian subtlety, Miles's fate is another instance of what Incarnate Evil, Quint or the Devil, has been doing to its victims throughout the literature of all ages: destroying them.

This is a terrible story; the essence of its terror lies in the diabolical motive of the two predatory presences. What James wishes to express through them is a general sense of spiritual infamy; not a specialized evil action, but Evil capable of everything, of the worst that can be imagined. The story is all conveyed to us through the governess. She believes that Miles's innocence masks a precocious knowledge of the relations between valet and former governess. She becomes convinced that

the children get up to meet the apparitions at night. She believes that they willfully try to frustrate her attempt to save them. The confidence James had in his ability to portray the sinister presences of his ghosts is evident in his choice of the governess as narrator. She is an outsider, an observer. This choice for a terror story is paradoxical. Unmistakably a nightmare is most terrifying to the man who dreams it; therefore, a ghost should be most terrifying to the one whom it "comes for." The story, then, should be narrated by the haunted; but James rises above "rules" in The Turn of the Screw. Part of the horror of this story is that the haunted, Miles and Flora, welcome the haunters. They get out of bed at night to watch at windows and walk on the lawn with the ghosts, devising the most cunning plans to free each other for time with their dreadful friends. To Miles and Flora, Peter Quint and Miss Jessel are not "detestable, dangerous" presences. This realization on the part of the reader intensifies the drama of the tale.

Since James's story, which in most cases would have been a "participator story," is told from the point of view of an observer, its impact comes not from a glimpse of horrors--the usual method--but from the horror of the withheld glimpse. The governess cannot know what transpires when Miles and Flora are with "them." She realizes the limitations of her position:

"Oh, yes, we may sit here and look at them, and they may show off to us to their fill; but even while they pretend to be lost in their fairytale they're steeped in their vision of the dead restored. He's not reading to her,... they're talking of them--they're talking horrors."

What was impossible to get rid of was the cruel idea that, whatever I had seen, Miles and Flora saw more--things terrible and unguessable and that sprang from dreadful passages of intercourse in the past.

James realized his limitation too, and it is just this withheld glimpse that makes the impression of the story so powerful. Consider, for example, the incident of Miles's dismissal from school. The mystery of the reason for it is never resolved, but James creates a general sense of evil surrounding the boy's conduct that is much more startling than the direct account of an evil act would have been. This technique and the heightened effectiveness to be gained by its use is even more powerfully illustrated by the outline given of the relationship between the children and their former "friends."

"And you tell me they were 'great friends'?"
 "Oh, it wasn't him! (Miles) Mrs. Grose with emphasis declared. "It was Quint's own fancy. To play with him, I mean--to spoil him... Quint was much too free."

This gave me, straight from my vision of his face, such a face!--a sudden sickness of disgust. "Too free with my boy?"

"Too free with everyone!"

"There was something in the boy that suggested to you...that he covered and concealed their relation? (Quint and Miss Jessel's)...What it shows that they must, to that extent, have succeeded in making of him!"

"At all events, while he was with the man--"
 "Miss Flora was with the woman. It suited them all!"

The occult quality of the story derives from this intimate relationship, formerly existing between the servants and the children and now continued by their ghosts. A sense of the dreadful meaning behind the appearances of Quint and Miss Jessel is nowhere better expressed than in the governess's passionate statement of the situation she cannot fathom:

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

Of James's withheld glimpse it can truly be said, "Oh, the just enough and how much it is...!"⁴

The supernaturalism in The Turn is a combination of that element in the material of the story, the presences, and the supernatural element of James's manner, almost his very sentences. This manner is evident in his choice of title and the reference to it in the introduction:

"I quite agree...that the ghost's appearing first to the little boy, at so tender an age, adds a particular touch...If the child gives the effect another turn of the screw, what do you say to two children--?"

But the excruciating turn in the James story is derived not only from the numerical concept of two children, but also from the superlative concept. The children are surpassingly beautiful, divine; and, in contrast, what happens to them is terrible, dreadful in the same superlative degree. From

4/ They Walk Again, with an introduction by Walter de la Mare, New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1942, p. 27.

James's creation of the impression of special beauty in the children emanates the horror we experience at their transformation. The quality of the children, not the mere fact of there being two of them, tightens to its most unbearable point the screw under which the author has pinned our emotions.

James creates the special quality of his children by a repetition of highly suggestive, metaphorical language whose recurrence extends the images into symbols having a thematic relation to the story. When the governess looks at Flora for the first time, she is "the most beautiful child I have ever seen;" but more than that, she is a "radiant image," an "angelic beauty" with the "sweet serenity" of one of "Raphael's holy infants." She has "placid, heavenly eyes." Miles, too, is characterized in the same terms of pristine innocence. From him diffused the "same positive fragrance of purity" which the governess had from the first moment noticed as surrounding his little sister. He was "incredibly beautiful," possessed of "something divine" in "his indescribable little air of knowing nothing in the world but love." He was "an angel." That James devotes such prodigal care to awaken an awareness of the special beauty of the children cannot be accidental in so consummate an artist; cannot, then, be other than plan, design.

As the governess was "dazzled by their loveliness" and placed "under the spell" so the reader is captured.

There is another set of terms used in describing the children to emphasize a special quality in their beauty-- a brightness inferred from the repetitious occurrence of images pertaining to light. The governess sees Flora looking at her with "a great childish light." Miles has "a great glow of freshness" and a "real-rose flush" of innocence. Even when they are naughty their brilliance seems not to diminish. Flora has a "lovely lighted face" and considers "luminously" even when her governess finds her hiding behind the draperies to peer out on the lawn after midnight. Miles while explaining his questionable conduct "fairly glittered in the room," and the governess says that "it was his brightness indeed that gave me a respite."

These two verbal patterns which describe the children's beauty and particularly its light-giving quality make them innocent in the pristine sense--not merely uncorrupted, but incorruptible. And yet through the sensitive observations of the governess we see them change. They retain a degree of their beauty, like fallen angels, but the veil of it grows so thin that through their childish beauty we look on a vista of the evil that has opened to them. From this evil the governess tries to save them. Salvation, therefore, is a part of the symbolism of The Turn woven

in with the occult Supernatural World, represented by the ghosts, and the diabolism embodied in the absolute evil of their motive for appearing.

At the surface level the plot-action depicts a governess's attempt to save children from a preternatural understanding of evil; symbolically, however, her attempt depicts the struggle to frustrate Evil in its designs against the primitively innocent human Soul.

Only the vestigial remains of what elsewhere might have been Gothicism (and is Gothicism in Thrawn Janet) are recognizable in James's management of setting and background effects for the struggle of the governess. His choice of season and weather and other natural details might have made an undisciplined play for the emotions of the reader, a proceeding in the best Gothic tradition. Instead they prove his ability to achieve a ghostly effect exclusive of this conventional expedient. James's descriptions are a part of the story's delicate symbolism, involving Man's fall. They are not portentous or foreboding in themselves. This crude device would have moved his descriptions too close to the exploitation of descriptive details practiced by the "Goths". The background details of The Turn are used to deepen the reader's understanding of the story's symbolism. For instance, there is an almost Eden-like quality in the

references to Bly that underscores the innocence of the children, the serpentine diabolism of the ghosts, and the redemptory quality of the governess's role in "saving" them.

The quality of the evil which the governess fights on behalf of her charges also contributes to the symbolism involving Man. The evil in The Turn represented by the ghosts is an evil which advances insidiously, overcoming before it is recognized for what it is--if this is not pushing James's delicate symbolism into blatant allegory--as the serpent corrupted the original innocents. With this symbolism of Man in mind James's use of the supernatural medium becomes superlative, transcending the degree to which all other writers have raised the ghost story. Under the guise of a supernatural fairytale, James conceals a reality more horrible to contemplate than any of the apparitions in his volume of ghostly tales. He presents the deep-going ugliness which corrupted two children with a superlative intensity of artistic passion which is more heart-rending than the moan of any specter. Realizing that the mystery of the diabolical is more easily faced than the tenseness of a real situation in The Turn of the Screw, James provides an escape for our apprehensions through the loophole of the supernatural.

VI Postscript

In presenting analyses of this group of supernatural stories, the primary purpose has been to compare the techniques of the authors and to illuminate their method of beguiling the belief of the reader. If, however, the discussion has failed to show also that the supernatural short story is an artistic creation on the same high level of integrity with the story which has other material for its subject, then the discussion has failed to bring about one of the conclusions it desired.

To decide on the literary merit of the supernatural story it is well to recall how many great writers whose true fields lay in the treatment of other more natural subjects still had the desire to make an excursion into the supernatural realm. These erratic excursions have not always resulted in notable contributions to the literature of supernaturalism, but they show the widespread and long-enduring vogue of the species. At various times, however, a latent partiality for the occult, the uncanny, the unseen has produced such masterpieces of terror and suspense as Lytton's The Haunted and the Haunters and Melville's Benito Cereno. Dickens, too, wrote a "ghost story," although he could not forego a jocular manner and treated Morley without decorum in A Christmas Carol.

American literature is immeasurably richer for Hawthorne's mournful reflection on the mysteries of the supernatural even though its frightful manifestations did not interest him. Similar examples can be found in every great period of literature.

During the course of this paper, the stories of five authors have been introduced. Of this number none but Poe made the supernatural story his characteristic medium of expression. James chronicled the contrasts between American and foreign civilization in an impressive list of novels. Kipling recorded the pageantry of an empire in novel and story and poem. Stevenson is first of all a teller of adventure stories. All, nevertheless, wrote supernatural tales which have since been accorded a position of supreme artistry among their compositions.¹ No list of the world's most powerful short stories, unless restricted in subject, would exclude Markheim. Nor could 'They' fail to be included in the list of the world's most beautiful and moving ones. It is almost a platitude to reaffirm that with The Turn of the Screw Henry James dowered the literature of the short story with a masterpiece of narration, but a statement of

1/ Clay Shuttered Doors, the Hull story, is not included as a story of the same reputation and literary worth as The Turn or 'They'; however, it is at the present time frequently anthologized and is the author's best work. The story has integrity of purpose and admirably illustrates the art of the teller of supernatural tales.

that reputation which it enjoys as a masterpiece is pertinent here.

All of these men--Kipling, Stevenson, James--were masters of the short story art. They brought this mastery, this command over form and content, no less to the composition of their supernatural tales than to the treatment of their realistic subjects. In a comparison with the artistic success of their other works, the techniques of their ghostly tales lose nothing. No more felicitous marriage of form and content is to be found than that in their supernatural stories. Striving for perfection in story method, character delineation, style, and attitude toward material is evident in equal measure with that in their other works. Who having read Markheim would claim a more intimate acquaintance with another character from Stevenson's pen unless mere length of words be indulged? Did Kipling achieve a more poignant expression of human emotions in Without Benefit of Clergy than in 'They'? Can the style, the soar and lift and flight of it between the high and low, the language of ordinary conversation and the language of impressionism reach a finer degree of effective expression in any novel of James than it does in his novelette The Turn of the Screw?

To fix their literary merit, these stories may be counted separately for a tally of their individual effects

or collectively for the impact of a group expressing one subject: the influence of the Supernatural on Man through one of its manifestations, the ghost. Added separately or collectively, however, the "whole" created in the reader's mind transcends the mere sum of the fusion's of form and content--method, character, style, attitude --mentioned earlier. Granted that a total in excess of the separate techniques contributing to a story is the effect of all great fiction, this result is distinguished in the supernatural story by a heightened intensity emanating from the material itself. In the stories analyzed here, the effect of the whole rises to such perfection that it seems the result of artlessness rather than design. The outcome of the story moves the reader beyond an explanation of its hold on him; yet he experiences a mental reaction as palpably as he experiences the shudder or quick intake of breath which may be the story's overt effect on him.

With assurance it may be stated that the supernatural short story is worthy of serious consideration and careful study; but for Ligeia, 'They', Markheim, and The Turn of the Screw the final judgment can be only this: these stories are examples of high literary art.

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