Psychoanalytic Criticism of the Life and Works of Henry James.

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PSYCHOANALYTIC CRITICISM OF THE LIFE AND WORKS OF HENRY JAMES

A Dissertation

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in

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by

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B.A., Louisiana State University, 1961
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ABSTRACT

A survey of the psychoanalytic criticism of Henry James reveals the popularity of psychoanalytic theory among modern literary critics and the diversity in their approaches to it. Psychoanalytic criticism of James varies in response to changes in psychoanalytic theory and the popular acceptance of it. For example, critics of the 1920's and 1930's adopted the practice, then current, of using psychoanalysis to condemn Victorian sexual repressiveness and to condemn James as a typical Victorian. Later critics became more complex and cautious in their use of Freudian theory or departed from it to employ the modified theories put forth by the Neo-Freudians or the Jungians. To the Freidians it was significant that he was an inhibited Victorian gentleman whose writings are ambiguous, full of disguised sexual implications and suggestive symbolism. Neo-Freudians later found in his work evidence of an inferiority feeling and a need for self-fulfillment. Jungians noted a rebirth archetype which has a possible biographical significance.

In their understanding of psychoanalysis, critics of James range from practicing psychoanalysts who adhere rigidly to the concepts of their respective schools, to laymen who are essentially ignorant of psychoanalysis but
who apply those concepts which have been widely popularized or have been used previously by other critics, often misinterpreting them, as, for example, early critics misinterpreted Freud's views on sexual freedom. Most are primarily students of literature who select and combine those psychoanalytic principles which they feel best explain James or support their own critical theories. Most of the major themes running through Jamesian criticism are derived from the contributions of only a few critics, such as Van Wyck Brooks, who established the stereotype of James as expatriate, and Edmund Wilson, who stressed the "ambiguity" in his personality and writings.

According to their preconceived opinion about James or about the nature of the artist, critics treat him as a psychologist or as a neurotic case. Peter Coveney and Robert Rogers, for example, analyze his works as unconscious revelations of his repressed desires and ignore their conscious and objective elements. Van Wyck Brooks and Maxwell Geismar call him neurotic because of their personal distaste for his politics or morals. In contrast, Edmund Wilson and Leon Edel treat the works as case studies by an intuitive psychologist, with an extraordinary insight into personality and motivation, derived partly from introspection.

Despite little evidence to support such a view into the workings of his own mind, Oscar Cargill even suggests that James may have knowingly applied the theories of Freud
and his predecessors. In any case, James shared with his contemporaries the Romantic interest in exploring beneath the surface of human behavior which, according to Lionel Trilling, later culminated in the work of the psychoanalysis.

The psychoanalytic criticism of James reveals certain failures of psychoanalytic criticism in general—its reductiveness, its tendency to degenerate into wild, unfounded speculation, its inexactness, and ability to serve as "proof" for differing interpretations. Nevertheless, psychoanalytic criticism has had a favorable effect on James's reputation. It drew attention to him which he might otherwise never have received by destroying the early view of his works as merely cold and mechanical dissections of character and revealing them instead as the disguised expression of intense passion. It accounted for the ambiguity and uncovered under the abstractions and vague allusiveness a hidden meaning more acceptable to the modern reader than the more obvious traditional interpretations. It showed that James was a great psychologist, dealing with eternal human conflicts, whose works can not only survive, but benefit by reinterpretation in the light of modern theories of behavior.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Psychoanalysis has had a tremendous influence on modern literary criticism. Many modern critics have adopted the psychological theories of Freud, Jung, or the Neo-Freudians as the basis for their analyses and evaluations of literature. Psychoanalysts themselves have written essays on various writers and their works. Some writers, like Shakespeare, Kafka, Poe, T. S. Eliot, and Henry James, have been the subject of hundreds of such studies. Frequently, psychoanalytic criticism has been responsible for completely revising critical attitudes toward certain writers. Such is the case with Henry James. It is the purpose of this study to survey the psychoanalytic criticism aimed at explaining and evaluating the life and work of Henry James in order to show the various types of criticism which result from the practical application of psychoanalytic theory to the works of one man and to show just how psychoanalysis has affected this man's reputation and has changed the popular concepts about the man and his works.

I chose Henry James because the great quantity and variety of psychoanalytic criticism which has been applied to him provide almost a summary of the field of psychoanalytic
criticism. Within this study, I hope to clarify some of the reasons for James's popularity with the psychoanalysts.

I shall divide the psychoanalytic criticism of James into three major groups on a rough chronological basis in order to show the strong influence of certain of the early critiques on later developments in Jamesian criticism. Within each period, however, I have found it clearer and more instructive to group the critical essays discussed according to their theme, their method, or the particular aspect of James treated in the essay. The periods are: criticism of James to 1930, criticism of James from 1930 to 1940 (some minor criticism from this second period is included in the earlier section), and criticism of James from 1940 to the present. The quantity of material produced in the last period is so much greater than that produced in the two earlier periods that I need four chapters in which to cover it all, but it is of such diversity that a chronological arrangement would result in confusion and would demonstrate nothing about the critics or their conclusions about James. Therefore, I have divided the critical essays of the third period according to whether they are biographical in intent or whether they represent analyses of the works. The biographical material, I have organized according to the critic's thesis to show the direction of influence from one critic to another. The criticism of the works, I have subdivided both according to the work criticized—with one lengthy chapter devoted to analyses of "The Turn of the Screw"
and two briefer chapters to criticism of James's other works -- and according to the critic's approach--whether he takes the work to be a deliberate psychological study or a neurotic fantasy of the author's.

In surveying the psychoanalytic criticism of Henry James we find a great deal of diversity and inconsistency among the critics in the ways they use psychoanalysis and in the conclusions they draw from it. This diversity has its origins in differences among the critics themselves. Psychoanalytic critics do not constitute a well-defined "school" of criticism, but are simply biographers and literary critics who use psychoanalysis in varying degrees, as part of their comment on a particular author and his works. Critics who may be classified as "psychoanalytic" range all the way from practicing psychoanalysts, who in their criticism adhere rigidly to the concepts of their respective school of psychoanalysis, to laymen who are essentially ignorant of psychoanalysis but who apply to art those concepts and methods which have been widely popularized or which had been used previously by other critics. A critic who has only a vague knowledge of Freud, Jung, or Adler may use their concepts without intending to, simply as part of the modern way of thinking, and may find Oedipal conflicts, defense mechanisms, unconscious motives, childish perversions, archetypal patterns, or inferiority complexes in every writer he criticizes. Furthermore, he tends to abstract these concepts from their original framework, to misinterpret them, modify them, and
confuse them with other theories. Therefore, it is often impossible to say whether a given critic at any specific time is being accidentally or deliberately psychoanalytic, unless he tells us, which very few do.

Not only do critics vary in their understanding of psychoanalysis, but they vary in their applications of it. Needless to say, a critic's own nature and interests determine his use of psychoanalysis in his criticism, just as his own interests in a particular author determine his use of psychoanalysis in understanding and evaluating that author. For example, the literary criticism of the psychoanalysts themselves is often simply an extension of psychoanalytic theory to explain a work of art as an expression of, and as an endeavor to solve, the personal problems of the artist, or to reveal the art as a kind of clinical "case history," illustrating one or another aspect of psychological theory. But many critics use psychoanalysis to develop a literary or social theory which they then apply to practical criticism, sometimes combining essentially psychological considerations with problems of form, of the genesis of a work, of its meaning for the age, and of its ultimate value as art. We often find such critics taking more trouble to adjust the author to their preconceived theory than to understand him. Others may select and reject among psychoanalytic concepts, combining them with other psychological and social theories, and even readjusting them, simply to support a preconceived opinion—favorable or unfavorable—of a particular writer.
Several critics apply to one work by James psychoanalytic concepts which have previously been applied to the same work, but their interest in psychoanalysis extends no further than this single application. A few, in fact, seem to be more influenced by what other critics say than they are by anything they may know of psychoanalytic theory.

Psychoanalytic criticism may deal with James's life or with his works, may treat him as a psychologist or as a psychological case, may analyze his works as studies in human psychology or as neurotic fantasies, with varying degrees of emphasis and in various combinations. For example, one critic, by interpreting the works as though they were James's dreams, may show him to have been a kind of neurotic, while another may apply the same method to reveal that he was a conscious and deliberate writer of psychological "case histories." In many cases, psychoanalytic methods are applied to the understanding of a single work, without reference to the author or to his intentions. Still other critics look in James's works to understand, and often to condemn, the society in which he lived, on the assumption that James and his characters were typical representatives of that society.

This critical diversity is due to the diversity of psychoanalysis itself, which since its beginning has been revised, expanded, and broken into three major schools—Freudian, Jungian, and Neo-Freudian. Because the principles and methods of each school are often of a type that can be interpreted in a variety of ways and applied with a variety
of results, and because critics adopt and combine the theories of the various schools rather arbitrarily according to their personal needs and preferences, it is impossible in many cases to place an individual work of literary criticism clearly into one school or another. Therefore, in a brief summary I will try to distinguish these three schools of psychoanalysis as they pertain to the criticism of Henry James, in order to provide a basis for identifying and assessing these concepts when they appear in the critical works to be discussed.

Freudian Psychology

Psychoanalytic critics may apply Freud's theories about the nature of man to James or to his characters (sometimes as though they were real people), using Freudian methods of investigating hidden motives from symbolism, patterns of speech, gaps in logic or illogical behavior, dreams and fantasy. Freudian critics can be distinguished by their emphasis, directly or by implication, on unconscious motivation, on the conflict between unconscious desire and conscious aims, on the interaction and tension among the three personality systems—the id, ego, and superego—and especially by their attributing a sexual origin to almost all James's personal and artistic peculiarities.

Perhaps because James wrote a great deal about his own childhood and included children in several of his stories, we find critics making extensive use of Freud's theories
about the importance of childhood development and sexual maturation, noting James's failure to progress from childish stages of development, his castration anxiety, his early fixation on his mother, his ambiguous attitude toward his father, and his consequent inability to fully resolve his Oedipal conflict in the phallic stage. Another Freudian concept which, because of his large and unusual family, is frequently applied to James is that of the expansion of the Oedipal complex to a family complex, in which the child's brothers and sisters come to represent for him the father and the mother or in which there is a rivalry among brothers and sisters for the affections of the parents.

Critics also apply to James or to his characters Freud's belief that if, as a result of childhood failure to mature properly, a person represses his sexual desires, he may develop neurotic anxiety—a general state of tension and vague fearfulness—or some hysterical symptom. Some find in James or in his characters evidence of the extensive use of Freudian defense mechanisms—projection, reaction formation, repression, regression to an earlier stage of life, or withdrawal from life—to protect against the awareness of these desires.

Freudian critics find that art functioned for James in one or both of the ways identified by Freud in his writings about the artist—as a form of work activity into which the artist channels, "sublimates," his libidinal energy, and as a type of dream fantasy or neurotic hallucination in
which he unconsciously gratifies "either the egotistic craving of ambition" or his erotic desires.\(^1\) Freud's insistence on the close relationship between the artist and the neurotic provides justification for those critics who wish to make an unfavorable evaluation of James. They are aided by the fact that the terminology of psychoanalysis is often unnecessarily reductive and belittling. In urging men to face the unpleasant facts about themselves, the psychoanalysts have tended to overstress these facts and to characterize man as nothing but a bundle of unconscious instincts and desires.

However, Freudian psychology allows a critic to consider the artist as more than merely a "successful neurotic." In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud suggests that dreams and artistic imitation may also be motivated by the repetition compulsion—a method for restoring control of an unpleasant situation by returning to it again and again in fantasy—and thus may serve the artist, not as an escape, but as a means to help him face and conquer the world of reality.\(^2\) In addition, artists to Freud are intuitive psychologists who have a special sensitiveness of perception in regard to the hidden feelings of others, and the courage to give voice to


their own unconscious minds." According to their taste, critics analyze James as either a neurotic or as an intuitive psychologist. Freudian psychology provides a justification for both views.

Freud's insistence on the relation of dreams and daydreams to imaginative creation leads the Freudian critic to speak of James's works as though they were his dreams—in terms of unconscious wish fulfillment, discharge of libido, manifest and latent content, repression, resistance, displacement, transference—and to apply to them the methods of symbolic analysis and free association to discover the artist's hidden motivations. Critics often apply to James's works Freud's belief that the "relation between a symbol and the idea symbolized is an invariable one," and therefore, "symbols make it possible for us in certain circumstances to interpret a dream without questioning the dreamer." In dreams, Freud says, symbols are almost exclusively used to represent sexual objects and relations; long, narrow objects, such as keys, sticks, and knives, signify the male organ; hollow objects—boxes, cases, and cupboards—the uterus. "Thus, rooms in dreams are usually women. . . . A dream of going through a suite of rooms is a brothel or harem dream." 

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4A General Introduction, p. 158.
A problem resulting from this approach is the tendency of some Freudian critics to dismiss the obvious function of an object in a story and to interpret everything in terms of a hidden sexual symbolism. In fact, this tendency has become so much a part of the modern way of looking at life and art that Leon Edel complained in 1961 that his students "persist in seeing only the 'sexual symbolism' in a work and are in perpetual pursuit of it at the expense of the work's substance and artistic and moral purpose." Many such critics ignore Freud's cautions that because dreams are deliberate distortions, they are almost always ambiguous and cannot be fully understood without a full history of the dreamer and a thorough knowledge of all the associations connected with his fantasy. These, of course, in the case of the artist, we seldom have access to.

The other method by which Freud studies dreams and neurotic hallucinations is that of "free association," according to which a neurotic patient talks freely about his dreams and fantasies, and the analyst, listening for recurrent themes and apparent gaps in logic, discovers what the patient is trying to hide. Because free association is impossible to apply to the artist, Freud himself and the


critics who follow him (including some Jamesian critics) use a variation on it. They study the lives of the authors, their letters, and autobiographical writings for recurrent themes and symbols, significant omissions, and for similarities to the fictitious writings.

Unfortunately, what critics often do is to substitute their own associations for those of the author and then attribute them to him, often confidently putting forward vast and complex theories derived from a few statements in a single work of art, under the delusion that they are being objective and scientific. William J. Griffen notes that the analyst who deals with a dead author must supply the associations that an image suggests, must dream the dreams, and make the identifications, and may thus unconsciously read his own problems into someone else's art. Because a symbol may have many meanings and meaning may be disguised by displacement, condensation, inversion, and transference, the critic can easily find grounds for any interpretation that pleases him.8

Even very early in the twentieth century, critics were likely to have some knowledge of Freud, and there is some possibility that Henry James himself was familiar with some Freudian concepts. Freud's first work on psychology, a

brief preliminary study for the book Studies in Hysteria, was published on January 1 and January 15, 1893, in the Neurologisches Centralblatt. In April 1893, this article was reviewed by F. W. H. Myers, a friend of the James family, at a general meeting of the Society for Psychical Research in London, and his review was printed in their proceedings the following June. According to Francis X. Roellinger, Jr., Henry James read and studied the reports of this society, of which William James was vice-president from 1890 to 1893 and president from 1894 to 1896. William James included a comment on this early study in a "Review of Janet, Breuer and Freud, and Whipple," in the Psychological Review of March 1894, in which he stressed the importance of the discovery that the cause for neurotic symptoms may be "subliminal" or unconscious memories of a psychological "shock." Thus, even before Freud had published any major works, some of his basic concepts were already becoming known among European and American psychologists (and, incidentally, among people connected with Henry James).

The full-length book, Studies in Hysteria by Joseph Breuer and Sigmund Freud, first appeared in 1895. In the next year, in one of his Lowell lectures on psychopathology,

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10 "Psychical Research and 'The Turn of the Screw,'" American Literature, XX (January, 1949), 403-404.

11 Psychological Review, I, 199.
William James again commented on the possible usefulness of these new discoveries.\textsuperscript{12} In 1900, Freud's second important work, \textit{The Interpretation of Dreams}, was published. By 1905, Freud had published \textit{The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality}, and \textit{Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious}, and had come to the attention of scientists throughout the world. In 1909, G. Stanley Hall, an eminent American psychologist and president of Clark University invited Freud to address the meetings commemorating the founding of the university. The lectures were published in \textit{The American Journal of Psychology} in April 1910.\textsuperscript{13} After this, articles on Freud appeared regularly in technical journals.\textsuperscript{14} According to Frederick J. Hoffman, intellectuals and artists had already begun to see the possibilities of the new psychology.\textsuperscript{15}

As early as 1913, Freud's ideas were becoming known to the general public, mostly through popularizations in laymen's magazines. In 1913, English and American critics were able to read the first English translation of one of Freud's major works—\textit{The Interpretation of Dreams}. After


\textsuperscript{13}XXI, 181-218.

\textsuperscript{14}Claudia Christopherson Morrison, \textit{Freud and the Critic: The Early Use of Depth Psychology in Literary Criticism} (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1968), pp. 6, 11.

1913 there was a rapid increase of interest in Freudian psychology, and by the twenties, Freudianism had really penetrated the thought of England and America. We can assume that any critic writing in this period had had ample opportunity to learn a great deal about Freudian psychology. Freud's works had been translated into English and, in popular books and periodicals, translated from technical language to that of the layman. The tremendous popularity of Freudianism in this period is attested to by Mark Sullivan's estimate that by the 1920's there were over two hundred books dealing with Freudianism. Many of these early books and articles reveal a superficial understanding of Freud among the general public, centering around a few basic ideas about dream analysis, the unconscious, the "complexes," and the misconception that Freud encouraged sexual looseness.

By the thirties, Freudian psychology had developed from a popular fad to a part of the modern way of viewing life, as it remains today. In addition, by this time, the wild enthusiasm for psychoanalysis had settled into a more serious discussion of the value of Freud's theories. Scientists began to question their scientific validity. Marxists objected to Freud's failure to take account of

16 Ibid., p. 58.

17 Our Times: The United States, 1900-1925 (New York, 1932), IV, 171.

social and economic factors. Many people, from the clergy to psychoanalysts themselves, rejected the strong emphasis on sex. Several followers of Freud had begun to rebel early and by the thirties were themselves well established.

Jungian Psychology

Carl Gustav Jung broke away from Freud about 1911. Many of his theories too have become part of the modern way of thinking and have had a strong influence on literary criticism since about 1940, and appear in the criticism of James mostly in the 1950's and 1960's. Although Jung developed an extensive theory of individual psychology, Jungian literary criticism is based on his theory of the collective unconscious and its expression in art. Jung divides art into two types: the psychological work of art takes its material from the realm of conscious human experience, on a level which "nowhere transcends the bounds of psychological intelligibility"; the visionary type of art derives its existence from the obscure and "timeless depths" of the collective unconscious, "which surpasses man's understanding."^19

Jungian critics derive their method of analysis from Jung's theory of archetypes, the "deep presentiments" of the collective unconscious which often serve as "balancing or compensating factors" for those problems confronted in actual

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These archetypes, when expressed in art through myth and symbol, may have a "healing and redeeming" power for the artist and the audience. The procedure of the Jungian critic is to identify the universal symbols, myths, images, and recurrent patterns of thought and behavior in a work of art, and by showing that these represent archetypal patterns bring to conscious understanding the power of the visionary experience. Thus they completely ignore the author's personal life or his intentions in his art, for to them he is interesting only when he rises above the individual and, drawing on the common soul of all mankind, becomes an "impersonal, creative process." 

The Jungian viewpoint was popular because of what Stanley Edgar Hyman calls its "collective and affirmative nature," which allows the critic to go beyond the individual, the personal, and restores to myth, legend, religion, and art a kind of social value as purveyors of Truth which had been denied them by Freud. To the Jungians, fantasy is Truth, because in fantasy we dip into the collective mind of the race.


21Modern Man, p. 172.

22Tbid., p. 168.

Neo-Freudian Psychology

Unlike Jung, who worked away from Freud's theories of the id to a kind of mysticism and glorification of the irrational, the Neo-Freudians worked from his concept of the ego to a commonsense view of man as a conscious, responsible being, master, not victim, of his fate. As a result of this change in emphasis, they are often known as Ego Psychologists. They are also called Individual Psychologists, because they concentrate on personality integration and the development within each individual of a unique "self system," or Social Psychologists, because they relate personality development and motivation to interpersonal relationships rather than to biological processes. Under the heading "Social Psychological Theories" Hall and Lindzey mention several of them—Alfred Adler, Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, and Harry Stack Sullivan—whose works have had a tremendous influence on modern thought.

The ancestor of the group, Alfred Adler, broke with Freud in 1911. Adler published most of his work in the 1920's, and according to Ruth L. Munroe, it quickly became popular with people outside the analytic profession, partly because his theories are closer to common sense and common observation than Freud's and are thus more immediately

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appealing than the "pansexualism" and "pessimism" of Freud. Since then, many of Alfred Adler's formulations, like Freud's, have become part of the common stock of clichés about personality,\textsuperscript{26} and as such they are often used by psychological critics of Henry James.

Adlerian critics of James, like the later Neo-Freudians, can be identified because of their stress on the feeling of inferiority and the need for security, rather than the sexual impulse, as the great driving force in man. Each young child feels helpless and inferior compared with the adults around him, and he develops a desire for compensation, for superiority. From the world around him--his parents, friends, teachers, books--he derivesthe self-ideal, a fiction of what he would like to be. This becomes his unique goal in his progress toward achievement. The normal personality ultimately drops his childish desire for power and takes self-actualization, perfection, and completion, the fulfillment of all his potentials, as the best way to achieve security and self-esteem.

His style of life, also unique, is the way he chooses to attain his goal. It results from inherited predispositions combined with the child's interactions with his parents, the first representatives of his environment. All Neo-Freudian psychologists emphasize the general climate of the home on the development of personality,\textsuperscript{27} especially the

\textsuperscript{26}Munroe, p. 335.  \textsuperscript{27}Ibid., p. 416.
need of the child for affection and approval. A child will develop a "self concept" from his parents' attitude toward him. And he will develop an attitude toward women, toward marriage, toward sex, toward society in general, from the examples provided by his mother and father. To some extent these influences function as a result of his position in the family. For example, a second child is often ambitious and very successful in life as a result of his effort to catch up with the older child.28

Adlerians find the key to a person's "life style" in the pattern of his overt behavior, as well as in his dreams, daydreams, memories, and art productions.29 But they tend to interpret these in a commonsense fashion as expressions of attitude or forward-looking solutions to real problems. To Adler, the metaphor and symbol of each dream is unique and cannot be explained by reference to fixed systems of "universal" symbols.30

As with the Freudians, critics apply Adler's theories about the genesis of the neuroses to James and to his characters. According to Adler, the normal person eventually adapts to life so that society derives a certain advantage from what he does; he compensates for his inferiorities and achieves a sense of security by working for the common good.

29 Munroe, p. 427.
But the neurotic, failing to adapt his goals to his environment or to his own capabilities, attempts to avoid his inferiority feeling by the achievement of personal superiority and "a godlike dominance over his environment."

Further, he uses his neurosis to avoid confronting the real problems of life by restricting his sphere of action to those situations in which he feels he can dominate, often withdrawing into a fictional world in which the problem no longer exists, or in which he can readily achieve his selfish goal of personal success. Adler's description of those who tend to develop neurosis sounds very much like some of the psychoanalytic descriptions of James:

... especially children who have a noticeable organ inferiority, who suffer from defects, who are insecure, and who fear humiliation and punishment the most develop the craving and haste which ultimately dispose to neurosis. At an early age they will avoid tests of their worth or evade injuries to their sensitivity. They are bashful, blush easily, evade any test of their ability, and lose at an early age their spontaneity. This uncomfortable condition strongly urges toward safeguards. They want to be petted or want to do everything alone, are afraid of any kind of work, or read incessantly.

However, they are often precocious, and their thirst for knowledge compensates for their insecurity.

However, like Freud, Adler provides a basis for considering the artist as more than a neurotic when he notes

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32. Ibid., p. 59.
that the artist and the genius often forego the solution of their personal problems--avoiding marriage, for example--in order to contribute something greater to mankind--to teach us how to see, how to think, how to feel. Critics often reflect the influence of Adler when they demonstrate that James strove for superiority in order to overcompensate for some physical inferiority, his back injury or a constitutional sexual inadequacy, and turn it into an asset; Adler says:

In almost all outstanding people we find some organ imperfection; and we gather the impression that they were sorely confronted at the beginning of life but struggled and overcame their difficulties. We can notice especially how early they fixed their interests and how hard they trained themselves in their childhood. They sharpened their senses, so that they could make contact with the problems of the world and understand them. From this early training we can conclude that their art and their genius was their own creation, not an undeserved gift of nature or inheritance. They strove and we are blessed.

In Jamesian criticism, the problem is whether critics choose to regard James as a neurotic or as a genius. Their evaluation is outside of the province of psychoanalysis although it often determines their use of psychoanalytic principles. But in contrast to Jungian analysis, Neo-Freudian criticism is always a study of individual human beings--either the artist or his characters.

A critic making use of the above theories may not necessarily have been influenced by Adler. Within Freudian

\[33\text{Ibid.}, \ pp. \ 141, \ 153.\]

\[34\text{What Life Should Mean to You, } p. \ 248.\]
psychology itself there has been, since Freud's death, an increased tendency by men like Heinz Hartman, Ernst Kris, R. M. Lowenstein, and David Rapaport, to broaden Freud's concepts to deal more fully with man's rational faculties and with his functioning as a social being. Ernst Kris, for instance, condemns psychoanalysts for oversimplifying the influences on art to merely personal and sexual ones, for overemphasizing the role of the id in art and neglecting the ego, and says that the rise of ego psychology can help us to explain other aspects of art, especially how cultural conditions influence individual works. We may find Neo-Freudian principles used unknowingly by critics who adopt the Freudian method of reading the author's character from his works or Freudian theories about the importance of childhood, but who ignore the emphasis on sex.

Also, a few later Neo-Freudians—Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, and Harry Stack Sullivan—have had a great deal of influence on recent thinking, and some influence on critics of James. But because they published much later than Freud or Adler, their theories are influential only on the very recent psychoanalytic critics. Fromm published his famous Escape From Freedom in 1941. New Ways in Psychoanalysis by Karen Horney was published in 1939. Sullivan's first book,  

35Hall and Lindzey, p. 65.

Concepts in Modern Psychiatry, was not published until 1947. These psychologists accept Freud's deterministic view of man, his theory of unconscious motivation and nonrational motives. But, like Adler, they reject sex as the basis of human motivation and see individual personality development as the result of efforts to avoid anxiety and achieve self-esteem and a sense of security.

Leonard F. and Eleanor B. Manheim praise the ego psychology of the Neo-Freudians because it allows us to see the artist as more than just a person who translates crude sexual fantasies into socially acceptable forms. "Instead," they say, we see him "as one who is endowed with the ability to permit material from the unconscious to enter into consciousness and to use it for the production of universal, humanly attractive products called works of art, without being dominated or destroyed by that material; one who can play with the forces that lead to neurosis and worse and tame them, without loss to himself and for the benefit of mankind."37 Ego psychology allows us to see each man as a unique, creative individual, who both forms and is formed by society. He is not the unconscious victim of sexual hunger, but is the conscious pursuer of socially beneficial goals.

As a method of art criticism, psychoanalysis has a number of serious deficiencies, which we find evident in the

criticism of James. In the first place, it is often reductive. Freudian critics, for example, often end by "explaining" all creative activity in terms of a few instincts and neuroses, tracing every literary work to the author's unresolved Oedipal conflict; thus there is no basis by which to distinguish James from any other writer. Although Jung objected to Freud's reductionism, Jungian archetypal analysis often has the same effect of destroying the complexity of a work and of dismissing the individual elements. Even Neo-Freudian critics, who should be the least reductive, we often find discussing James almost completely in terms of an inferiority complex or a desire for power.

In the second place, psychoanalysis provides no basis for discussing formal aspects of art or for evaluating art. Freudian and Neo-Freudian studies tend to be analyses of the artist's inner motivations. Jungian critics frankly regard form as irrelevant to the effect of a work and devote themselves solely to archetypal analysis. No one of these schools even attempts to provide a consistent basis for evaluating art, a fact which critics often forget.

The greatest failure of psychoanalytic theory is its vast capacity for being reinterpreted to support and justify the critic's own interests and prejudices. It provides no fixed system by which critics can draw consistent, verifiable conclusions. Thus two critics using the same Freudian concept may arrive at two completely different interpretations and draw completely opposing conclusions about the same work.
The value of psychoanalytic theory for the modern critic lies, certainly not in the development of a consistent science of criticism, but in the many interesting and rewarding suggestions it has provided for the development of new approaches to art. Psychoanalytic theory has provided a new emphasis on the relation between the artist and his work, and a method for discussing this relationship. Psychoanalytic influence on criticism resulted in critics giving closer attention to works of art as expressions of the author's personality. Thus, it glorified art as a source of information about the mind and the soul of man, and for the Jungians, as a repository of truth about the whole of life itself. It resulted too in a close attention in criticism to the language and symbolism of literary works as a key to this truth. As a result, psychoanalytic criticism provided new insights by which critics have been able to find greater depth of meaning in many literary works.
James, since his death, has been very popular with the critics. An analysis of the criticism of his life and works would provide a survey of all the major modern schools of literary criticism. According to William Talmadge Stafford, "No critic of our general literature can be called a major critic unless he has in some way met the critical challenge of James."\(^1\) However, James was not always so popular. During his own life his literary reputation was high only for a few years after the publication of "Daisy Miller" in 1878; but in his later years, interest in his works began to wane, largely because, in an age of rising interest in literary realism and naturalism, he was regarded as a representative of the genteel tradition.

In 1904, Claude Bragdon evaluated his reputation: "A man too great to be ignored, he is yet too ignored to be great, for his appeal is, and must ever be, to what Stevenson

\(^1\) "The American Critics of Henry James, 1864-1943" (unpublished Doctor's dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1956), p. 3.
calls 'a parlour audience.'"2 Although the 1918 issue of The Little Review was devoted completely to James, the writers have treated him as though they felt they had to defend him. For example, in one article, Ethel Coburn Mayne justified her early love for James in an apologetic tone and concluded, "He made the drawing-room a working-model of the universe; and was it? To-day the question has been answered: it is not."3

After World War I, however, there was a tremendous rise in the popularity of his works, which critics agree was due to the introduction of Freudian psychology into literary criticism. As Heidi Specker has pointed out, psychoanalytic influence changed the public's view of reality, and led it to accept James more readily. His efforts to depict the inner life anticipated and ran parallel to an increasing interest in psychology and psychoanalysis.4

To many, Freud and James seemed to be working on the same subject—the exploration of human motives and the depths of the mind. In an article on "The Revival of Interest in Henry James," Clifton Fadiman wrote, "Seen in the light of what Freud has taught us, James suddenly appears much more

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2"The Figure in Mr. James's Carpet," The Critic, XLIV (February, 1904), 146.

3"Henry James (As Seen from the 'Yellow Book')," The Little Review, V (August, 1918), 4.

aware of the hidden and even sinister drives of men and women than we had supposed." In this light he appears as a modern writer to be placed with Proust, Joyce, and Mann. According to Leon Edel, the modern psychological novel, especially the stream of consciousness novel of which James's works are the precursor, was part of the "deeper and more searching inwardness of our century," reflected in the writings of William James and Henri Bergson, and on a clinical level in the work of Freud. This turning inward was essentially a "romantic protest" against the evils of traditional culture.

Freud and James seemed to have a great deal in common, perhaps because they were both part of the same tradition—the Romantic tradition. Lionel Trilling, in demonstrating that psychoanalysis represented a culmination of nineteenth-century Romantic literature, has pointed out their common characteristics, characteristics which have also been ascribed to the novels of Henry James. Both Freudianism and Romanticism are devoted to a research into the self, to uncovering the "hidden element of human nature" which underlies the visible, to an exploration of "ambivalent feeling" and irrational motivation. Implied in both is a moral


6The Psychological Novel, 1900-1950 (New York, 1955), pp. 73, 40.

7Hoffman, p. 73.
revolution, including the investigation of sexual maladjustments and perversity, and pleas made for the free expression of the impulses. There is a preoccupation with the death wish, with perverse self-destruction, with the repellent and the horrible. Frank O'Connor has found James to be in the same tradition, saying that his stories are in the fin de siècle tradition, and many are close to Oscar Wilde's Picture of Dorian Gray. They deal with evil, but not with tangible evil; "it is the evil of Sade and of the German romantics, a product of the fantasy for which there is no satisfactory objective equivalent."9

One important effect of psychoanalytic criticism was that it showed James to have been a kind of Freudian himself. And once a few critics had indicated that James was dealing with the same subjects as psychoanalysis, others began to give him more careful attention. In addition, psychoanalytic criticism, directly applied to his life and works, clarified certain points of difficulty and justified him for the young rebels against Puritanism and for the enthusiasts of the new psychoanalytic concepts of art and the artist. Other enthusiasts of James seized on the new psychology as a means by which to direct attention to some of the subtle aspects of his language, his imagery, his indirection, and thus to save

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8"The Legacy of Sigmund Freud: II. Literary and Aesthetic," Kenyon Review, II (Spring, 1940), 153-156.

his works from the charges of snobbishness, obscurity, coldness, and fussiness frequently directed against them.

The Freudian critics have made James's works concrete and understandable by dealing with the actualities behind the abstractions, the vague allusiveness. They have removed the veil for the modern reader and justified to him the passionate intensity which often accompanies seemingly innocuous situations in James's stories and novels. To a psychoanalyst, emotional intensity in a dream or a work of art serves as an indication that the content has a deeper and more serious significance than is first suspected. The Freudian critics have, in many cases, devoted themselves to uncovering that latent content, and their studies have resulted in gaining a popularity for James's works they might never have achieved otherwise. They have shown moderns that he was not dealing with the shallow and over-civilized morals and manners of a decadent society, but with eternal patterns of human behavior in terms that his own society could understand.

It must be noted that Freudian criticism was not solely responsible for the idea of a latent or hidden meaning in Henry James's works. James himself, in fact, was partly responsible, for in his story "The Figure in the Carpet" (1896) he wrote about a famous author, Hugh Vereker, who suffers from the fact that no critic has discovered the underlying intention of his work. In this story, James had Vereker say of his intention: "It stretches, this little trick of mine, from book to book, and everything else,
comparatively, plays over the surface of it. The order, the form, the texture of my books will perhaps some day constitute for the initiated a complete representation of it. So it's naturally the thing for the critic to look for. It strikes me... even as the thing for the critic to find." Critics have taken this as a personal statement by Henry James and a challenge to try to discover the figure in his carpet. But even if he had never written this story, the vague and allusive quality of his style, the ambiguity of plot and character motivation, the highly emotional reactions of characters to seemingly dull and insignificant occurrences would have led critics to assume that he was suggesting things he dare not say openly.

Psychoanalytic Criticism of James to 1930

James as a Psychologist

Even very early critics, who might be called "pre-Freudian," recognized that James was essentially a psychological novelist. A few even objected that he was a cold and deliberate scientific investigator of human thought and behavior who, according to Richard Nicholas Foley, "had gone too far into the minds of his characters without revealing

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10 The Novels and Tales of Henry James, ed. Henry James, with prefaces by Henry James (New York, 1909), XV, 231. Hereafter cited as The Novels and Tales.
what was more important, their hearts and feelings."¹¹ Frank
Moore Colby, for instance, complained that James's characters
are inhuman, fleshless, "stripped to their motives," and that
"through page after page he surveys a mind as a sick man
looks at his counterpane, busy with little ridges and grooves
and undulations."¹²

In 1881, an anonymous reviewer of Washington Square
(1880) called this story "a clever bit of psychological
anatomy," and said, "we admire it as we might admire a bril-
liant experiment in the laboratory, or a skillful operation
in the clinical lecture-room."¹³ With more understanding,
William C. Brownell in 1882 described James's work as
"romantic sociology," which combines scientific curiosity
with romantic interests and moral seriousness.¹⁴ Six years
later, a reviewer in Epoch wrote that James "gives us the
elaborated small views . . . valuable alike to the historian,
the psychologist, the student of social science."¹⁵ William
Dean Howells called James "a great psychologist, who has the

¹¹'Criticism in American Periodicals of the Works of
153.

¹²"In Darkest James," Imaginary Obligations (New York,
1904), pp. 325, 328.

¹³"Current Fiction," The Literary World, XII (January
1, 1881), 10.

¹⁴"James's Portrait of a Lady," The Nation, XXXIV
(February 2, 1882), 102-103.

¹⁵IV (November 23, 1888), 290-291.
imagination of a poet."  

Critics began early to apply Freudian concepts to reveal in James's work the same interests in human motivation, unconscious and irrational impulses, abnormal psychology, and sexual maladjustments that provide the subject for psychoanalysis. In 1903, Alice Duer Miller commented that James did not content himself, like the ordinary psychological novelist, with probing his characters' conscious states of mind, but went further and included the subconscious states of mind which are the very basis of mental life. Miller defended James as being obscure only to those who do not understand this mental life, and thus she was the first to indicate a need for knowledge of psychology to appreciate his work.  

Her approach reveals her own awareness of the psychological studies of the subconscious made by men like Janet, Charcot, Bergson, William James, and Freud, although it cannot be determined from these essays, how much these early critics had actually read about psychology and psychoanalysis.

Another early critic, Claude Bragdon, called James a natural psychologist and the most modern of novelists, who shows human passion "perverted, sublimated, or disguised" by "the operation of the laws, forms, and observances of


civilization." No one, Bragdon said, excelled James in revealing the ugliness and elemental passion hidden under the smoother surface of modern life. To William Lyon Phelps, James was a kind of doctor analyzing character-patients who were suffering from the terrible passion of love, "a specialist dealing with the finer shades of emotion, with peculiar patients suffering from a sickness quite beyond the ordinary novelist's range." In 1918, T. S. Eliot commented that both James and Hawthorne were interested in the "deeper psychology."

In the same year, Alfred Richard Orage praised James for having anticipated Freud's concern with the unconscious. Orage was the first critic to link the names of James and Freud. He noted that William James was interested in the psychology of the conscious, Henry in the psychology of the subconscious, both normal and abnormal. The difference between the two accounts for the different methods used by the two brothers, and, to a great extent, for the difference in their modes of life; for the conscious can be studied in the laboratory, under control, but the subconscious can be appreciated only by those with a sort of "second sight," a

18 The Critic, XLIV, 148.
special ability to observe carefully, perceptively, and sympathetically. Orage calls Henry James a "magician of psychology" who, aiming at a sense of real life in his novels, did not describe the subconscious, but portrayed and revealed it—in some novels as a "'double'" embodied in a living figure, and in others as a double without a body, as a ghost—with the explicit purpose of making us aware of our deeper selves.\(^2\)

John Crowe Ransom says that great literature is full of psychoanalytic truths which have been disguised but can be uncovered by the initiated. Psychoanalysis will show, for example, that Henry James, like all great artists, was a "natural psychologist" who, in his exploration of human motivation, anticipated the methods and concepts of the new science.\(^3\) Other critics have agreed. J. H. Lewis calls James a "wary delver into the mysteries of motive and personality."\(^4\) V. J. McGill describes The Sacred Fount (1901) and The Golden Bowl (1904) as psychological detective stories. He notes that James's works have special appeal for students of the mind because "his labyrinthine analyses, his brilliant studies in motivation and 'association' are only too


\(^{24}\)"The Difficulties of Henry James," *Poet Lore*, XXXIX (Spring, 1928), 117.
fine and the psychologists know it."25

According to Constance Rourke, James came closer than any other American writer to the kind of introspective analysis characteristic of the Puritan. His novels have a delicate but intense scrutiny of motives, and his later novels, like those of Melville and Hawthorne, deal with subtle and intricate moods and inner emotional states. They "vastly amplified this new subject of the mind lying submerged beneath the scope of circumstance, which had long engaged the American imagination."26

And Joseph Warren Beach says that in The American (1876) James has touched on an interesting point of psychology, "the difference between the feelings of which a man is conscious in taking a certain position and the fundamental motives, generally unknown to him, which lie behind the conscious feelings."27 This concept of James as a "natural psychologist," which reappears again and again in the criticism of James, is in full agreement with Freud's high regard for the artist's special insight into the real character of man.


James's "Case Studies": "The Turn of the Screw."—Most of these early critics referred to Freudian psychology in order to demonstrate James's ability as a psychologist, but they did not apply psychoanalytic concepts or methods to his works in any detail. A few, however, also working on the same assumption, applied Freudian methods and theories to his stories and characters to show that his works are kinds of psychological "case studies." Several of these critics mentioned the possibility that certain of the more ambiguous figures in his novels are actually insane, and that this insanity is the "hidden" theme. In line with the suggestion by Orage, they focused on James's ghost story, "The Turn of the Screw" (1898).

As early as 1898, an anonymous reviewer in The Critic noted that because the governess in "The Turn of the Screw" "has nothing in the least substantial upon which to base her deep and startling cognitions," the reader is forced to question her sanity. Henry A. Beers speculated in 1915 that because the ghosts in "The Turn of the Screw" are "just a suspicion of evil presences," the "true interpretation" of the story is "that the woman who saw the phantoms was mad." Beers suggests that James deliberately wrote the story as a psychological study because "the old-fashioned ghost story is too robust an apparition for modern credulity. The modern

28 "The Recent Work of Henry James," The Critic, XXXIII (December, 1898), 524.
ghost is a 'clot on the brain'"—an opinion often put forth
by later critics as a justification for a psychoanalytic
interpretation of the story. In 1921, for example, Virginia
Woolf wrote that James's ghosts in "The Turn of the Screw"
produce a frightening effect on the modern reader only
because they "have their origins within us," because they
are symbols of the baffling, the strange, and the frightening
aspects of our lives.30 In 1923, Fred Lewis Pattee suggested
that this story may be read "as the record of a clinic: the
study of the growth of a suggested infernal cliché in the
brain of the nurse who alone sees the ghosts, of her final
dementia which is pressed to a focus that overwhels in her
mind every other idea, and makes of the children her innocent
victims."31

In 1924 Edna Kenton published the first detailed
analysis of "The Turn of the Screw"—and the first study of
any of James's works as a psychological case—in which she
accepts the early view that it is the case study of a neurotic
governess. She calls attention to James's comment in the
preface to the story in the New York Edition that "it is a
piece of ingenuity pure and simple, of cold artistic calcu­
ation, an amusette to catch those not easily caught . . . the

29"Fifty Years of Hawthorne," Yale Review, IV (January,
1915), 307.


31The Development of the American Short Story: An
jaded, the disillusioned, the fastidious."  

She has taken this to mean that "The Turn of the Screw" is a trap, set deliberately by Henry James, for the inattentive reader.

Kenton reminds us that the whole story is told by the governess, who seems to have an "admirable flair for the evil she finds there," and finally concludes that the entire story is the creation of its insane narrator. The reader finally realizes that both the ghosts and the children "—what they are and what they do—are only exquisite dramatizations of her little personal mystery, figures for the ebb and flow of troubled thought within her mind, acting out her story" (p. 255). There are no ghosts, no children, no Bly, no uncle; there is only the unbalanced mind of the governess recording her wild fantasies.

Edna Kenton was not deliberately clinical or Freudian; her article was written simply as a plea for careful reading of James. But she did anticipate the Freudian view and her article influenced the later psychoanalytic work of Edmund Wilson.

A similar analysis of the same story was made early by Professor Harold C. Goddard and presented in his lectures at Swarthmore some time before 1920. It was not published, however, until 1957, by Leon Edel, and so was never very


33"Henry James to the Ruminant Reader: The Turn of the Screw," The Arts, VI (November, 1924), 251.
influential on Jamesian criticism, although it is probably after all the most thorough and logical interpretation of this story yet made. It is valuable because it provides independent corroboration for the interpretations of Kenton and Wilson. Edel entitled the article "A Pre-Freudian Reading of The Turn of the Screw," but, of course, it is not pre-Freudian just because it was written before 1920. In fact, at one point Goddard used the term "psychoanalytic"\textsuperscript{34} and, in demonstrating that the governess is of the hysterical type, repeated the Freudian concept linking the development of hysteria to the disguised fulfillment of unconscious desires. He noted that the governess is young, inexperienced, and of a nervous and emotional character; she is in love with the master, and has been placed in a difficult situation that could have unbalanced a more experienced person. When such a person falls in love, Goddard says, "and circumstances forbid the normal growth and confession of the passion, the emotion, dammed up, overflows in a psychical experience, a daydream, or internal drama which the mind creates in lieu of the thwarted realization in the objective world" (p. 8).

According to Goddard, the governess hopes to attract the attention of the master by performing some romantic act of courage. Two things which help her to achieve her purpose are Miles's unexplained dismissal from school and an

\textsuperscript{34}Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XII (June, 1957), 34.
"inadvertent hint" about Peter Quint dropped by Mrs. Grose (an assumption of Goddard's). The first incident, Goddard says, using psychoanalytic terminology, is "just the touch of objectivity needed to set off the subconsciousness of the governess into an orgy of myth-making." The second provides a valuable suggestion as to the direction her imaginative invention will take. We do not need to be psychologists, says Goddard, to see "that that inveterate playwright and stage manager, the subconscious, would never permit so valuable a hint to go unutilized" (pp. 8-9). The ghosts come "out of the governess's unconfessed love and unformulated fear" (p. 10).

A difficulty for this interpretation is the fact that Mrs. Grose identifies the male ghost as Peter Quint from the governess' description, supposedly before the governess has ever heard of him. Much of the discussion of "The Turn of the Screw" as a psychological study of the governess has centered around this technical problem. To get around it, Goddard assumes that the governess had gotten a hint about Peter Quint from Mrs. Grose before the appearance of his ghost. In addition, Goddard shows, very satisfactorily in terms of this ambiguous tale, that the governess leads Mrs. Grose to the identification of Quint. He notes in this connection that Mrs. Grose had previously regarded Quint as "a horror in human form that is a menace to the children," and thus, "the governess' fears and repressed desires and the housekeeper's memories and anxieties unconsciously
collaborate" (p. 14). Goddard's interpretation of this story is probably the most complete of the earlier ones in that he has tried to anticipate and deal with specific difficulties created by it.

He defends his interpretation against the charge (later to be leveled at Kenton and Wilson) that it is shallow and reductive, for, he insists, insanity is much more difficult "to probe and get to the bottom of than a crude spiritualism." Peter Quint and Miss Jessel are no "less mysterious or less appalling because they are evoked by the governess's imagination," nor are they less real, for "the human brain is as solid a fact as the terrestial globe, and inhabitants of the former have just as authentic an existence as inhabitants of the latter" (p. 32). Like Henry A. Beers and Virginia Woolf, Goddard believed that his interpretation would have a greater effect on the modern reader than the more conventional one.

Like Edna Kenton, Goddard found corroboration for his interpretation in James's preface. James's purpose was not simply to trick the reader, but to condemn the type of environment in which this young girl grew up, an environment ripe for the development of insanity. He concludes:

The reaction upon a sensitive and romantic nature of the narrowness of English middle class life in the last century: that, from the social angle, is the theme of the story. The sudden change of scene, the sudden immense responsibility placed on unaccustomed shoulders, the shock of sudden unrequited affection—all these together—were too much. The brain gives way. And what follows is a masterly tracing of the
effects of repressed love and thwarted maternal affection. The whole story might be reviewed with profit under this psychoanalytic aspect (p. 34).

Goddard was the first critic to use psychoanalysis to prove that James was not simply a teller of genteel Victorian tales, but that, in fact, he was a student of psychology and a social critic who rebelled against the repressive life of the Victorian middle class. Thus Goddard anticipated by over fourteen years, Edmund Wilson's influential psychoanalytic essay in *The Hound and Horn*.

In a review in 1927, Wilson himself anticipated his own famous critical article. In it, Wilson argues, like Edna Kenton, that we must do as James asked us in the Preface, and read his novels with careful attention to find out what is actually in them, for although James was bold in the development of his form and in the selection of his themes, "he wrote his fiction under heavy inhibitions, the result both of personal shyness and of the peculiar moral timidity of his race and day." Although the motives of passion and greed are at the bottom of many of his works, he adopted a convention of rarely mentioning them, so the reader is left confused as to exactly what happened.35

According to Wilson, in stories like "Madame de Mauves" (1875), "The Aspern Papers" (1888), and *The Sacred Fount*, James "is preoccupied with the fastidious and scrupulous, 

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but basically timid and undervitalized" type of man who is doomed to be simply a spectator into the lives and love affairs of others, but who is himself shut out from experience. James understood this character well because he was such a man himself. There is also a female counterpart to this type, characterized by "some Puritan blindness of the senses or atrophy of the emotions," such as the governess in "The Turn of the Screw" or the "Lesbian Boston lady" depicted in The Bostonians (1886), who misinterprets her feelings for a young girl as an evangelical fervor in the cause of feminism. Wilson praises Edna Kenton for recognizing that "The Turn of the Screw" is "a story of hallucinations arising from sexual repression and the deceptions of the subconscious 'censor,' and manifesting themselves on principles with which we have been familiarized by Freud." James apprehended clearly the psychology below the surface of his characters, for, concludes Wilson, "at bottom, James was as scientifically modern and as 'tough-minded' as his brother William" (p. 113).

Very early, then, Wilson began developing these themes which run through the Freudian criticism of James: that James was a natural psychologist who anticipated the concepts of Freud, that James's character is revealed in his work, and that his stories have two meanings, one of which, the true meaning, lies hidden by the other. Interestingly enough, however, neither Kenton's article nor this early essay by Wilson attracted much attention until after the publication of Wilson's longer essay in 1934.
James as a Psychological Case

Henry James attracted the interest of early critics, not only as a psychologist, but also as a "case," as a man whose own peculiar psychological problems are revealed in his writings. Leon Edel points out that James himself provided justification for the study of his character from his works, for in his own criticism, James was primarily concerned with the artist's mental functioning and inner being. To James, Edel says, "it is a question of recognizing that the writer's pen is a tell-tale pen: It is revelatory even when it takes on the multiple disguises of fiction. Indeed, the very character of the disguise reveals, rather than conceals, the creating consciousness." In an essay on Guy de Maupassant (1888), James commends Maupassant's belief that "the novel is simply a vision of the world from the standpoint of a person constituted after a certain fashion." And James goes on to say of the artist: "His particular organism constitutes a case, and the critic is intelligent in proportion as he apprehends and enters into that case." If James took this attitude toward other writers, certainly he would have accepted others taking the same attitude toward him.


Those influenced by psychoanalytic concepts found James and his fiction particularly well suited to their approach. In the first place, the ambiguity of his stories invites speculation and admits of almost any reasonably consistent interpretation. Too, the vague symbolism in his novels provides a vast amount of material for the analytic method. And finally, "a study of his own life and the lives of the characters he created reveals personal problems that are of particular interest to psychoanalysts. One might argue that in terms of psychoanalysis all men are "cases"; but James's peculiarities were outstanding enough to obtain the notice of even pre-Freudian critics. For, very early, critics began to praise or condemn James's works in terms of his personal psychology. Psychoanalysis, later, came to provide a complete theoretical basis for such studies.

In 1902, for example, J. P. Mowbray said that James's later novels represent James himself speaking through a variety of characters, and that James's lack of virility caused him to turn instinctively to "the boudoir side of life, and . . . to the intricacies of match-making and the silken embroideries of scheming dowagers and tender protégés." According to Claude Bragdon, the figure in James's carpet is "the pattern of his wonderful mind,

revealed inevitably, and for the most part unconsciously, in his work."\textsuperscript{39}

Several critics repeated the belief that James's works reveal him as a cold and detached, though careful and scientific, observer of humanity—an impression which arises, according to William C. Brownell, because James frequently identifies himself with an indifferent and morally fastidious narrator.\textsuperscript{40} Phillip Littell provided an example by suggesting that the narrator in The Sacred Fount is the victim of an "insane obsession," an "intellectual curiosity, active at every moment, fatiguing, monstrous," which had its origins in James himself.\textsuperscript{41}

Stuart P. Sherman speculated that the lack of interest in the general mass of humanity, apparent in James's novels, resulted from his peculiar upbringing as a child. The father's deliberate effort to save Henry from the pressure of allegiance to any locale, educational system, or occupation, and a mysterious physical accident at the beginning of the Civil War which assigned Henry James "to the rôle of an engrossed spectator," and ultimately made him "a fastidious connoisseur of experience, an artistic celibate to whose

\textsuperscript{39}The Critic, XLIV, 150.

\textsuperscript{40}"Henry James," Atlantic Monthly, XCV (April, 1905), 505, 511.

\textsuperscript{41}"James's Sacred Fount," New Republic, III (July 3, 1915), 234.
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without page(s) 48.

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soil and sunshine of its native fields." 44

Van Wyck Brooks was also a student of psychoanalysis and in 1920 wrote a very influential psychoanalytic biography of Mark Twain. 45 In 1932 he published three articles on Henry James 46 which in 1925 were incorporated into his book The Pilgrimage of Henry James. In them he abandoned his open use of psychoanalysis, seldom using psychoanalytic terminology or dealing with James's problems, as he did with Twain's, in terms of sexual repression. Nevertheless, because we know that he was familiar with Freudian theory, we are justified in recognizing him as the first psychoanalytic biographer of Henry James. Moreover, he clearly makes use of several Freudian concepts and methods: the importance of childhood environment and family influence on the development of the man, the unconscious revelation of an artist in his art, and the concept that in a crisis an adult may revert to childish stages of development and methods of thinking. In his use of James's fiction as a primary source of information about the man, Brooks was the first critic to


45The Ordeal of Mark Twain, introd. by Malcolm Cowley (rev. ed.; Cleveland, Ohio, 1948).

apply Freudian methods of analysis to James and his works. Brooks's technique is basically to analyze what was wrong with James and then to "explain" his failures as a result of family and social pressures. His themes are, first, that James's early life caused him to fear America and to idealize Europe and, second, that his consequent expatriation and the problems it caused him are reflected in his art. He notes that because of personal failure and family misfortune, the elder Henry James had come to fear America as the place of "calamity, destruction, oblivion," and he conveyed this fear to his sons. He sheltered them from the common life in America, discouraging their contact with the rough boys at school and encouraging them to care only for the culture and social order represented by Europe, "the Great Good Place, the abode of honor, order, beauty, of all the elegances" (p. 23). Thus he bred into the young Henry a fear of life from which the boy took refuge in a fantasy world of dreams about the romantic land across the ocean.

Brooks finds that Henry also had personal reasons to associate America with failure. As a child in America he performed poorly in school and was unable to get along with the other boys. His character was "circumspect and somewhat prim" (p. 33). Thus he felt powerless in the boisterous and

competitive American society of the nineteenth century. The injury which he sustained during the first hours of the war was for him a symbol of his powerlessness. In addition, his habit of reading only European literature and his sheltered travel in Europe encouraged his tendency to romanticize Europe and led him to the conclusion, depicted in "The Jolly Corner" (1909), that America signified failure and destruction for the artist (p. 29).

In 1875, James went to live in Paris, and later moved to England. Brooks insists that in spite of the fact that he was never fully accepted in either place or that neither place lived up to his moral and critical standards, James clung to his fairy-tale view of Europe, praising it all the while, so that "behind his novels, those formidable projections of a geometrical intellect, were to be discerned now the confused reveries of an invalid child. For in his prolonged association with people who had merely glimmered for him, in the constant abrogation of his moral judgment, in these years of an enchanted exile in a museum-world— for what else had England ever been for him?— Henry James had reverted to a kind of childhood" (pp. 131-132).

According to Brooks, James never really grew up; a "perpetually shocked," "outraged and disappointed" Puritan child lingering behind the façade of an old man of the world is revealed in James's later work in the theme of the victimization of an innocent person at the hands of a malevolent and callous world, as in "The Turn of the Screw." The
Awkward Age (1899), What Maisie Knew (1897), The Other House (1895), and The Golden Bowl (pp. 147, 150). The "evasiveness, the hesitancy, the scrupulosity" of James's writing style also result from his expatriation and ultimate failure and disappointment in Europe: "The caution, the ceremoniousness, the baffled curiosity, the nervousness and constant self-communion, the fear of committing himself--these traits of the self-conscious guest in the house where he had never been at home had fashioned with time the texture of his personality" (p. 131).

Brooks's major aim in this study is obviously not to psychoanalyze James but to condemn him for having refused involvement in American life. He resents James's flight from America and expresses this resentment clearly, especially in his evaluation of James's motives. Therefore his biography is essentially what Edel calls a "debunking" form of biography, an early example in Jamesian criticism of the unpleasant practice of using psychological analysis to belittle an artist and his works. Brooks's real evaluation of James comes before his analysis, which serves him largely as a justification for a position already taken.

According to Louis Fraiberg, Brooks dealt very carelessly with psychoanalysis; he had probably read only the most well-known works of Freud--The Interpretation of Dreams, Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious, and The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, which appeared in English in 1913, 1914, and 1917, respectively. Of these he seems to
have retained only a few superficially understood general notions which he mixed, higgledy-piggledy, with bits from other psychological sources. Fraiberg attributes this carelessness to indifference in psychoanalysis, noting that Brooks's "chief concern is the establishing of his critical viewpoint on American letters, which is a philosophical and social one, going far beyond the scope of psychoanalysis."

Many critics incorporated the conclusions thus arrived at into their own works as part of the "truth" about Henry James. According to Stafford, Brooks was "the first to reduce the complex entity of James the artist to the simple abstraction of James the symbol." An unfortunate result of his work was that it influenced later critics to think in terms of James the recluse, James the neurotic, James the expatriate, rather than in terms of James the artist; and it resulted in an unfavorable opinion of James which persisted down to the present in the work of Freudians and non-Freudians alike.

However, Brooks's work also served James's reputation well, for it called attention to him and inspired other critics to write about him either in agreement with or in opposition to Brooks's position. Like many of the later

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48 *Psychoanalysis and American Literary Criticism* (Detroit, Michigan, 1960), pp. 122, 133.

49 "The American Critics of Henry James, 1864-1943," p. 158.
Freudian interpretations of James, Brooks's biography became a center of controversy and a catalyst which initiated other works on James.

Followers of Brooks.--In 1923, for instance, Fred Lewis Pattee repeated Brooks's opinion that James's upbringing, his sheltered life, his haphazard education, his early separation from America, and the rootless migrations of his family made him "solitary and detached," unfit for practical life--a cold, scientific observer. To Thomas Beer, James was an egotistic snob whose timidity and fear of life were a result of his repressive upbringing: "He was prim and circumspect, as befitted the child grown old who was ordered at the age of seven to compose a note of apology for appearing barefoot on the porch of a seaside villa before callers." Beer agrees with Brooks that James avoided life by withdrawing into a fantasy world of his own creation, "a sunny garden where poisons blew as perfumes too heavy for a refined sense and crimes were shadows, not clouds, that swept across his shaved and watered turf."

Dorothy Brewster and Angus Burrell, in an analysis of The Ambassadors (1903) show that Lambert Strether and Chad Newsome play "a rôle that James might be said to have

50 The Development of the American Short Story, pp. 194-196.

imagined for himself." They quote Van Wyck Brooks's suggestion that Jim Pocock represents "what James feared he might have become if he had gone through the Harvard Law School or been placed in trade in Boston, Massachusetts." Because James thus identifies himself with his characters, it is impossible for him to escape the attention of the curious psychologist: "Henry James betrays himself often in his writing, and this game of tying up the writer to his books is a legitimate one and needs encouraging."52

The social and nationalistic bias in Brooks's analysis of James is repeated by Vernon L. Parrington, Granville Hicks, and Laurence Leighton. Parrington agrees that James was out of place in the crude, brutal frontier life of America, for "his organism was too sensitive, his discriminations too fine, to subject them to the vulgarities of the Gilded Age, and he fled from it all." James romanticized Europe as a result of an "unconscious inferiority complex in presence of a long-established social order to which he was alien." Failing to find there the gracious culture he had attributed to it in his imagination, he withdrew from the external world and spent his artistic talent in a "lifelong pursuit of intangible realities that existed only in his imagination." His characters are only projections of his brooding fancy, externalizations of hypothetical subtleties. Thus absorbed

in "the stream of psychical experience," he might be seen as "a forerunner of modern expressionism." Like Brooks, Parrington wants social realism in the novel. A writer like James, who is not a social realist, is in Parrington's vocabulary, an escapist, almost a neurotic case. Thus Parrington, with the help of psychoanalysis, condemns him as a man and as an artist.

Granville Hicks shares Brooks's view that James took refuge from life in art and that his separation from real life, reflected in his unrealistic portrayal of character, resulted from his alienation from America and his failure to be accepted in England. In 1934, in the special Henry James issue of The Hound and Horn, another critic, Laurence Leighton, writes that "James regarded the excitements of adolescence as the excitements of Europe. It was, at first, an enchanted land." James's whole life, his art, his style, were efforts to escape from conflict with his environment.

Brooks and his followers were really concerned, not with James's art or with his personal psychology as such, but with its social implications. In most cases, as in the case of Brooks, the evaluation actually precedes the analysis.

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53 Main Currents in American Thought, III, 239-241.


55 "Armor Against Time," The Hound and Horn, VII (April-June, 1934), 376, 378.
and the two are essentially unrelated. Brooks and Parrington, for instance, resent James's lack of patriotism and his refusal to participate in American life. Hicks is a socialist, and naturally disapproved of James's identification with the leisure class, his refusal to concern himself with the problems of society at large. The fault with critics like these is not that they are biased, but that they do not make their bias clear in their criticism. Instead of saying frankly that they are condemning James because he was not a realist or a socialist, they call him a neurotic, and condemn him as sick. But no doubt, if James had remained in America and written about the plight of the American poor, they could have found equal justification in Freud for his essential sanity.

Opponents of Brooks.—It is significant that two of the critics who have most thoroughly refuted Brooks's thesis were Edna Kenton and Edmund Wilson, who have themselves gained eminence as Freudian critics of James. In her defense of James, Edna Kenton simply maintains that he always remained an American and left America only in order to be objective about it, to eliminate his provinciality.56

Edmund Wilson says that there is too much sociology in Brooks's study and not enough psychological analysis of James's character. After all, "James's solitude, his

emotional starvation, his inhibition against entering into life, were evidently the result of his fundamental moral character, not merely an accident of his social maladjustment; and with the problem of that fundamental character Mr. Brooks never adequately deals." Thus Wilson states the topic he will develop in his own articles on Henry James.

Another critic, William Troy, who has also made use of psychoanalytic methods and concepts in criticizing James, deplores the fact that Brooks's biography resulted in a popular misconception of James as a "semi-ridiculous, semi-tragic figure." Such a view of James, Troy says, is the natural result of the adherence to modern psychology, which denies the effectiveness of conscious judgment, the workings of which are the primary subject of James's novels, and which completely disregards the author's stated intentions. Thus Brooks and his followers can account for James only as a kind of psychological "case." Because of James's expatriation, says Troy, Brooks is determined to dislike him. He uses a little psychological formula to describe and explain failures that are failures only to himself. And, in doing so, he neglects to explain James's many and great successes (p. 353). Troy misses the point he has made, however; Brooks tries to bring psychoanalysis to his aid in condemning James


58"Henry James and Young Writers," Bookman, LXXIII (June, 1931), 351.
for not being a social realist, and in doing so, he misuses psychoanalysis, failing to establish a really logical relationship between James's life and works and deriving from psychoanalysis an evaluation which it cannot support.

James as a Puritan.—Related to Brooks's insistence that James avoided reality in his life and art was the complaint that he did not deal frankly with problems of sex—probably the major cause of his unpopularity as a "genteel" writer. Several critics regard his "typical Victorian" sexual inadequacy, rather than his cultural alienation, as the essence of his personal and artistic failures. For example, Granville Hicks notes that his characters "give no evidence of physical passion." J. H. Lewis relates the "baffling celibacy of James" to the aloof and passionless lovers of his novels, who are "too well bred to reveal sex or great feeling." We mistrust James's picture of love, says Lewis, because it was not drawn from experience, but like his own life, is characterized by "too much cerebration" and remoteness from real life. Orlo Williams writes that James's "horror of brute facts and plain names" caused him to sheer off "any direct treatment of these human conflicts and passions which must be the essential groundwork of the novelist's art," to elaborately circumvent any mention of

59 The Great Tradition, p. 123.
60 Poet Lore, XXXIX, 119.
Their approach reflects the intellectual rebellion in the 1920's and 1930's against the Puritan and Victorian repressiveness of the earlier eras. Social critics seized on the Freudian concept of the sexual origin of the neuroses as scientific "proof" that the Victorians were all neurotic because they were sexually repressed and to justify a greater liberalism in matters of sexual behavior.

In 1928 Régis Michaud, commenting on the current tendency to use psychoanalysis in the war against Puritanism, places Henry James among those "obsessed by the problems of Puritan inhibitions and their influence on human conduct," and identifies him as a precursor of modern novelists like Theodore Dreiser and Waldo Frank, who felt that "the Puritan repression of natural instincts is a danger and a failure. It breeds hypocrisy and poisons the soul." But Michaud says that, although he indicted Puritanism, James remained a Puritan at heart. His ambivalent attitude is reflected in his heroines, whose Puritan consciences will not allow them to really "clasp to their bosom" all the pagan beauty of Europe. His novels thus become a "first-hand contribution to the study of inhibitions," of "the Puritan blindness of the senses or the atrophy of the emotions,"

In his book, Expression in America, Ludwig Lewisohn

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61"The Ambassadors," The Criterion, VIII (September, 1928), 56.

states that, under the guiding principle of psychoanalysis, he will attempt "a portrait of the American spirit" as it is articulated in creative expression. He accepts Freudian analysis as an imperfectly developed, but empirically valid, science: "It was . . . inevitable that I use the organon or method of knowledge associated with the venerated name of Sigmund Freud. The portrayer of any aspect of human life or civilization who does not do so today will soon be like some mariner of old who, refusing to acknowledge the invention of mathematical instruments because their precision was not yet perfect, still stubbornly sailed his vessel by the stars."^^

Lewisohn relates the problems of James's age to the popular attitude toward sex. He is against repression and for freedom, and, like Brooks, uses psychoanalysis uncritically whenever it seems to support his ideas. The age of Howells and James, he says, was so concerned with purity and gentility because it was so "immitigably vulgar" and "so violently sex-conscious." As an example, he mentions Henry James's "A London Life" (1889) in which "a young woman implores a man, who does not love her, to marry her and save her reputation, merely because the two have been left alone in a box at the opera" (pp. 238-239). He explains the Victorian ambivalence toward sex by quoting from Freud's Totem and Taboo:

The people have an ambivalent attitude toward their

taboos; unconsciously they would like nothing better than to transgress these prohibitions, but they are also afraid to do so; they are afraid precisely on account of the greatness of their desire. . . . The foundation of a taboo is a forbidden action toward which there is a powerful inclination in the unconscious. . . . For what no one desires to do would not need to be forbidden and that, surely, which is most emphatically forbidden must be the object of desire (p. 245).

Lewisohn uses James, among others, as an illustration of his thesis. Like Michaud, Lewisohn treats Henry James as both psychologist and patient, his works as both "case" studies and unconscious revelations of personality. He credits James with having been at least partially aware of his own motives, noting that the theme of "The Figure in the Carpet" is an anticipation of the Freudian principle that the work of each artist reveals the processes of his innermost psyche (p. 258).

James found it impossible to participate in normal human experience, especially, Lewisohn hints, in normal sexual experience. In compensation, he developed his faculty of observation and his "sympathetic sensibilities" so that "he could seem to appreciate the normal passions and predicaments of normal people which he had never shared" (p. 262). Thus, Lewisohn says, "Flight was his motive; frustration was his theme; flight and frustration intertwined were the figure in his carpet" (p. 260). But James, unconsciously fearing that his figure would be revealed, his deepest desires exposed to public view, created an elaborate and verbose style of writing in order to conceal the real
subject of his stories from himself and from his readers.

His style also served to disguise his lack of experience under "an elaborately beautiful indirection" which allowed him "to describe passion without showing its sting, poverty without its direct pain and humiliation, self-murder without the agonies that must precede it, . . . and all the actions and passions of mankind but as in their curved outer gestures they affected an observer as acute and sympathetic but as cool and as remote from life as he himself" (p. 262). It is this very lack of experience that is James's greatest fault, though James would never permit himself to know this, since such an admission would have destroyed the complex defense mechanism by which as an artist he sought to disguise and compensate his failures as a man. Thus, says Lewisohn, he does not touch our hearts and lives.

Lewisohn is trying to prove the value of realism and naturalism in literature by demonstrating, one by one, that the Puritan and Genteel writers were neurotic escapists. He wrongly believes psychoanalysis to have established a direct relationship between mental health and artistic ability; thus he feels free to conclude that, because the Puritan and Genteel writers like James could not handle their sex problems, they could not write. To him the test of literary merit lies in the author's choice of theme and in its concreteness and fidelity to reality, so that he ultimately condemns James as an artist, while recognizing that "as stylist, master of form, creator of a body of memorable work," he is "probably
the most eminent man of letters America has yet to show" (p. 255).

Thus we see many early critics of James--Van Wyck Brooks, Fred L. Pattee, Thomas Beer, J. H. Lewis, Dorothy Brewster and Angus Burrell, Orlo Williams, Vernon L. Parrington, Granville Hicks, and Ludwig Lewisohn--using psychoanalysis in the service of their own socially oriented theories of literature. These early analyses tend to result in unfavorable opinions of James, not because of any inevitable conclusions reached by psychoanalysis, but because in the 1920's James was still out of favor. Critics wanted realism and social comment, and James did not seem to provide these.

The works of these early critics had a tremendous influence on attitudes toward James. Many of these earliest Freudian works demonstrated the effectiveness of "putting people down" by reducing them to a bundle of Freudian complexes. In the 1920's and 1930's this practice was especially useful as an instrument against the "Puritanism" of the older generation, represented by Henry James. It was so effective that even more recent critics, hostile to James, have insisted on using it. We shall discover more of this type of criticism in the works of Stephen Spender, Leslie Fiedler, and Maxwell Geismar.

It should be noted that critics who use psychoanalysis as a scientific justification for a Romantic rebellion against Victorian social regulations are misusing it in several ways. In the first place, psychoanalysis may provide insight into
the character of a writer and his work, but as we previously noted, it provides no basis for evaluation, no set of principles, no scale of values. Brooks and his followers have employed the rather dubious method, made available by Freudian theory, of evaluating a man in terms of his "normality" or his "sanity." But psychoanalysis falls short even in this case, for it provides no real definition of an "abnormal" person. Abnormalities are simply normal tendencies carried to an extreme. Therefore, by placing extreme stress on a few of James's mild peculiarities, a critic can easily "prove" that he was "abnormal" or neurotic. Furthermore, Freud did not say that because an artist's work reveals an Oedipal conflict or a repressed wishful fantasy it is a bad work. In fact, as with Hamlet, its repressed content might be the very thing to appeal to the reader.

In the second place, these critics are apparently unaware that Freud did not argue for the free expression of the primitive impulses. In fact, Freud believed that civilization has been built up "by sacrifices in gratification of the primitive impulses," by the redirection of energy "towards other ends, no longer sexual and socially more valuable." He says, "Society can conceive of no more powerful menace to its culture than would arise from the liberation of the sexual impulses and a return of them to their original goal."\textsuperscript{64} The misinterpretation arose, however, among those

\textsuperscript{64}A General Introduction, p. 27.
critics not really familiar with his principles, from Freud's failure to always make himself clear on this matter and from his seeming, by overemphasis, to give the dark powers of the unconscious the leading role in behavior, at one point calling it "the true psychical reality."  

Finally, many critics, especially those writing in the 1920's and 1930's, when enthusiasm for Freud was at its peak, fail to question the scientific validity of the "science" providing the "proof" for their Romantic convictions. Hall and Lindzey point out that, in the presentation of his theory, Freud gave no account of his procedure or any systematic presentation of data, leaving "the door open for many doubts regarding the scientific status of psychoanalysis." Furthermore, the theory itself is faulty: there are no fixed sets of relationships from which predictions can be made, no basis for quantitative measurements.  

In 1935, W. Beran Wolfe makes an interesting point in this connection—that Freud's theory was not really a science, but developed as a result of his upbringing in the repressed, bourgeois society of middle-class Vienna and naturally appealed to others like himself raised in a world "which had invested sex with a transcendental magic."  

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65 The Interpretation of Dreams, p. 613.

66 Theories of Personality, pp. 70-71.

today have almost completely rejected Freudianism, while giving Freud credit for many valuable insights into human nature. It is for these insights that other critics have studied psychoanalytic theory, while recognizing its inadequacies.

Hall and Lindzey point out, in defense of Freud, that very few theories of behavior provide much in the way of scientific proof. What psychoanalysis does have to offer, they say, is a picturesque language and a broad and deep conception of man:

Over and above all of the other virtues of his theory stands this one—it tries to envisage a full-bodied individual living partly in a world of reality and partly in a world of make-believe, beset by conflicts and inner contradictions, yet capable of rational thought and action, moved by forces of which he has little knowledge and by aspirations which are beyond his reach, by turn confused and clearheaded, frustrated and satisfied, hopeful and despairing, selfish and altruistic; in short, a complex human being. For many people, this picture of man has an essential validity (p. 72).

Herbert J. Muller says that Freudian man has "a genuine dignity and force": "He is always torn by conflict, threatened by the powers of darkness; his victories are compromises, invitations to further battle; yet he continues to aspire, he is worthy of the struggle, and his virtues emerge from it." Thus it is possible to use psychoanalysis to support a more favorable view of James both as a human

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being with many very human problems and as a kind of psychicologist who dealt with these problems in his art.

Psychoanalytic Criticism of James: 1930-1940

In the 1930's enthusiasm for psychoanalytic criticism was at its peak, and it is not surprising to find many of the more important psychoanalytic works on James coming in this period. Under the influence of psychoanalysis, critics devoted more and more attention to studies of James as an individual. In these studies they tended to be more exact and thorough, more careful in their use of evidence, and more correctly Freudian than earlier psychoanalytic critics. In addition, they were more complex in their approach to James and tended not to be so completely favorable or unfavorable in their evaluations nor to be so reductive as the early critics. Their approach reflects the more serious attitude toward psychoanalysis developing in the 1930's. For instance, Edmund Wilson took up the suggestion made by Edna Kenton about the ambiguity in "The Turn of the Screw," expanding it to include James's other works, relating it to James's personality, and justifying it in terms of psychoanalytic theory. During this period, critics like Glenway Wescott, Edmund Wilson, Stephen Spender, and Anna R. Burr drew attention to certain incidents in James's life, certain aspects of his character, which, in terms of psychoanalysis, provide significant answers to many puzzling questions.

Their criticisms have been very influential. First,
they have modified the popular concept of James and his work. For instance, by demonstrating that his works do deal with sex, that they are not only genteel novels of manners, but are about the deep and dark secrets of the human mind, they have repaired much of the damage done by Brooks to his reputation. Secondly, their insights have recurred again in later criticism. That James himself condemned Puritan repressiveness, that his work is ambiguous and many of his narrators unreliable reporters, that he wrote about sexual perversions and much of his language has sexual overtones, or that his characters often act out his personal conflicts have now been accepted by many as "facts" about him. Finally, they have inspired other critics to look more deeply into James's writings. Even critics who openly despise these Freudians probably have benefited from their insistence on close and careful reading of his works. Certainly James's reputation has improved as a result of the demonstration by the Freudians that his novels have more than one level of meaning. They are so based in life that, like life, they are open to many interpretations.

The Henry James Issue of The Hound and Horn

In 1934, The Hound and Horn published an issue devoted to the works of Henry James. This issue is a landmark in the history of Jamesian criticism, for it initiated a revival of popular and critical interest in his works, especially through three articles relevant to the present study, by
Glenway Wescott, Edmund Wilson, and Stephen Spender. To some extent these critics have carried on the practice of using psychoanalysis to condemn Puritan repressiveness, finding in James an example both of a victim of and a rebel against Victorian social conventions.

Glenway Wescott.—Wescott's article, entitled, "A Sentimental Contribution," is a reminiscence on youthful reading of Henry James. In discussing James's subject matter and his obscure and difficult style, Wescott anticipates a great deal that was to be said by the later Freudian critics. He defines the popular conception of James in the phrase: "Henry James: expatriation and castration," referring to a rumor current in America during his youth that Henry James could not have fathered a child because of his pre-Civil War accident. But Wescott speculates that this accident, plus James's expatriation, was the source, not of failure, but of his power as an artist.69

Like Michaud, Wescott sees James as a secret rebel against social convention, whose delight in the rupture of these conventions is the "hidden meaning" commonly suspected to underlie all of his stories. He believes that a serious student of James's works would find that "they all appear to have originated in, and with elegant subterfuge display, excitement about some bold, sad, and scabrous problem, some

69The Hound and Horn, VII (April-June, 1934), 523-524.
overt perversity or real bad behavior." The Ambassadors, for instance, is about "habit-binding pleasure and incestuous match-making." The Wings of the Dove (1902) is about blackmail. The Golden Bowl is about the "treacherous passion . . . of a homosexual man" (pp. 530-531). James wrote of sordid moral problems, of sex and perversion, in an elegant context, "without undue disturbance of moral proportion or staling of sensibility," without facing up to their possible effects on the personal innocence of his readers, on the ordered and refined society he enjoyed (p. 532). He could get away with such sublimations, such transpositions from a lower to a higher plane, without feeling ashamed.

But this compromise is the source of his failure for the modern reader. It results in more passion and hinted meaning than is warranted by the facts as related, in a "psychic content" far too great for its elegant container. Such an emotionally equivocal art is not satisfactory for mature men and women, for "a hardened, perhaps even scarred personality," and Wescott hints, for a hardened and scarred age. The modern age wants realism, not "composite emotions and suggestive figures of speech and veiled intensities and hypothetical heroics" (p. 533). Although he does not mention Freud or Freudian theory, Wescott prepares the way for Freudian analysis by calling attention to the puzzling discrepancy often found in James's stories between emotional reaction and situation.
Edmund Wilson.--In an article in the Henry James issue of The Hound and Horn, probably the most influential ever written on James, Edmund Wilson repeats the themes of his 1927 essay.\(^7^0\) I shall summarize the article as it appeared, revised and expanded, but essentially the same, in the 1938 and 1948 editions of Wilson's The Triple Thinkers. In the first part of the essay, Wilson centers his discussion on "The Turn of the Screw," treating it, not as a ghost story, but as a study in the morbid psychology of the governess, whom he regards as a neurotic case of sex repression. Wilson is the first critic to point out the Freudian implications of certain episodes and objects in the story and from them to draw conclusions about the meaning of the work. He says that the governess has identified herself with her predecessor and has "conjured up an image who wears the master's clothes but who (the Freudian 'censor' intervening) looks debased, 'like an actor,' she says (would he not have to stoop to love her)?"\(^7^1\) He notes that the male apparition first appears on a tower and the female apparition on a lake and that the ghost of Miss Jessel first appears on the lake at the same time that the governess is watching Flora make a boat by placing a long stick in a hole in a flat piece of wood. At the end of the story, when the governess is left


\(^{71}\)The Triple Thinkers: Twelve Essays on Literary Subjects (New York, 1948), p. 91.
alone with the boy, she compares the two of them to a young couple on their wedding journey. She then tries to make him confess what he did at school but succeeds only in frightening him to death (pp. 90, 93-94).

According to Wilson, the governess is a variant on the familiar Jamesian theme of "the thwarted Anglo-Saxon spinster," who deceives herself and others as to her motives. Wilson agrees with Goddard and Michaud that James is a social critic, condemning one of the products of his society in his "accurate and distressing picture of the poor country parson's daughter, with her English middle-class class-consciousness, her inability to admit to herself her natural sexual impulses and the relentless English 'authority' which enables her to put over on inferiors even purposes which are totally deluded and not at all in the other people's best interests" (pp. 94-95).

In the second part of the essay, Wilson relates the works to James, showing how the author's special problems resulted in specific themes and methods. Wilson agrees with Lewisohn that James is "dramatizing the frustrations of his own life without quite being willing to confess it, without fully admitting it even to himself." From his novels, Wilson says, we can see that there was something insufficient about James's emotional life. A type of Jamesian hero is the American bourgeois who, like the author himself, lives on an inherited income and who turns his back on the commercial world to enrich his experience in Europe. But to Europe he
brings the qualities of "timidity, prudence, primness," and a puritan morality which make him easily disconcerted. The women are similar—cold, innocent, conventional, often suffering "from Freudian complexes or a kind of arrested development" (p. 101).

Around 1895, after the failure of his play Guy Domville, which is about a man who rejects love and money to enter a monastery, James entered a new phase in which sex did appear in his work almost as an obsession. In stories like What Maisie Knew, "The Turn of the Screw," "In the Cage" (1898), and The Sacred Fount, "irregular relationships, . . . illicit appetites, maleficent passions," provide the chief interest, but are presented ambiguously. Now the observer is usually a small child and the people who surround him "tend to take on the diabolic values of the specters of The Turn of the Screw," values which "are almost invariably connected with sexual relations that are always concealed and at which we are compelled to guess" (pp. 109-110).

James is no longer able to maintain his old objectivity, to deal directly with scenes of emotion. Wilson says: "He has relapsed into a dreamy interior world, where values are often uncertain and where it is not even possible any longer for him to judge his effect on his audience . . . which by this time has shrunk to a relatively small band of initiated readers" (p. 110). There is an increasing psychological atmosphere in his novels, and the language becomes more poetic, full of dreamlike similes and metaphors. The
"long abstract formulations," "unnecessary circumlocutions," and "meaningless verbiage" with which he fills out his sentences "are probably symptomatic of a tendency to stave off his main problems, since they are a part of the swathing process with which he makes his embarrassing subjects always seem to present smooth contours" (p. 112).

But Wilson notes that a positive element reappears in these "queer and neurotic stories": moral values begin to reassert themselves. In the Americans of the later novels—Milly Theale, Lambert Strether, Maggie Verver—the ideals of America triumph. His very last fiction, "occupied in a special way with the forgotten, the poor and the old, even . . . with the uncouth, the grotesque," is perhaps "the reflection of his own old age, his own lack of worldly success, the strange creature that he himself has become" (pp. 119-120).

Like Brooks, Wilson sees James's later works as the result of his feeling of failure and disappointment with what he had made of his life. Unlike Brooks, Wilson does not intend, as he says, "to reduce the dignity of these stories by reading into them the embarrassments of the author." For James "has expressed what he had to express—disappointments and dissatisfactions that were poignantly and not ignobly felt—with dramatic intensity and poetic color" (p. 129).

Wilson, plus Kenton and Brooks, is regarded by later critics as a pioneer in the introduction of Freudian methods
into the criticism of Henry James. Louis Fraiberg praises
his knowledge and understanding of psychoanalysis, especially
his appreciation of dream symbolism and its manifestation in
literature, and his ability to relate the author to his
works. In doing so, Fraiberg says, Wilson adheres faithfully
to standard Freudian psychology and avoids the "ludicrous
oversimplification" of which Brooks and Lewisohn were
guilty. 72

In his essay "The Wound and the Bow," Wilson accepts
the Freudian view of the artist as a neurotic, not as a
degradation of the artist, but as a mark of his difference.
He describes the condition of the artist in terms of the myth
of Philoctetes who was isolated from his fellow man because
of a horrible stinking wound, but who was the possessor of a
miraculous bow which caused his countrymen to seek him out. 73
Wilson's theory is derived partly from Adler's idea that the
genius is the victim of an inferiority complex, who overcomes
his inferiorities to be of supreme usefulness, to deal with
the problems of humanity. 74

Wilson's attitude, surprisingly enough, reflects that
of most of the best psychoanalytic critics. In spite of the
charge that their analyses are reductive, they often tend to

72 Psychoanalysis and American Literary Criticism,
p. 176.


74 Hyman, p. 35.
show a sincere and profound respect and sympathy for the author whose private neuroses they are exposing. Wilson, for instance, does not psychoanalyze James to prove that James was crazy, but because he wants to understand James better. To understand an author, for many psychoanalytic critics, means to reveal the basic human conflicts confronted by him and confronted by all of us at some time in our lives. By showing that the author has dealt with the very bases of personality, the universal elements of character, they feel they are demonstrating the source of his greatness. To Wilson, an author's "wound," his personal psychological problem, is the source of his artistic power. By describing the artist's peculiar psychology and its reflection in his art we are providing insight into the sources of creative power and the creative process.

Wilson concludes the essay by noting the increasing popularity of James. His spectator-hero, Wilson says, "appeals for obvious reasons to a period when many intellectuals, formerly romantic egoists or partisans of the political Left, have been resigning themselves to the role of observer or of passive participant in activities which cannot command their whole allegiance." To Wilson, James's personal failures, depicted in his art, are the very source of his present popularity.

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75 Triple Thinkers, p. 130.
Stephen Spender.—Another very important essay in The Hound and Horn was written by Stephen Spender. In 1935 Spender expanded this essay in his book The Destructive Element: A Study of Modern Writers and Beliefs, in which he adds a strong emphasis on sex, probably under the influence of the essays by Glenway Wescott and Edmund Wilson. What Spender does is to combine psychological and social criticism somewhat in the tradition of Brooks and Lewisohn, so that he considers James as an individual and as a product of his society. Unlike Brooks, but more like Michaud and Wilson, he views James's works, not only as ways for their author to escape from the reality he could not stomach, but also as a valid condemnation of that reality.

Spender defines James's problem as an inability in his life and art, to reconcile the inner with the external world. In Roderick Hudson, for example, Roderick Hudson and Rowland Mallet represent the conflict in James "between the desire to plunge too deeply into experience and the prudent resolution (leading, perhaps, to a certain prudishness) to remain a spectator." This inability Spender relates to James's conviction that European society was decadent—a world without belief in which he could not function—as well as to a conflict on the subject of sex, resulting from

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personal inadequacies and from his adherence to the harsh, repressive, New England Puritanical view of life.

Spender regards James as a psychological novelist who recognized, before Freud, that man's greatest problems were his internal psychological conflicts. His characters live, like their creator, partly in a world of their own daydreams and psychological frustrations. His later novels are filled with the imagery of frustrated desires, just as in our dreams we symbolically express those secret wishes repressed from our waking thought. Spender says that James uses dream imagery so freely that it is sometimes difficult to tell the boundary between the real and the fantastic, as though the fantastic were part of the reality. Spender notes, like Brooks and Wilson, a trend toward more fantasy in the later novels, until in The Golden Bowl the life of fantasy becomes more important than reality. Because James, like Joyce, wrote of repressed men and women and because he identified himself with them, we are not always sure how much of his ambiguity was conscious. Instead of thinking in terms of phalluses, "it is natural that a James character should . . . think in terms of . . . ivory towers, beautiful lakes, pagodas and golden bowls" (p. 83).

Spender is completely Freudian in his theory that James's underlying personal problem is a latent homosexuality, which is unconsciously revealed in lively and convincing depictions of passionate friendships between men—Valentin de Bellegarde and Christopher Newman in The American, and
Rowland Mallet and Roderick Hudson in *Roderick Hudson*. Connected with this he finds a certain vulgarity in James's attitude to the body and to sex which in the early novels consists in the sexual act being regarded as a mere formality or as something ridiculous and disgusting, as in "Madame de Mauves" (1875). An obvious symptom of the author's uneasiness is his indulgence in the violent and the melodramatic (pp. 38, 32, 34).

In the middle period James took refuge in unconscious sexual fantasy, in ambiguous books like "The Pupil" (1892), *What Maisie Knew*, "The Turn of the Screw," and *The Awkward Age*. Spender accepts Wilson's interpretation of "The Turn of the Screw"—"Every detail is correctly Freudian"—but doubts that James could have consciously anticipated Freud. In the later novels, sex is nearly always presented as if it were base, as in the relationships of Madame de Vionnet and Chad Newsome in *The Ambassadors* and Kate Croy and Merton Densher in *The Wings of the Dove* (p. 35). To wholly understand James a reader must appreciate the unique isolation of experience of a man who, only after overcoming great inhibition, could finally, as in *The Golden Bowl*, accept "the idea of people loving" (p. 194).

Spender relates James's attitude toward sex to Wesleycott's suggestion that he was physically castrated in his early injury. He repeats the Freudian observation that thoughts of castration preoccupy the mind with ideas of suicide and death, and notes that the death theme is so
prominent in James's novels that critics remark on the fact that Maggie Verver did not die at the end of *The Golden Bowl*. The death theme, however, has a more than personal origin, for, derived from a tradition that began with Hawthorne, it extends into James's work and beyond, into modern literature (pp. 37, 40).

Spender cautions the reader that James's problems are typical of his age, that much of his work stems from the fact that he was a New Englander who spent his entire life attempting to reconcile a puritanical moral code with his idea of the European tradition (p. 196). Thus we see Spender's purpose is partly a psychoanalysis of James's culture. From Brooks, through Lewisohn, Michaud, Wescott, Wilson and Spender, critics reflect the popular tendency to use psychoanalysis to show that Puritan repression resulted in an unhealthy attitude toward life, an attitude like that depicted by James in his characters. But whereas Brooks and Lewisohn say that James was ignorant of his incompleteness as a human being, the others find evidence in his art that he perceived and regretted it.

F. R. Leavis and Yvor Winters.—Although, according to Spiller, F. R. Leavis and Yvor Winters reject the moral relativism in modern life which was brought about partly by psychoanalysis,78 both praise Wilson's theory because it

78"Henry James," *Eight American Authors*, p. 410...
supports their own opinions of James. They suggest, like Spender, that James's literary failures resulted from his isolation from real life, and a consequent inability to reconcile the inner with the external, the illusion with the reality, the theoretical with the concrete. F. R. Leavis praises Wilson's convincing observation that the subtleties and indirections of James's technique "tended to subserve a fundamental ambiguity; one, that is, about which he was not himself clear." Leavis finds in Wilson's essay corroboration for his own belief that, because James did not live enough and because his art became too great a part of his life, he developed toward "over-subtlety" in his writing and lost the "sureness in his moral touch." 79 He says of "The Turn of the Screw": "The subconscious life behind that story, however much or little James may have been aware of the significance detected by Mr. Edmund Wilson, is not that of free and healthy functioning; it is the subconscious life of a spirit in some important ways strained and starved." James's over-concern with consciousness can be seen as an index of some corresponding deficiency in his character, "some failure about the roots and at the lower levels of life" (pp. 416-417).

Like Brooks, Yvor Winters deals with the unfavorable results of James's isolation from his culture. Like Wescott, Spender, and Graham Greene, Winters is puzzled by the unmotivated emotionalism in James's novels; however, his

explanation is somewhat different from theirs, for he sugg-
gests that at times James and some of his characters seem
insane or almost insane as the result of misdirected efforts
to write of the American moral sense isolated from American
manners. The problem arose, says Winters, because James,
though American in character, was not familiar with even the
major aspects of American manners.

Wilson's hypothesis about "The Turn of the Screw,"
Winters continues, is the most plausible one, for in this
story the governess "constructs out of a series of innocent
and unrelated acts, a consistent and coherent theory of
corrupt action and a very intense emotional reaction to the
theory." She must be insane because the gap between any
rational motive and her resulting state of mind is so wide
as to include every item in the story.®® Other stories by
James also show a wide margin of unmotivated, obscure
feeling, apparently without his having realized it. Fleda
Vetch in The Spoils of Poynton (1897) and Lambert Strether
in The Ambassadors are apparent cases of "moral hysteria"
who ruin the lives of the people around them for the sake of
very elusive and subtle moral scruples. In other novels,
like The Portrait of a Lady (1881) and The Awkward Age, the
characters have emotional reactions for which they must find
an acceptable motive—thus their intricate moral

®®Maule's Curse: Seven Studies in the History of
rationalizations and thus the subtlety with which they scrutinize each other and their situation, in the effort to justify their own feelings or simply to understand what is going on. Actually, there is nothing going on, says Winters, because James is trying to deal with moral feeling in a vacuum. Thus James is a forerunner of the experimental poetry of the twentieth century: "The obscurity of the moral problem, the development of the feeling in excess of the motive, is a familiar phenomenon of the romantic period. . . . The conscientious concentration upon this obscurity--conscientious almost to hallucination . . . is the residue of the New England heritage . . . " (p. 198).

Anna R. Burr and Graham Greene:

Henry James and the Civil War

In the same year that Wilson's essay was printed, Anna Robeson Burr published the journal of Alice James. In her introduction, she deals with the whole James family--the father, Henry Sr., the mother Mary Walsh, and their five children, William, Henry Jr., Bob, Wilky, and Alice--and tries to explain their peculiar behavior in terms of a kind of family neurosis, noting "certain psychological manifestations . . . which must have played a large part in their inheritance and development." Henry James, Sr., was the victim of hallucinations which recurred over a period of nearly two years, during which he underwent various treatments for nervous breakdown. The sister, Alice, became a nervous
invalid after a severe hysterical breakdown before she was eighteen. Bob, the younger brother, had a nervous collapse following war service. Henry was subject to periods of depression throughout his life. All five children, says Burr, "presented the customary indications of high-strung nerves in childhood and adolescence, disliking the dark, being highly sensitive to pity and keen to all emotions. That this was an inherited susceptibility is readily seen when their father in his Autobiography describes his own emotional tendencies." 81

Although never explicitly Freudian, Burr certainly supports the view of Henry James as a psychological "case" of some sort. She also supports the view of James as a deliberate psychologist. For she notes that he was exposed throughout his life to people who were victims of a kind of nervous anxiety, and he was aware of such anxiety within himself. He feared, "for the talent he adored, for the privacy that fostered it, for his independence threatened by responsibility." This fear is the motive which took "this sensitive easily upset person as far as possible from the America he regarded as the seat of all disturbance" (p. 58).

James also left America to avoid the contrast between his career and those of his brothers, Wilky and Bob—during the war when they became heroes in the family: "It was hard

to be kept from serving one's country but worse to be forced to see one's younger brothers in the limelight, with the banners and bands. This disappointment echoes through his autobiographical writings" (p. 65). Burr is the first critic to investigate James's psychological peculiarities from his writings about himself, rather than from his novels and stories. She draws attention to the possible psychological significance of the injury mentioned in James's Autobiography and remarks that, although in Notes of a Son and Brother he expresses honest regret that he could not accompany Wilky and Bob, his regret "does not altogether cloud over a mood of relief that the sacrifice of his artistic leisure was not to be required of him" (p. 32).

Burr's essay is more in the line of Adlerian psychology than of Freudian. She treats the family's hysterias, depressions and hallucinations, and moves to Europe as protective reactions which both served the individual Jameses and prevented them from leading a full life. She is also Neo-Freudian in her substitution of anxiety and fear of life for sex as a motivational factor, and in her recognition that James felt unsafe in America. Much of this, however, may come from Brooks, who also assumed that James left America as the ultimate result of his family situation.

Although Anna R. Burr's work did not call up the violent agreement and disagreement occasioned by the publication of Brook's biography or Wilson's Hound and Horn essay, her emphasis on the James "family neurosis" and on the effect
of James's injury and reactions to the American Civil War were picked up and repeated by later critics of James. Graham Greene, for instance, remarks that James was overwhelmed by a sense of evil in the universe because of a history of awareness of evil in his family and because of guilt he felt for having evaded war duty. Like Burr, he mentions that the elder James's fear of evil and "sense of demonic possession" were conveyed to his children. The frequent intensity of Henry James's treatment of his material, as in "The Turn of the Screw," results from this fear. Another source of James's sense of evil was the feeling of self-betrayal related to his brothers Wilky and Bob. It was not the result of a "castration complex," but of a subconscious sense of personal failure for having evaded military service without sufficient cause.82 Burr and Greene are significant as the first critics to consider the effect of James's reactions to the Civil War on his future life and on his art.

Thus in the 1930's several major contributions were made by the psychoanalytic critics to the understanding of James's life and works. Anna R. Burr and Graham Greene drew attention to the significance of the Civil War for James and suggested as a source for his personal difficulties a kind of family neurosis. Edmund Wilson suggested a kind of basic

ambiguity as the key to understanding James's own personality and the personalities of his fictitious characters. Stephen Spender noted the "vulgarity" in James's novels which resulted from his attitude toward the sexual act. Glenway Wescott, Edmund Wilson, Stephen Spender, Graham Greene, and Yvor Winters defined a major difficulty in James's novels and stories which confused and alienated the modern reader—the excess of apparently unmotivated passion. As Winters indicates, this over-emotionalism can only be justified in terms of a "hidden meaning" such as that uncovered by Edna Kenton and Edmund Wilson. The suggestions about James made by these critics were seized upon by many later critics, and often accepted by them as fact. They provide the basis for many of the later critical works on James.
Since 1940 there has been a steady increase in the tendency of Jamesian critics to accept and use the psychoanalytic conclusions about him and to follow psychoanalytic methods of studying the author from his works. Several new trends in the psychoanalytic criticism of James began in this period. Frederick Hoffman notes an increase, beginning in the 1940's, of an interest in the study of language and symbolism in psychological criticism.\(^1\) We find Jamesian critics following this trend by analyzing the symbolism in James's works for clues to their "deeper" meaning and for clues to the author's personality.

There has also been an increase in the number of critics writing under the influence of Neo-Freudian thinking, partly as a result of an essay on James by Saul Rosenzweig but also as a result of changes in the field of psychoanalysis itself. For example, although Leon Edel may have been partially indebted to other Jamesian critics for his use of Neo-Freudian psychology, he also arrived at its use

\(^1\)Freudianism and the Literary Mind, p. 86.
as a result of knowledge of revisions in psychoanalytic thinking and a preference for the new views. Two later changes in the psychoanalytic criticism of James, coming in the 1950's and 1960's, were, first, an increased respect for James as a kind of psychologist, including, even, efforts to prove that he knew Freudian psychology and made conscious and deliberate use of it in his writing; and finally, related to this, the application of Jungian concepts and methods.

This chapter discusses those recent works on James the intent of which is essentially biographical. Many of these simple repeat themes of earlier psychoanalytic criticism of James--of the effect of his injury, of his sexual inadequacy and possible homosexuality, his fear of life, his family rivalries, his compensation or escape into art, which was a form of sublimation for his unsatisfied desires, and his natural, though unconscious, understanding of his own psychological problems. More than earlier critics, these biographers stress especially James's feeling of failure, his sense of inferiority, as a result, no doubt, of Neo-Freudian influence. They tend to stress the importance of James's family relationships, the development of childhood attitudes and their influence on his later life and work, and to relate the works to the biography.

These biographical works are usually not so simple as Brooks's early work; they take a complex approach to James, combining different schools of psychoanalysis and treating James as a complex personality, seldom condemning him wholly
as a neurotic or praising him unreservedly as a psychologist. Also, they select from and combine the insights achieved by earlier critics. A few of these biographers, Geismar and Fiedler, continue the practice of psychoanalyzing James as a representative of some social or economic condition. But those who come earliest in the 1940's, Saul Rosenzweig and his followers—Maurice Beebe, Clifton Fadiman, Charles Neider, Joseph Warren Beach, R. P. Blackmur, F. W. Dupee—treat James as an individual, and though they find interpersonal relationships significant in James's development, they avoid sociological analysis or references to cultural influences on James.

William Troy

William Troy is one of the first critics, after Wilson, to try to understand James's works by examining specific imagery and symbolism in his stories in the manner of Freudian dream analysis formerly used by Caroline Spurgeon and Wilson Knight on Shakespeare. By thus investigating the order and arrangement of his symbol—which can be people, events, or settings—he hopes "to uncover conflicts of feeling that are more often than not belied by the overt urbanity of style."  

Troy focuses on the garden symbol as a key to the

hidden psychological conflicts in James's characters. As used in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), it is a "point of concentration," a symbol both for the rich promise of fulfillment opening for Isabel and for the terror of experience which she finally "rationalizes in terms of moral obligation." Troy is the first critic to suggest that Isabel Archer is not wholly admirable, her trouble being that she will not have "the bitter fruit" of experience but instead "runs from the garden in panic." The symbol is ambiguous because the author himself is ambivalent in his attitude toward experience.

Troy notes that in the middle period of James's life, in the eighties and nineties, the symbol splits. In "The Turn of the Screw" the beautiful garden at Bly suddenly changes for the governess from a kind of Garden of Eden into a "scene of desolation and death," for she projects into it all that part of her own nature which she believes to be evil. In *The Other House*, the story of the murder of a child by a jealous woman, all the action takes place in the garden. This story "sounds the depths of what must have been in his life a period of the most tortuous metaphysical panic and moral despair," without which James would not have reached the "full-bodied affirmation of the last and greatest period." In *The Ambassadors*, Gloriani's garden represents life. James, like Strether, expresses his acceptance of life as it is, "with the wary knowledge of the shadows lurking ever in the dark corners of the garden" (pp. 228-229).
Troy avoids using any "formula" for interpreting James's symbols, preferring to study them in the context of James's life and works, without any preconceived notions about their meaning. He shows Neo-Freudian influence in that he interprets the symbols, not in terms of sex or aggression, but rather as representations of attitudes toward life. Although we can get a full understanding of James, says Troy, only through a study of his major symbols, he sometimes made explicit statements, as in "The Altar of the Dead" (1895). This story is a comment on the "pathetic desolation of the individual in our society," because we have no ritual which recognizes and observes the continuity of human experience. James's works are especially popular now "when loss of continuity is our gravest threat, when personality is everywhere at a discount, when all consequent values dissolve in the general terror." Troy reflects Jungian thinking when he says, "This sense of the continuum between past and present, between all who share the memory of a common experience, is now known to be at the base of every religion in the world." And, he says, Henry James shared such a sense, though he was never theologically inclined (p. 230). Thus Troy, like Spender, Wilson, and Michaud, uses psychoanalysis to show that James, as revealed in his work, is a critic of the modern social malaise.
A Psychoanalyst on James: Saul Rosenzweig

The first article on James written by a psychoanalyst was an essay published in 1943 by Saul Rosenzweig. According to Willian Van O'Connor it is one of the few really good psychoanalytic critical essays ever written. And it has been one of the most influential on Jamesian criticism.

Rosenzweig begins with an account of James's mysterious injury at the beginning of the Civil War, speculating that it was a repetition, "by one of those devious paths of identification which creates strange needs in sensitive personalities," of a similar accident which befell his father at the age of thirteen, resulting in the amputation of a leg. His father was injured while extinguishing a fire in a stable, and "Henry James, the son, while likewise engaged . . . may, if only for a moment, have suffered a lapse of attention or alertness, due possibly to some glimmering association about his father's accident on a so similar occasion; and that thus favored, the accident took effect." This is pure conjecture, and Rosenzweig admits as much. It is based, however, in Freud's belief that the unconscious is responsible for many acts which the conscious regards as accidental.

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4 "The Ghost of Henry James," Partisan Review, XI (Fall, 1944), 440. This article was originally published in Character and Personality, XII (December, 1943), 79-100. The page numbers in my text refer to the article as it appears in the Partisan Review.
The relation to his father's accident explains the ready acceptance of the injury and the certainty as to its long duration indicated in *Notes of a Son and Brother.* From James's own statements we can agree that the injury had as much psychological significance as physical significance as physical, perhaps making him suspect himself as a malingeringer. Since childhood James had suffered from a feeling of inadequacy which was "sharply crystallized" by his injury into a negation of life, what Rosenzweig calls a "passional death." According to Rosenzweig, it became a nucleus around which many aspects of his life and art were oriented (p. 453).

Rosenzweig regards "The Story of a Year" (1865) as an early working out of the personal conflicts related to this injury. Significant as aspects of James's own life are the hero's self doubt, his mother's possessiveness for her son, the heroine's being a ward of the mother and thus a kind of "cousin" to the hero, the absence of a father, the identification through their similar fates of the hero and his father, and the fact that the hero's fate is determined, not by the war, but by psychological forces. Also significant is the correspondence between Henry James's blight and John Ford's death, which as that of an abandoned lover, is a symbol of James's own passional death. As if to confirm this "death" James left America and took up residence in England in 1875 (pp. 444-445).

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From it came the ghost which appears again and again in the later tales—a symbol of "the immortal impulses of the unlived life." In the supernatural tales, like "Sir Edmund Orme" (1892) and "Owen Wingrave" (1893), James vindicated, through the hero's triumph over the ghost, his temporary solution to his conflict. In later life, in 1904, he returned to America, probably because of a desire "to complete the unfinished experience of his youth," to exorcise the ghost of his unlived life before death overtook him. He recorded the failure of his effort in "The Jolly Corner" (1909), which complements the earlier "Story of a Year": "As Henry James—or Ford—left America to reside abroad, Brydon returns to confront his former self" (pp. 448-449).

Having failed in this attempt to rework his life, James went through a period of severe nervous depression toward the end of 1909. But with the beginning of World War I in 1914, he suddenly became interested in social action, perhaps in an effort to compensate for his failure to act during the Civil War. Rosenzweig conjectures: "Instead of hanging his head as a war disability, he would stand forth as a war hero; England, which had been for him a refuge of escape, would become a citadel of his true assertion; and America, which had exhibited him as weak, would now be exhibited by him as weak" (p. 452). The ghost of his rejected self would finally be liberated from its "death." Rosenzweig praises James as a kind of recluse who in his last years exerted great effort and finally succeeded in reestablishing
contact with contemporary social realities.

In a brief summary at the end of his essay, Rosenzweig presents his case, as he says, "in the jargon of psychoanalysis": "The Oedipus situation of Henry James included a highly individualistic father—a cripple—and a gifted sibling rival (William) who together dwarfed the boy in his own eyes. . . . A severe inferiority complex resulted." He solved the problem "submissively as a profound repression of aggressiveness." As a result of his injury, his inferiority complex developed into "castration anxiety," which involved the "manliness of war" and the "virility of Love." The accident may have indicated as well "identification with the crippled ('castrated') but powerful father . . . both through the son's remarkably similar accident and in their common incapacitation," and on a deeper level, may have been accepted as a "token of filial submission." Rosenzweig says, "Introversion in which both aggression and sexuality were repressed was now established as a modus vivendi." Rosenzweig suggests that the injury acting on a possible "constitutional bisexuality," may have subdued the more active and masculine elements of his character and accentuated the passive and feminine elements. Rosenzweig does not say that James was physically castrated in the accident, but that the injury served to reinforce a pattern of behavior already well established.

After the injury James turned to fiction. His writing served as an escape into fantasy as well as a means to
relieve his frustration through sublimation. But this solution was not sufficient, and he finally left America. His novels show a "precious overqualification of style and restraint of sexual passion," reflecting his inhibited way of life. His superior psychological insight derived from introspection into his own problems. In the final one-third of his life the old drives revived. The ghost stories attest to "the return of the repressed" (pp. 453-454).

Rosenzweig, like Burr, shows the influence of Ego psychology on Freudian theory, for he stresses the inferiority complex, treating it as something distinct from the sex urge. He sees the ultimate source of James's disability as a function of his inheritance (constitutional bisexuality) and of family relationships. James suffered, not from guilt over incestuous desires for his mother or hatred for his father, but, in the Adlerian sense, from a feeling of failure because he could not live a full life.

Rosenzweig's approach is quite reasonable. By writing the essay in two parts, only one of which is couched in psychoanalytic terms, Rosenzweig makes it clear that he is interpreting James in the light of a particular system of thought, rather than exposing the final "truth" about him. Psychoanalysis is somehow more acceptable when presented in everyday language rather than in the jargon of orthodox psychoanalysis. For example, many people, including both William and Henry James themselves, have remarked on James's
feeling of powerlessness in his aggressive and boisterous family. Only when this feeling is defined in terms of the Oedipal conflict, castration anxiety, or the inferiority complex do people reject it as belittling. But these are only different ways of describing the same behavior, as Rosenzweig clearly indicates. In any case, Rosenzweig does not present these interpretations as "fact." For instance, his hypothesis about James's inferiority complex is presented as pure speculation, but as speculation which may throw some light on certain problems of the author's life—his expatriation, his aloofness, the origin of his ghost stories, and his behavior during the First World War.

And finally, Rosenzweig's approach is not reductive. He does not endeavor to "explain" James or his art. He simply applies psychoanalytic theory and methods to one aspect of James's character. He never implies that James is "nothing but" an inferiority complex. James is a great deal more; but Rosenzweig is dealing in this article with "nothing but" the inferiority problem and its final resolution. Nor does Rosenzweig ever imply that by exposing James's complexes he shows him to be any less a great man and a great artist. Unlike Van Wyck Brooks and Ludwig Lewisohn, he makes no value judgments.

However, Rosenzweig's essay has often been misunderstood. A common misinterpretation is the basis for the partial refutation by Maurice Beebe, who claims that Rosenzweig reduces James's peculiar vision to a form of
neurosis. In fact, Rosenzweig does not regard James as a neurotic, but as a man who successfully solved his problems in a particular way. Critics like Beebe often forget that in Freudian terms to say that a man has an unresolved Oedipal complex is not necessarily to say that he is neurotic. Beebe falsely assumes that because Rosenzweig did not deal with the conscious, objective aspect of James as an artist, he denied the existence of such an aspect.

Beebe makes some specific objections to Rosenzweig's conclusions, noting, for example, that the injury was not the cause of James's detachment or of his choice of career, for he had previously done some literary work and had already determined the direction of his interests. However, Beebe agrees with Rosenzweig that James felt a close association between his injury and the war, and that the injury was psychosomatic, providing "the excuse, the rationalization, for doing what he had always wanted to do" (p. 532).

Beebe's view is not then in complete contradiction of Rosenzweig's, and it too reflects the influence of the psychology of unconscious motivation. As a matter of fact, Beebe, like many critics of psychoanalytic criticism, objects not so much to the psychology, as to the particular application of it. His essay demonstrates the distressing fact that even the psychoanalysts themselves do not arrive at

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consistent verifiable conclusions that strike immediately upon every reader as the key to truth he has been searching for, that even their conclusions can never be more than interpretations, open to question.

**Followers of Rosenzweig**

Rosenzweig's essay received wide circulation in the 1940's and 1950's and had an immediate impact on Jamesian biography and criticism, probably because psychoanalytic criticism was pretty well accepted by this time, not as an exciting and revolutionary new theory, but as part of the modern view of man. Rosenzweig's emphasis on James's feeling of failure, his "psychological castration," which ultimately took the place of Brooks's alienation theory as an explanation for his problems, is the basis for almost every one of the articles and books discussed in the rest of this chapter.

*James as a Homosexual.*—As we have seen, James's apparent lack of virility has been a constant source of interest for his critics, beginning with J. P. Mowbray in 1902, through Glenway Wescott and Stephen Spender. Rosenzweig's article served to crystallize this interest and provide critics with an "authoritative" basis for further speculation. In 1947, George Snell wondered if James's accident, which perhaps robbed him of his virility, could account for his failure to deal, not only with sex, but with the
ordinary tensions and conflicts that beset men and women.⁷

Taking a clue from Spender and Rosenzweig, Charles Neider says that James was in constant flight from the real world, which he associated with heterosexual relationships, into "the 'purer' realm of celibacy, chastity, renunciation --or, that is, narcissism and latent homosexuality." Neider says, "One senses the latent homosexuality in almost all of James's work"; James's symbols and character relations often have homosexual overtones. For example, Neider rejects the supernatural conventions of "The Turn of the Screw" and insists that the evil servants are still alive, according to which view, "the homosexual symbolism is starkly evident."

In "The Pupil," an intelligent and sensitive boy, Morgan Moreen, and his tutor, Pemberton, form a subtle alliance against the "vulgarly heterosexual" parents. Also, in "The Aspern Papers" there is significance in the narrator's desire to "reach" Jeffrey Aspern's person through his literary effects. Neider finds symbolic homosexual meaning in the small oval portrait of Aspern which the narrator finally possesses, as well as in the narrator's reference to it during the climactic scene with Miss Tina.⁸

Neider fails to provide any facts from James's life

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or letters to support his "sense" of James as a homosexual. He uses only the works, jumping directly from those of isolation and renunciation to the conclusion of homosexuality. So his thesis is mere speculation, open to doubt. His conclusion is Freudian, and his method of deriving his conclusion from James's literary works is also Freudian. But he ignores, like many critics, the injunction of Freud and other psychoanalysts that we must interpret the dream or the work of art in the context of the artist's whole life. In addition, because Neider seems to "force" the interpretations a bit, we recall Griffen's comment that critics dealing with the works of a dead author can easily find grounds in psychoanalytic theory for any interpretation that satisfies him. (See above, p. 11.) This kind of careless psychoanalysis, then, often has the effect of making us question the critic's own motives. Nevertheless, Neider does not belittle his subject but indicates that James's disability may have been the source of his great power. He says, "Perhaps much of the beauty of the work is due to this latent homosexuality, to the beautiful gestures and forms with which it disguises itself. But this is not to suggest that James was altogether unaware of his masks. It is part of the challenging complexity and greatness of the man that he was capable of turning his microscope and his irony upon himself as well as upon the world he observed" (pp. 14-15).

The theme of James as a homosexual appears again and again in Freudian criticism of Henry James. Given James's
uneventful sex life, his failure to marry, his remarkable insight into the character of women, it is a logical conclusion for psychologically-oriented critics to draw, especially when it supports a pet theory or when they do not want to make the effort to look for more complex causes. To some amateur psychoanalysts, "unconscious, latent homosexuality" is a very handy concept by which to explain the eccentricities of an author when they cannot easily be explained otherwise. This is not to say that all who draw this conclusion are foolish amateurs, nor that they are completely unjustified in the case of James. But a reader could wish for more careful analysis of the growth, development, and manifestation of this irregularity than Neider has provided before accepting it as the whole truth about Henry James.

Some such evidence is provided by Michael Swan in his account of James's association with Hendrik Christian Anderson, a young sculptor. Apparently it was a very close and affectionate relationship which endured for some years. By about 1901, Swan says, Anderson had become one of the "son figures" which James gathered around him in the last years of his life. Swan does not suggest the possibility of latent homosexuality in the relationship, although he does not reject it. However, anyone wishing to draw such a conclusion would find a certain amount of evidence for it in these intensely emotional letters. For example, James begins one letter: "My dear, dear, dearest Hendrik," and says, "The
sense that I can't help you, see you, talk to you, touch you, hold you close and long, or do anything to make you rest on me or feel my deep participation—this torments me, dearest boy, makes me ache for you, and for myself, makes me gnash my teeth and groan at the bitterness of things." He closes another letter, "Think only of my love and that I am yours always and ever, Henry James."  

James as a Neo-Freudian Case.—Van Wyck Brooks originated the idea that James was haunted by a feeling of failure in life. Anna R. Burr and Saul Rosenzweig associated this feeling with his injury, his failure to participate in the war, and his position in his exceptional family. Clifton Fadiman, Joseph Warren Beach, R. P. Blackmur, and F. W. Dupee accept the feeling of failure as the key to James's life and art. They are Neo-Freudian in their stress on his inability to commit himself to others, to form close interpersonal relationships, to really live fully. They show the influence of Adlerian theory, according to which a man who fails in one area often strives to compensate for his failure in another or creates a fiction that that area is not really desirable anyway. They agree that as a result of his failure, James developed a "fiction" that a full life was not really desirable, and withdrew into the world of art.

where he compensated for his own failures and tried to come
to terms with them by writing about them.

In his general introduction and his notes on the
tales, Clifton Fadiman agrees with Rosenzweig that James's
ghost stories are attempts to reorder his life. "The Jolly
Corner," for example, is a kind of unconscious "auto-psycho-
analysis." Fadiman also agrees that James's remarkable
insight, especially into characters like Marcher in "The
Beast in the Jungle," comes from his own life: "He must have
felt . . . that the circumstances of his parentage, the early
accident that partially incapacitated him, the removal to
England—all had combined with many other factors to narrow
for him the possibilities of direct and passionate experi-
ence." Like Strether, he suffered from "the troubling
pressure of his unlived life."\(^{10}\)

In a review of *The Notebooks of Henry James*, Joseph
Warren Beach accepts Rosenzweig's view that James suffered a
physical or psychological castration as a result of his
injury. But whatever we think of Rosenzweig's formula, he
says, we cannot help but be struck by James's "essential
loneliness," his avoidance of intimate personal relation-
ships. He touched life at many points, but only with the
imagination, living, pathetically, through reconstructing
the lives of imaginary beings. Perhaps in *The Ambassadors*,
Strether's outburst to his friend, little Bilham, to "live—live all you can," expresses James's own regrets. Beach goes on to note that James's characters find more satisfaction in renunciation than in possession—an attitude which the author presents, not as a symptom of abnormal psychology, but as "an example of a refined and superior reaction to certain situations" (p. 32). Maybe, Beach says, James's emphasis on "special and esoteric 'relations,' relations with a difference" is an effort to compensate for not having had even the ordinary relations (p. 26).

R. P. Blackmur says that the conditions of James's life "led . . . to the final decision at full maturity that in the very passion of pleading for full life in others, for him life had to be sacrificed to art." These conditions were:

... freedom of sensibility and conscience and the emotional insecurity that is apt to accompany that freedom. His was a minimum financial security and the curious need to prove one's own value that in responsive natures sometimes goes with that security. His also was so wide a variety of social and educational exposures, which had in common only their informality, that he was left the most social man in the world but without a society or an institution that could exact his allegiance. His, further, was an accidental injury by a slip or a fall in early manhood which seems to have left him with the sense of a physical uprootedness and isolation that only aggravated, as it fed upon, his emotional isolation. Like Abélard who, after his injury, raised the first chapel to the Holy Ghost, James made a sacred rage of his art as the only spirit he could fully serve.

By comparing James with Abelard, Blackmur implies that there was a physical castration and that James created in art the life he could never have.\(^{12}\) Blackmur, like Rosenzweig, is Adlerian in that he stresses James's need for a feeling of individuality and a sense of security.

James's "fiction" was that of his devotion to art. Art gave James satisfaction for his "omnivorous curiosity," and it made the sacrifice of other forms of life acceptable as though they were sacrifices for art's sake; it assured him of an outer identity, no matter what his failures in life might be, and it provided a conviction of purpose which "overrode" his failures and sacrifices and "put him in unsailable relation with society." Blackmur asks, "Who will say that it is not an invoked obsessive device, a ruse to transform life otherwise intolerable? But who will say, in the conditions of his life, that he had an alternative?" He knew himself actually at the periphery of things and "had therefore to make himself a center in invoked reality" (II, 1049, 1051).

The psychological analyses of Beach and Blackmur are not expressed in psychoanalytic terms, and we can probably assume that their use of psychoanalysis resulted more from general reading and from a general knowledge of psychological theory than from any great enthusiasm for psychoanalysis as such.

In his biography of James, F. W. Dupee recounts James's life using psychoanalytic concepts in the appropriate places, sometimes providing added information for them. While he has drawn a great deal from the insights of Rosenzweig, his work shows a knowledge of psychoanalysis which extends beyond a mere indebtedness to other critics. For example, he stresses, more than any earlier critic, the problem of sibling rivalry in that "paradoxical family," who cultivated rivalry, but who, "by their mutual affection and solicitude," condemned envy and open competition. Dupee points out that Henry felt always "overwhelmed by superior beings, all of them more active and articulate than himself," especially by his father and his brother.\(^{13}\)

In order to survive, Henry decided early that he was unable to participate in life. He derived consolation from the example of his mother, the quiet one in this "vociferous family"; since he could not be lively, he strove to be "good" as she was said to be. "And," Dupee says, "the fact that she was more 'conventional' than the rest may have influenced him when he came to dissociate himself from his father's radicalism and to assert his pleasure in the decorous and traditional" (p. 31). Although Dupee is the first to stress Henry's relationship with his mother, he does not explore the Freudian possibilities of the Oedipal conflict or of latent homosexuality. If anything, he is Adlerian, concentrating,

\(^{13}\) *Henry James* (New York, 1951), pp. 29-30.
like Burr and Rosenzweig, on James's relations with the rest of his family, which led him to adopt a retired and passive "style of life" on the model his mother provided. Dupee suggests that James's own extraordinary identification with the feminine mind, revealed in his gradually increasing preference for feminine protagonists in his novels, may have originated in his childhood relation to his mother (p. 112).

Dupee is the first psychoanalytic critic to make much of James's interest in his cousin Minny Temple, refuting as insufficient the attempts that have been made to prove that James remained a bachelor because of the frustration of an ordinary masculine passion for her. It is just as logical, he maintains, to assume that James's invalidism did not prevent his courtship of Minny, but "was itself the symptom of some fear of, or scruple against, sexual love on his part" (p. 45). Like Spender, Dupee notes that sexual passion in James's plots, increasingly associated with cruelty and corruption, nearly always constitutes "the extreme situation, a destructive element in which only the bad people immerse" (p. 125).

Like Rosenzweig, Dupee believes that James's impotence was psychological, but his helplessness after the injury, probably to his back, increased his sense of isolation, of otherness, and at the same time justified it. Dupee notes that James

... writes of the injury and its aftermath as if he were aware of their climactic position in an order of events reaching back to the small outsider of his New
York childhood. Owing to his invalid state he now at last actually is "other"; and having, as it were, established his difference on a simple palpable physical basis, he is free . . . to try to compensate for it in appropriate ways . . . . Long something of a stranger in his family, and lately a stranger in an America, or at least a North, galvanized and drawn together by war, he begins to know "the honour of a tragic fellowship," a community of suffering with the torn country and harassed soldiers (pp. 49-50).

He was consoled by the resources of his own mind, and with them turned his feeling of inexperience to his advantage:

On this unflattering premise he constructed the whole argument of his remarkable life, enriching his tales with the passions of the state of otherness: the pathos, the comedy, the romantic wonderment, the severe critical detachment. He was to make no bold and direct assault upon experience. He was not so much to annihilate the otherness of things as to put himself more at ease with it, forcing its mysteries in such a way that they ceased to seem malignant and came to seem only "wonderful," a favored word of his later years (p. 32).

In Washington Square Catherine Sloper reveals all that James felt of the "pathos and terror" of being an outsider, even in his own family (p. 63). "The Pupil," "The Middle Years" (1895), "The Jolly Corner," and "The Altar of the Dead" (1895) are about estranged and solitary men, possessed by an unnatural anxiety, who "in a cold and vulgar world . . . cherish their idealism and their self-esteem, often . . . to the point of mania," and who "dread lest they be defrauded, not simply of recognition, like the artists, but of life itself, of significant experience" (pp. 178-179). Many of these poor gentlemen have a secret desire to be loved, reflecting James's own need. Dupee notes a kind of "fraternal-homosexual affection" between boy and tutor in
"The Pupil," and between the aging author and his doctor-admirer in "The Middle Years" (p. 182).

Another critic, Michael Swan supports Dupee's view that in later life James felt a "psychological need" for a disciple, a need which may explain his attachment to Hendrik Christian Anderson. Swan draws his conclusion from the fact that, beginning in the early nineties, James wrote on the theme of an elderly writer with a young disciple in stories like "The Lesson of the Master" (1892), "The Middle Years," "The Death of the Lion" (1895), and "The Figure in the Carpet." James eventually discovered such disciples in real life in men like H. G. Wells, Hugh Walpole, and Percy Lubbock. Like Rosenzweig, Swan comments on James's "controlled form of nervous breakdown" in 1910, but attributes it to the death of William, who had for a long time been a replacement of his father. Swan quotes from a letter to H. G. Wells written after William's death: "He had an inexhaustible authority for me, and I feel abandoned and afraid even as a lost child."14

Ilse Dusoir Lind, Alfred Ferguson, William Walsh, Frederick Masback, and Frederick Matthiessen repeat the emphasis on James's inferiority feeling and his consequent withdrawal from life. Lind shows that James associated the failure of

his play Guy Domville in 1895 with his failure, twenty years earlier, as a newspaper correspondent for the New York Tribune. Even after all those years James could recall with "incredible distinctness" everything that had taken place between himself and the editor, Whitelaw Reid. However, says Lind, through a fictional confession of his misdirected ambition in his story "The Next Time" (1896), he was able to resolve his conflicts and constructively redirect his energies.  

Walsh and Ferguson emphasize the importance of sibling rivalry and the need for a sense of identity in James's formation of a life style of contemplation and observation. Alfred Ferguson says that the obscure style of James's later writing resulted from the frustration of his efforts to get fame and fortune and consequently ever to overcome his life-long feeling of failure, to achieve relief from dependence and "assurance of identity." Unable to attain these, he took refuge in the great good place of art, in technique for its own sake, in a limited achievement of perfection. To "diminish their impact on him" he expressed his personal anxieties in his art--his lack of success, popular recognition, the vulgarity of the audience, the nightmare of death.  


According to William Walsh, James's feeling of failure, resulting from sibling rivalry, led to his achievement in the one area of life he was sure of and to his choice of a passive, contemplative role in life. Although he never ceased to compare himself with William and Wilky, with their talent for active participation, his recognition of his own role relieved his anxiety by conciliating his powers and giving "an organizing centre to his life."\(^{17}\)

In his doctoral dissertation, "The Child Character in Hawthorne and James," Frederick Joseph Masback also accepts the view that as a child James suffered from being an introvert in a household of extroverts, and from his rivalry with William, "who was a handsome, talented, intelligent, and sociable boy who seemed to be able to do everything better than Henry and did not mind reminding him of the fact."\(^{18}\)

In his book, Henry James: The Major Phase, F. O. Matthiessen avoids a psychoanalytic approach, although he occasionally reflects the influence of earlier psychoanalytic critics of James, especially Rosenzweig. Matthiessen sees it as a source of anxiety for James that as a result of his upbringing and his injury he might never be able to participate fully in life. His feeling of insecurity was increased by a succession of family deaths, especially that

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\(^{17}\)"Henry James and a Sense of Identity," The Listener, LXII (August 6, 1959), 206.

\(^{18}\)Syracuse University, 1960, pp. 155-156.
of Minny Temple. Matthiessen says, "It needs no amateur psychoanalyzing to read into his many declarations for life an escape from the burden of his private anxieties"—his feeling of insecurity and his consequent revulsion from life.¹⁹

These critics, especially Ferguson, Walsh, and Masback, may owe something to the work of Leon Edel as well as to that of Rosenzweig, for Edel, who began publishing extensively about James in the 1940's, also deals with him in terms of Freudian and Neo-Freudian principles.

Leon Edel

Leon Edel is a biographer of James who has made extensive use of psychoanalytic theory and who evidently regards himself as a kind of psychologist. He demonstrates a thorough knowledge of both Freudian and Neo-Freudian psychology, but is not bound in his writing to any one school, using whatever theories seem relevant to his purpose. This tendency to mingle different psychoanalytic theories is sanctioned by much modern psychoanalytic practice. Modern psychoanalysts, for instance, often use Freud's conclusions about childhood sexuality, the Oedipal conflict, and the sexual origin of the neuroses, in conjunction with later theories of men like Adler, Sullivan, and Fromm about the inferiority feeling and the need for security. Edel has

¹⁹New York, 1944, pp. 29, 50.
written several articles about the use and misuse of psycho-
analysis in literary criticism and biography in which he
defines his own approach and the standards he sets for him-
self in his own work on James. In these articles he outlines
the three areas with which the biographer must be concerned.
The first is his relation to his subject, which is like the
relation between the psychoanalyst and his patient, except
that the biographer chooses his subject. There is a danger
that he will choose a subject which satisfies some need of
his own—a father figure, perhaps—whom he often over-
idealizes or completely belittles in his biography. Edel
says, "There must be, I take it, a strong and compelling
element in a biographer's attraction to his subject which
pushes him on his difficult and often obsessive task, and it
is mixed up in different degrees with all sorts of drives:
a boundless curiosity, not unmixed I suppose with elements
of voyeurism; a drive to power, common I suppose to most pro-
fessions; a need for omniscience." 20 The biographer must
understand his motives in choosing a particular subject so
that he can be objective.

Secondly, the biographer's relation to his material
is like that of the psychoanalyst to the dream work of a
patient. The biographer should look for recurrent patterns

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20 "The Biographer and Psycho-analysis," *The International Journal of Psycho-analysis*, XLII, 460-461. This essay was originally given as a talk at the Edward Hitschmann Memorial Meeting of the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute on March 23, 1961.
of thought in the works, for the author's own imagery and symbolic "chain of fantasy," and must then establish the connections between it and the historical material available to him. He must remember, however, that because he cannot verify his conclusions by the "associations" of his subject, his work is inductive and speculative. He must not reduce the artist to a neurosis, nor belittle his subject, often a man of genius, by showing that he was a narcissist, a homosexual, or that he had a necrophilic impulse. In the presence of a great man, a biographer must maintain a spirit of humility and a sense of objectivity. He should arrive at an understanding, not a judgment.

In his relation to his audience, Edel says, the biographer or literary critic must guard against overuse of "the terminology and jargon of psychoanalysis," against making rigid diagrams of the fantasies of character or author according to Freud or describing the interpersonal relations in the manner of Sullivan. Rather, he must translate his diagnosis into everyday language at the same time relating it to the whole work of art, to the author's life, to his society.

In 1953, Edel published the first volume of a four-

\[\text{\textsuperscript{21}}\text{Literary Biography} (London, 1957), pp. 41, 459.\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{22}}\text{The International Journal of Psycho-analysis, XLII, 464-466.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{23}}\text{Literary Biography, pp. 60, 72.}\]
part biography of Henry James. The aim of the biography is to correct false impressions of James, "to untangle his life, to bring order out of the web of his many friendships, to throw light on the much-discussed 'ambiguities,' ... to catch the life that throbed behind the work." In doing so, Edel ties together the various theories of earlier psychoanalytic critics.

In the first volume, Edel defines James's basic attitudes and shows how they were formed; in the later volumes he shows how these attitudes caused him to react under the various conditions of his life. Edel reflects the influence of Ego psychology in his belief that once he came to an understanding of James's essential personality and behavior patterns, formed in the early years, he could publish the first volume of the biography, about James's early life, while the second was unwritten, without the fear that any new material would alter his fundamental insights. And because the fundamental insights are unchanged throughout these four volumes, they can be discussed here as though they were one volume.

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25Untried Years, p. 16.

26The International Journal of Psycho-analysis, XLII, 462.
Edel is also Neo-Freudian in noting the significance to the formation of James's life style of the interpersonal relationships within the James family, especially, like Sullivan, emphasizing the effect of consistency in the socialization process. He gives special importance to the role played by the personality of the mother, Mary James, who was a more forceful person than the father but was often inconsistent in dealing with her children. Thus the little boy's concept of family life was a confusing "picture of ambiguity and reversal of relation: a father strong, robust, manly, yet weak and feminine, soft and yielding, indulging his children at every turn; and a mother, strong, firm, but irrational and contradictory." 

On the basis of evidence from James's life, letters, and published works, Edel discovers that he worshipped and feared his mother, but identified himself with his father whom he regarded as weak. For example, his reactions to his youthful injury suggest that he drew a parallel between his weakness and that of his father. The older Henry James had called his hallucination a "vastation"; the son called his injury a "vast visitation." Edel always gives careful

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28 Untried Years, pp. 50-51.

attention to such unintentional puns, accepting Freud's belief that they can provide useful connections.

Although in his letters and autobiographical writings, Henry James, with proper filial piety, consistently idealized his mother as a "fragile self-effacing and self-denying woman . . . spending her last strength for her children," in his novels and stories the mothers, "for all their maternal sweetness, are strong, determined, demanding, grasping women--Mrs. Touchett or Mrs. Gereth, Mrs. Hudson or Mrs. Newsome."30

From her example, James became aware that men are often controlled by women, and he came to fear the love relationship as a deterrent to the full life and often as a threat to life itself. His first story, "A Tragedy of Errors" (1864), is about a strong and determined woman who tries to murder her crippled husband.31 In "The Author of Beltraffio" (1885), "The Pupil," The Other House, and "The Turn of the Screw," Edel says, "the bright piping voice of innocence is smothered, the men are symbolically castrated." In The Bostonians the "picture of the American female . . . is that of her assertiveness, her pushing, ruling, dominating mastery of men and children, and her threat to American life."32 In other stories, a "Vampire Theme" accompanies the depiction of love relationships--in "De Gray, A Romance"

30 Middle Years, p. 38.
31 Untried Years, pp. 55, 217.
32 Middle Years, p. 144.
(1868), "Longstaff's Marriage" (1879), and The Sacred Fount. In "Longstaff's Marriage," for example, the hero's engagement brings on a "fatal illness" from which he recovers only when he is safe from marriage. Edel comments on James's play on names in his Notebooks: "Ledward-Bedward-Dedward-Deadward"; and sees it as an unconscious indication of James's fear that "to be led to the marriage bed was to be dead."33

Henry's fear of the love relationship accounts for his reticence in his "courtship" of his "adored" cousin, Minny Temple, whose early death actually came as a kind of relief, says Edel, for he could then translate her from a threatening reality "into an image of the mind," an idea to be worshipped and idolized.34 James was motivated by the same fear of women in his "virtuous attachment" in his later years to Constance Fenimore Woolson, who committed suicide in 1892. From her letters to him it is obvious that she wanted a closer relationship with James than he was willing to have. "The Altar of the Dead" expresses James's reactions to Fenimore: He felt a kind of struggle for power between them, and saw her as a threat to his independence. Thus, says Edel, their relationship reenacted an old conflict for James; in the struggle between man and woman, one had to


34Untried Years, pp. 324-325.
Thus Edel shows how a single attitude—the fear of love—originated from James's family situation, expressed itself in his novels and stories, and motivated his lifelong avoidance of romantic attachments. Edel concludes that James's attitude was unconscious, not because psychoanalysis says it should be, but because, though it is obviously there, James never openly acknowledges it.

In writing about the function of the biographer, Edel says that the critic should not be content with demonstrating that the artist is a neurotic but should be concerned with how he triumphs over his "wound," how because of it he acquires "a kind of second sight," how "the negatives were converted into positives." Thus in his biography Edel finds that James's negative attitude toward women was the basis for the lively and realistic portrayals of women in his novels. James's experience with his mother "had created a permanent damage within himself in his relation with women; and in that marvellous way in which nature insists on compensations and solutions, his constant effort to repair the damage, to understand what had gone wrong, gave him the necessary distance and aloofness—even while creating momentary blindness—that enabled him . . . to undertake the writing of The Portrait of a Lady, and to create a whole

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35 Middle Years, pp. 383-384.

36 Literary Biography, p. 59.
generation of American girls." Of the five children in the James family, the younger three had been crushed "by the irrationalities and contradictions of the familial environment over which Mary had presided." The elder boys had overcome them: "Out of these tensions and emotions generated by the mother which played against the easy compliance of the father, there had emerged a novelist and a philosopher capable of expressing the very contradictions that had produced them -- the one in brilliant fiction, the other in the lucid prose of rational thought."^®

Another important determinant in the development of James's personality, earlier noted by Rosenzweig and Dupee, was his struggle to find identity in a large and turbulent family of competing egos. Unlike Rosenzweig, Edel finds no inherited physical or psychological aberration in Henry James but regards him as a naturally active, masculine boy who learned to be docile and unassertive as a result of his position as a second son to an aggressive and domineering older brother. James's position in the family resulted in an inferiority complex and the formulation of a "life style" characterized by withdrawal from active affairs of the world, by patience, persistence, quiet calculation and secretiveness. By withdrawing from active competition, Edel says, the young Henry found he was able to act in his own way, to preserve

37Conquest, pp. 358-359.
38Middle Years, p. 38.
his individuality, and to conquer, for, because of his docility and "goodness," he became his mother's favorite son and was called the "angel" by the rest of the family. This passivity which was so effective at home eventually became for James a way of dealing with all of life's problems.  

Edel finds James's unconscious frustrations dramatized in his one recorded dream as well as in his pattern of behavior and in his art. In a youthful nightmare, described in A Small Boy and Others, he found himself holding the door of a room closed against some creature forcing his way in. He finally threw the door open, frightening the pursuer, routed the figure and chased it down and out of the hall of the Galerie d'Apollon of the Louvre, a place he remembered from his first childhood trip to Europe. "It is doubtful," Edel cautions, "whether the most skilful explorers of the unconscious" could interpret this nightmare, for we know nothing about the circumstances involved in it. But we can speculate about it "as something which sprang from this particular mind and was recorded at a particular time within the frame of this mind's life and experience." Edel conjectures that the nightmare reflects "the fears and terrors of a 'mere junior' threatened by elders and largely by his older brother"—an interpretation which recalls Adler's statement that second children competing with older siblings often

39Untried Years, pp. 57, 66.
40James, Autobiography, pp. 196-197.
dream of themselves in races or running after something.41

Furthermore, Edel notes that every time the brothers got together one of them became ill. For example, in March 1866, shortly after William returned home from a trip to Brazil, Henry's backache revived. In 1867, William left for Germany, and Henry quickly recovered. In 1868, William returned, and with him, Henry's backache, so that he could not read or write because of the pain. James also expressed his concealed hostilities in his art, creating a fictional world in which older brothers were vanquished, fathers made to disappear, mothers put into their place.42 Edel points out James's predeliction in his novels for second sons or second daughters. Roderick Hudson, for instance, is a second son; Kate Croy in The Wings of the Dove and Valentin de Bellegarde in The American outshine their older siblings in ability and moral depth.43

In the second volume of the biography, Edel deals with James's expatriation, explaining his preference for Europe as a desire to escape a smothering family influence which he could never avoid so long as he remained in America. On his visit to Europe in 1869 to 1870, James had "tasted the joys of personal freedom," but back home, "he was once again the Henry James Jr. of his past, the wide-eyed little

41 Untried Years, pp. 68, 75. See Adler, What Life Should Mean to You, p. 148.

42 Untried Years, pp. 243, 66. 43 Ibid., pp. 58-59.
Henry James, observed and observant, who had to defend his status within the family. Thus, according to Edel, James's return to Europe in 1872 was not an ignoble escape from failure but was the result of a normal adult need to retain a sense of individuality, to freely develop his potential abilities.

In spite of the rivalry William's marriage in 1878 arouse in Henry strong feelings of rejection and jealousy. At this point in his life there was a change in his work; he began to write about heroines—women rejected and betrayed by society. In 1881, Mary James died, and the following year, Henry James, Sr. followed her. In The Princess Casamassima (1886), Edel says, the number of fathers and mothers allotted to Hyacinth reflects James's "acute melancholy," his deep sense of loss. In this novel he "reimagined his subterranean world of feeling in terms of his hero's revolt, loneliness, despair and the need for action."

In the final volume of the biography, Edel deals with the "long purgatory" of depression which followed the failure of James's play. A few weeks after the catastrophe James wrote to Howells: "I have felt, for a long time past, that I have fallen upon evil days—every sign or symbol of one's being in the least wanted, anywhere or by any one, having so

44 *Conquest*, p. 37.
46 *Middle Years*, p. 192.
utterly failed." According to Edel, James responded to this
disappointment by regressing in the fantasy of his art to
relive his childhood difficulties, "as if the injuries of
long ago had occurred all over again, within his adult con-
sciousness, and he had to purge himself of them." 47

The Spoils of Poynton is the beginning of a series of
novels about "a struggling nightmare world," a "world of
blighted houses and of blighted childhoods--of little girls
--and a strange world of female adolescence." 48 One of
these, "The Turn of the Screw," is set, significantly, in
the 1840's, the decade of his own early childhood. In this
story there is a little boy as well as a girl; and Edel
notes two significant points about him: his "strong will to
masculinity, and his sense of entrapment" in a house domi-
nated by females. Edel connects Miles's crime at school--"I
said things"--to William's comment to James when they were
children--"I play with boys who curse and swear." Miles is
James who, during his childhood, had repressed his drive to
masculinity, having found success greater and punishment
less when he acted like a quiet, observant, little girl.
Like Morgan Moreen in "The Pupil" or the young adult, Owen
Wingrave, Miles finally dies. Edel concludes: "In James's
world little boys died. It was safer to be a little girl.

47 Treacherous Years, pp. 94, 164. See The Letters of

48 Treacherous Years, p. 168.
They usually endured."49

Edel points out that in each story of this series, James's "precocious little females" grow older: Effie in The Other House (1896) is murdered at the age of four; Maisie (1897) is five when the story begins; Flora is eight and Miles, ten. The unnamed girl in "In the Cage" (1898) is an adolescent. Nanda Brookenham in The Awkward Age (1899) is eighteen. In all these stories, Henry James relived his "buried life, in the manner in which he had known it--as a struggling little girl, as a beleaguered little boy, as a troubled female adolescent."50 Maisie, for example, is very like the Henry of the late autobiography--curiously and systematically studying her elders, searching for her identity. She is "a study of himself"; in "the disguise of a female child, the protective disguise of his early years, James performed imaginative self-therapy." Although in James's case the therapy was unconscious, intuitive, Edel finds it interesting that it occurred, coincidentally, during the same years in which Freud underwent self analysis and wrote his book on dreams.51

Edel deals cautiously with the relationship between Henry James and Hendrik Christian Anderson, earlier noted by Swan. He suggests a latent homosexual love, at least on James's part--"Certainly a great fund of affection was there,

49 Treacherous Years, pp. 207-209.
50 Ibid., p. 266.  
51 Ibid., pp. 263-264.
and it was openly expressed"—but finds its origins in the loneliness of these years of middle age and in James's desire to recover his youth through a young and handsome "alter ego." In weighing the "delicate and ambiguous" evidence provided by the letters to Anderson, Edel insists that "James was constitutionally incapable of belonging to the underworld of sex into which Oscar Wilde had drifted." 

The end of this period of despair came with the writing of *The Sacred Fount*. But now he questions the way of life he had established over all these years—speculating that perhaps observation and perception of others was not enough. May Server in this novel represents James, his "awareness of his loneliness, the passing of youth, the passing of success." After this last stage of "self-therapy" James could face his problems of middle age and loneliness and could open himself up "to feeling and to love," Now he will express his renewed will to life by writing a novel about a man like himself—Lambert Strether in *The Ambassadors*.

Edel depicts Henry James as a man whose later view of life was determined and limited by the circumstances of his childhood, but who constantly struggled to understand and to overcome these limitations through his art. As a child James formed a world view, a "fiction" about women, about older brothers, about marriage, about personal freedom, about art, about

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52 Ibid., pp. 315-316.  
53 Ibid., pp. 345-346.  
54 Ibid., pp. 354-356.
and about himself and his own abilities. This "fiction" became the basis for his "life style" of aloofness and isolation, for his tendency to express himself, to let himself go, only in his art, and even there to disguise his emotion under an elaborate mannerliness, an overconcern with form and style.

Edel is very Neo-Freudian in that he treats James's writing as a way for him to make a place for himself, to socialize, and as a natural ability he must exercise, a potential he must fulfill. Also, Edel says, "A good day's writing gave him a sense of strength, of control over chaos, a victory of order and clarity over the confused battle for existence." In his art he was able to create order lacking in his life. This is a major thesis of the psychoanalytic critics of James. It is based in psychoanalytic theory, but finds perfect application to James. Knowing that his personal life was uneventful, psychoanalysts are compelled to say that he "lived" in his art.

In doing so, Edel avoids using Freudian or Neo-Freudian jargon, thus avoiding the charge that he is over-simplifying and reducing James to a neurotic or a sex pervert. He reads James's stories as reflections of personal problems, but he is careful to identify these problems specifically as they occur in the works and in the life. For example, he does not simply look at The American, associate Valentin with

55Conquest, p. 158.
James and the Marquis with William, and state that the story reveals an obvious case of sibling rivalry. He shows how the situation is like James's own, not only in *The American* but in story after story. He never uses the works as the sole "proof" that James resented William. He uses them more as illustrations of a hypothesis drawn from both the life and the works, but primarily from James's life. Edel realizes that it is illogical and is bad psychology arbitrarily to identify a character with the author and then assume that what happened to the character also happened to the author.

Generally he uses psychoanalysis only when he thinks it will be especially revealing, never just for its own sake. He depicts James, not as a case study of a particular neurosis, but as a complex and subtle human being. He is never tempted away from the subject by, say, the attractions of psychoanalytic theory or of a critical view of what "the artist" should be. He does not describe James in terms of what he should be, but what he is.

*Leslie Fiedler*

Two recent critics—Leslie Fiedler and Maxwell Geismar—have followed the practice of Van Wyck Brooks in using psychoanalysis to condemn James and his age. Fiedler calls himself a "contextual critic" who sets literary works into all relevant contexts--sociological, psychological,
historical, and anthropological. Fiedler reflects modern trends in psychology in his addition of Jungian and anthropological considerations to the psychological and social ones of Spender, under whose influence he has obviously formulated much of his thesis. He says:

Readers familiar with orthodox Freudianism and Jungian revisionism will recognize the sources of much of my basic vocabulary; I cannot imagine myself beginning the kind of investigation I have undertaken without the concepts of the conscious and the unconscious, the Oedipus complex, the archetypes, etc. Only my awareness of how syncretically I have yoked together and how cavalierly I have transformed my borrowings prevents my making more specific acknowledgments (p. 14).

And he admits a debt to Marxist thought, as well. It is not really unusual, as we have seen, for a critic to select from psychoanalytic theory and apply those concepts which best support his thesis, whatever it may be. It is, however, somewhat unusual for a critic to admit it, and Fiedler must be given credit for honesty.

Like Spender, he concentrates on the themes of love and death, showing that the American fiction writer is incapable of dealing with mature heterosexual love but is obsessed rather with death, incest, and innocent homosexuality. He finds that in the history of the American novel there have appeared two opposing symbols of women—the Fair Maiden and the Dark Lady, "the glorious phantom at the mouth of the cave, and the hideous Moor who lurks within" (p. 296).

This "conventional moral color-scheme" appears everywhere in Henry James's work and is "an integral part of his deepest symbolism."

According to Fiedler, this archetypal use of the Dark Lady versus the Fair Lady gives James's work a mythic dimension, in addition to its deeply personal aspect. The Nice American Girl who appears in The Portrait of a Lady, The Wings of the Dove, and The Golden Bowl is derived from his cousin Minny Temple, who died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-four; and she is also a descendant of Hilda in Hawthorne's The Marble Faun. Thus, accepting the "sentimental heresy" of the pure maiden, James added to it a "necrophiliac titillation (otherwise exploited by Poe and Mrs. Stowe) by identifying the immaculate virgin with the girl dying or dead," as in "Daisy Miller" and The Wings of the Dove.

James derived his "truest, richest inspiration . . . from a fascination with and a love for the dead, for death itself" (pp. 302-303). In "The Altar of the Dead" the protagonist burns candles for his dead friends, "almost finds love in a fellow necrophile, but dies himself at the moment of surrender." In The Sense of the Past (1917) "a young man retreats . . . into a world of ghosts, where he himself seems a ghost; and no consummation to any relationship is possible." "Maud Evelyn" (1900) is "a final summation of the American asexual affair with the Pure Maiden—a willful derangement of the senses that makes
possible cohabitation with a ghost" (p. 304).

In *The Ambassadors* the "delicacy and moral tact" ordinarily invested in the Fair Maiden are embodied in Lambert Strether, "surely the most maidenly of all James's men." Madame de Vionnet represents the sexual allure of Europe. Mrs. Newsome is the Snow Maiden become an iceberg. Strether is caught between America, "a world desexed and morally engaged," and Europe, "sexually potent and ethically lax." Fiedler says, "The sympathy of the aging, virginal hero . . . goes this time quite unequivocally toward the adulterous woman, the Dark European Lady. The blue Iceberg has, however, in effect castrated him, and he cannot love what he approves; and so ends urging others to enjoy what he is incapable of possessing" (p. 307).

Fiedler criticizes James as a representative of his time. Because of the peculiar attitude toward sex and women in America, many American writers, including James, have never developed past the Oedipal stage. They are incapable of thinking in terms of heterosexual love because they refuse to recognize their own sexuality. Strether in *The Ambassadors* is Henry James who "for all his subtlety and tact," remained a kind of "Peeping Tom," "an innocent voyeur," "the man who sees everything but can do nothing, understands everything but can possess nothing" (pp. 344, 343).

Like other American writers, James feared marriage because it means the abandonment of childhood and the
acceptance of responsibility. It also means the acceptance of fatherhood, "an abandonment of the quest to deliver the captive mother and an assumption of the role of the ogre who holds her in captivity." The ideal American male "postulates himself as the fatherless man, the eternal son of the mother." There is no heterosexual solution, says Fiedler, which the American psyche finds acceptable for healing "the breach between consciousness and unconsciousness, reason and impulse, society and nature." American writers seem to ask for "a sentimental relationship at once erotic and immaculate, a union which commits its participants neither to society nor sin--and yet one which is able to symbolize the union of the ego with the id, the thinking self with its rejected impulses" (pp. 338-339). As a result, American literature is filled with asexual relationships, unconsummated passions, and innocent homosexual relationships between men. Thus in 1960, Fiedler "regresses" to a critical theme of the 1920's and 1930's--the condemnation of Puritan sexual repressiveness on a Freudian basis. Like Brooks, Lewisohn, Michaud, and Spender, he is concerned with James as a sociological phenomenon.

Maxwell Geismar

Maxwell Geismar, also writing in the 1960's, reacts violently to the popularity of Henry James. It is significant that he dedicates his book, Henry James and the Jacobites, to Van Wyck Brooks, for he shares Brooks's low
opinion of James and he follows Brooks's practice of using psychoanalysis to belittle a man whose politics he despises. Unlike Fiedler, who attacks the age, Geismar attacks James as an individual. He turns against James all of the discoveries made by psychoanalytic critics, especially by Leon Edel, in order to "prove" that he was nothing but an "infantile voyeur" who unconsciously projected all of his own frustrations, fears, and inhibitions into his work. James's characters do not lead full, normal lives because James himself did not. He lived only in his art. Thus he holds a special appeal for the American readers of the 1950's, "an age itself of social and cultural make-believe whose own yearnings for illusion and magic—for a false, blind enchantment at the cost of reality—met and matched James's native capacity for entertainment."  

He treats James's works one by one as personal fantasies of the author, finding proof for his theory in each. In *Washington Square* Catherine Sloper, like Henry himself, is the dull and backward member of a bright family, and her "'resolution' of silent suffering and emotional repression, of self-sacrifice and abnegation, forecast the typical Jamesian resolution to all the tangled affairs of life" (p. 39). *The Princess Casamassima* (1886) is based on the "orphan theme" found even in James's earliest fiction, and it shows

clearly "the fantasy world of a 'declassed' or socially ostracized Mother, who has, in addition, destroyed the Royal Father—who has, in his turn, refused to acknowledge his true son" (p. 70n). James's problem was an unconscious arrested Oedipal development. He loved his mother but rejected her because he was ashamed of her inferior social position. (Geismar does not give any evidence for this theory—unfortunately—for it is an interesting and unusual assumption.) Although consistently expressing devotion to his father and his brother William, he revealed his hatred in his stories of child prodigies struggling against eccentric and exploiting families, diminutive fathers, shifting family relations (p. 409). Anyone who did not suit him was symbolically murdered in his stories, for "the demands and needs . . . of his own insulated, armored and omnipotent ego dominated every other consideration." He was incapable of love, his only emotion being anxiety and fear for his own life and career (pp. 96-97).

Related to the "orphan princeling" theme is the unconscious theme of voyeurism evident in stories like "The Aspern Papers," "A London Life," "The Private Life" (1893), and "The Figure in the Carpet." "The Aspern Papers," for instance, is an objectification of James's deepest drives and obsessions:

That "ruthless curiosity," that bland (lofty) moral presumption of the artist's "right" to discover the "secrets" of other human beings, and particularly their sexual secrets here described in barely veiled terms, and symbolized in Juliana's "mask"; that
obvious voyeurism around which the story is built, and then all that frustrated teasing and being teased about the "object" of the narrator's quest; this whole emotional complex was typical of Henry James, both in his private communings in his Notebooks, and in a series of similarly compulsive and obsessive stories to come (p. 84).

These two major Jamesian themes—of voyeurism and of the outcast child—are combined in What Maisie Knew, "The Turn of the Screw," and The Awkward Age.

We should note, says Geismar, that the children in James's stories gradually come to know and thus to dominate the wicked adults. And similarly, the Jamesian observer becomes the interlocutor "who already knows the answers he is seeking to discover from all these uneasy accomplices of passion." In "The Turn of the Screw," James is the governess "in the sense that her snooping, prurient, obsessive sexual curiosity was his own." But this time it is the children who represent parental sexuality and corruption while the governess is the prying child (pp. 180-181).

Geismar deals with the later James in the same vein, finding that when, as in The Sacred Fount, he finally did overcome his lifelong sexual inhibition, then "even stranger 'theories' of sexual behavior and sexual motivation emerged: fabulous, incredible and fantastical indeed. In this esoteric Jamesian universe—a literary world that was comprised of one-half of the upper one per cent of the human race at best; and one-quarter of their emotions—the worst crime, next to being poor, was to be sexual" (p. 6).

The theme of "cannibalism" in The Sacred Fount, noted
by Edel, derives from James's concept of love as food, which "is related, on the psychological level, to a very early and primitive infantile fancy--pre-oedipal [sic], and pre-sexual--of the child 'eating' the mother who is nursing him, and hence possessed of the equivalent fear of also being 'eaten up.'" In The Sacred Fount "the symptoms of the infantile-oral in the basic concept of the novel are matched by the symptoms of the infantile-anal, as though the giving or withholding of love were like the giving or withholding of bowel movements; or by the equally juvenile fantasy that the loss of the human sperm impairs the health and vitality of the human organism" (p. 204). At the end, says Geismar, the narrator is overcome with shame after having "gained entrance to what has been called 'the primal scene' of his parents' sexual intercourse" (p. 207). Unfortunately, Geismar does not indicate the exact place of this interesting episode in the novel, which he should have done, since he was the only one to have discovered it. Nor does he identify the anal symbols, the bowel movements, in The Sacred Fount, and it is difficult not to conclude that Geismar refers to them only because of their unpleasant connotations.

Nor does Geismar neglect the opportunity provided by psychoanalysis to note James's "increasingly homosexual tendencies," finding in The Ambassadors, those "shadowy and shifting familial and filial relations, centered around an unconscious or repressed incestuous triangle, accompanied, very often, by a sublimated homosexual or lesbian situation,"
which "are evident in James's work as far back as The Bostonians or Watch and Ward" (pp. 259n, 281).

Freudian jargon often tends to have disparaging connotations. Geismar makes full use of these connotations in his attempt to destroy James's reputation. He intends to reduce James to nothing but a neurotic, a narcissist, an infantile voyeur, an escapist, a case of sexual repression, an Oedipal complex—in short, to the incarnation of evil, expressed in Freudian terms. Thus he gives, or tries to give, a certain scientific respectability to what is essentially hysterical and abusive name-calling.

In discussing the possible causes of James's neuroses, Geismar rejects any hint that might credit him in any way, or excuse him. He as much as says that no problems of environment, personality, or family life could account for James: "The origins of the Jamesian temperament and art may fit into the Freudian categories; the results break these categories wide open. They can hardly contain the unique literary monster called Henry James" (p. 399). The only possibility Geismar leaves open is that James is the devil incarnate. In fact, Geismar finally characterizes him as an "unconscious but all-devouring, absolute, implacable and finally altogether dictatorial, authoritarian and tyrannical ego, which sublimated and rationalized all of life to its own yearnings and needs, its own self-enclosed and idiosyncratic vision of 'life'" (p. 438).

Geismar rejects the insights of Rosenzweig, apparently
because they do not belittle James sufficiently. James was not, as Rosenzweig implies, the unconscious father of psychoanalysis. He was rather, Geismar says, "the sublime example of classical face-saving rationalization which completely avoided the least vestige of the Freudian truths" (p. 359). The critics, according to Geismar, have made fools of themselves by accepting whatever James said about himself. For, all his rules of art, all his aesthetic principles, were a rationalization of his failures: "He was a whole psychology course in himself—although not in the sense attributed to him by the rational-moral critics who accept all his transparent fictions at face value, and then proclaim Henry James as the Master of Freudian insights" (pp. 424-425).

Geismar's biography is an example of the extreme depths to which critics can plunge in their use of psychoanalysis to debunk literary figures. Needless to say, it represents a misuse of psychoanalysis. Geismar makes sweeping generalizations about James on the basis of no evidence at all. He seldom makes specific connections between James's life and his works. He never shows, for example, how a character represents the author but simply states that he does. Then by condemning the character, he can condemn James too. But a psychoanalysis is not a criticism even when it is properly carried out. According to Freud, almost everyone has some problems, both physical and mental; but to say that a man has flat feet is not to say that he is a bad man or
that his art is bad, although it may explain a certain high incidence of flat feet among his characters.

The result of Geismar's practice is a kind of hysterical and unscholarly tone in his book, which raises questions in the reader's mind about his own motives. According to Philip Rahv, Geismar is one of the most naive of Marxist critics and, like earlier critics of James, has a political opposition to him. James represents a class and opinion that Geismar despises. Geismar apparently does intend his attack on the individual Henry James to be an attack on his society and class. He makes continual references to James's snobbery, his love of money, his worship of the aristocracy, and his lack of interest in social problems. For example, in reference to The Princess Casamassima, James's only novel about social revolution, Geismar says, "Any form of social idealism, including that of a personal devotion to a social cause, or personal sacrifice for its sake . . . was inconceivable to Henry James, except, of course, among his imaginary or 'noble' upper class 'radicals.'" (P. 72. This is a complete falsification, for the one person whom James presents as insincere is the Princess herself.) In The Golden Bowl, money triumphs, says Geismar, because to James, poverty was the greatest sin and wealth the greatest good (p. 333).

Printed on the first, unnumbered pages of this biography are what Geismar obviously regards as pertinent quotations, among them this from Mark Twain's *Innocents Abroad*: "There are some things which for the credit of America should be left unsaid, perhaps; but these very things happen sometimes to be the things, which, for the real benefit of Americans, ought to have prominent notice." The book is obviously, then, intended to provide some sort of a warning, but of what, it is difficult to make out, for Geismar does not demonstrate that love of James results in any serious problems for an individual or for society; rather he condemns James almost completely on the basis of personal failings. His attack appears fiercely personal and vindictive. His fanatic concern with his subject's sex life, or lack of it, and his use of Freudian terminology to call James every dirty name in the book reminds us of Harry Stack Sullivan's observation that "a person who is very bitter toward others, very hard on his fellow man for certain faults, is usually very sensitive to these particular faults because they are secret vices of his own."59

59 *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry*, p. 309.
CHAPTER XV

"THE TURN OF THE SCREW"

So far I have considered all the early psychoanalytic works on James and all those which are essentially biographical in their intentions; these include most of the major psychoanalytic works on Henry James--those by Van Wyck Brooks, Edmund Wilson, Saul Rosenzweig, and Leon Edel. In the following three chapters I will discuss the psychoanalytically oriented studies devoted to the analysis of the individual novels and stories since 1940, those studies in which the critics concentrate on the works rather than on the author or on the author through one or several of his works. I say "psychoanalytically oriented" because there are many which, though apparently not intended to be psychoanalyses, nevertheless reflect the influence of psychoanalytic critics. Almost all of these critical essays are "offspring" of studies done by earlier writers, and in fact, most of them could not have been written at all without the suggestions provided by Wilson, Rosenzweig, or Edel. The great number of them should impress the reader with the present popularity of the psychoanalytic viewpoint, in spite of the frequent claims that interest in psychoanalysis is dying out.

The single work by James which has received by far
the greatest critical attention is "The Turn of the Screw." Edmund Wilson's essay is directly responsible for this attention. Most of the articles written on this story are simply arguments for or against the Wilson theory. In many cases, in fact, the critics are especially interested neither in psychoanalysis nor in James but are simply intrigued by this one interpretation of this one story. Thus they tend to build on to Wilson's hypothesis, reusing the psychoanalytic principles that were successfully applied earlier, and to focus their attention on the story itself rather than on the problems of the author's personality as revealed in it or on problems of literary criticism. They wonder about the facts as presented in the story—for example, if and how the governess could have known about Peter Quint. They argue about James's intentions as expressed in the preface and in his notebooks and letters, about whether he meant the children to be innocent or corrupt, the governess a saint or a sinner. Much of their comment is irrelevant to a psychoanalytic view, but the abundance of it and the variety of conclusions reached indicate that Wilson's main point—proved with the help of Freudian ideas and methods—that "The Turn of the Screw" is ambiguous, is certainly a valid one.

Because these essays so vastly outnumber those on any other work by James and because they are generally more closely related to one another than they are to any aspect of psychoanalysis or of Jamesian criticism, they are best treated in a separate chapter from the rest of the critical
works. And because, too, the criticism of "The Turn of the Screw" so often provides a model for the criticism of the other works, I discuss it first in Chapter IV, Chapters V and VI being devoted to the psychoanalytic criticism of the rest of James's novels and stories.

Some Opponents of Wilson

Wilson's Freudian interpretation has been so influential and so widely accepted that even critics putting forth differing interpretations feel compelled to demolish it first. And, in many cases, their dissenting analyses are still indebted to Wilson's theory in one way or another.

Many of these critics do not object to psychoanalysis or to psychoanalytic criticism as such. They simply feel that it does not apply in this case, that it does not adequately explain all aspects of the story. A. J. A. Waldock, Glenn A. Reed, and Oliver Evans, for example, refute Wilson's theory on the basis of James's stated intentions and of the details of the story.¹ Nathan B. Fagin criticizes Wilson's theory because it does not explain the ghost of Miss Jessel in terms of the Freudian pattern, because it tells us more about psychoanalysis than about James. He complains, rather

unfairly, that Wilson's approach makes James the same as Joyce or Lawrence, that it does not tell what is distinct about his work, nor does it take advantage of what we know about his life.²

Some object that Wilson's interpretation is too "scientific," that it is reductive and destroys the effect of the mystery. Their approach reflects a common criticism of Freudian theory and method. Douglas M. Davis, for example, condemns the Freudians for reducing the story "to the level of a medical journal report, its author to the level of a cheap, if not obsessed, trickster, and its leading character to the level of a neurotic murderer--in fact, one of the most despicable villainesses in all literature." He says that this kind of analysis results from a modern distaste for simplicity of motive or form and from a feeling that ghost stories are not serious enough.³ Although Donald P. Costello agrees with Wilson that James wanted us to doubt the governess, he too insists that any interpretation which takes away the ghosts and the reader's uncertainty about them robs the story of its mystery and horror.⁴

Several critics, impressed with Wilson's theory, will

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²"Another Reading of The Turn of the Screw," Modern Language Notes, LVI (March, 1941), 198.

³"The 'Turn of the Screw' Controversy: Its Implications for the Modern Critic and Teacher," Graduate Student of English, II (Winter, 1959), 11.

⁴"The Structure of The Turn of the Screw," Modern Language Notes, LXXV (April, 1960), 312-313.
admit it as one among many possible levels of meaning, but prefer to see the story as having greater depth than they feel is permitted by the Freudian interpretation alone. For example, although Philip Rahv rejects the Kenton-Wilson hypothesis as "a fallacy of rationalism," he notes the element of "morbid sexuality" expressed through the ghosts and finally concludes that the story can be interpreted both as given and as a study in abnormal psychology.\^5

Others, while rejecting Wilson's hallucination theory, substitute for it another that is essentially Freudian, thus indicating that an interpretation of the ghosts as neurotic fantasies is not necessary to a Freudian analysis of the tale. Robert Liddell condemns Wilson's theory chiefly because it is too ingenious, resulting, he says, from a desire for a "scientific" explanation, a modern refusal to believe in ghosts. Although he agrees with Wilson that the story is full of subconscious sexual imagery, he cannot accept Wilson's labeling the story a "sexual fantasy"; for, he argues, "if some unresolved elements lingering in the unconscious have found their resolution in the imagery, and have added to the total atmosphere of evil, it is only another illustration of the way that everything sometimes works together for good when a novelist is producing a great

\^5The Great Short Novels of Henry James, ed. with introd. and comments by Phillip Rahv (New York, 1944), p. 624.
novel." Liddell's statement certainly does not contradict Freudian theory, but contradicts only those who believe that James was a deliberate psychologist writing a kind of "case history."

Alexander E. Jones condemns Goddard, Kenton, Wilson, and their followers for presenting, out of context, only those facts which support their thesis, ignoring any which conflict with it. In connection with Jones we might note that critics of Wilson, like critics of Freud, often misinterpret or misrepresent what he said; for according to Jones, the Freudians say we cannot trust the governess' version of events at Bly. But Wilson actually says that we cannot trust her interpretation of them, which, as Wilson points out, is exactly what James said in the Preface: "It was . . . the general proposition of our young woman's keeping crystalline her record of so many intense anomalies and obscurities—by which I don't of course mean her explanation of them, a different matter. . . ." Thus Jones's point is not a complete refutation of the Freudian view. For we can agree with Jones that the governess' reports are true, that she does see the ghosts, and still agree with Kenton and Wilson that these ghosts are hallucinations.

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7"Point of View in The Turn of the Screw," *PMLA*, LXXIV (March, 1959), 117-118.

8*The Art of the Novel*, p. 173.
Apparently Jones himself is unable to resist the temptation of Freudian speculation for which this ambiguous little story provides so much material, for he tries to refute the Freudians by pushing their suggestion to its logical conclusion that the governess is affected with "pedophilia erotica" and wants to seduce Miles. However, ultimately relying on flat contradiction instead of factual or logical refutation, he concludes that "The Turn of the Screw" is not a tale of sexual abnormality, and that to see it as such is an example of "excessive ingenuity" (p. 117).

In reading a theme of sexual perversion from the "tone" of "The Turn of the Screw," Ignace Feuerlicht also reveals Freudian influence while rejecting the direct application of Freudian method to the story. He compares James's tale to Goethe's "Erlkönig," a story in which the evil king of the elves kills an innocent little boy and which the critics have interpreted as based on the illusions of a sick child. As with "The Turn of the Screw," he says, a "powerful, irrational creation" is turned by psychological critics into the case study of a neurotic.9 One of the reasons for this interpretation of James's story is that "the very secrecy and vagueness surrounding the evil, the vices, or the relation between the ghosts and the children points to the sexual sphere." But Feuerlicht prefers to regard the

9"'Erlkönig' and The Turn of the Screw," JEGP, LVIII (January, 1959), 69.
evil as a homosexual alliance between Miles and Quint rather than an aberration in the mind of the governess (pp. 72-73).

To Walter F. Wright, the Freudian interpretation of "The Turn of the Screw" is inconsistent with economy in storytelling, for "if James had wanted to study sexual frustration, he could have written a much simpler tale." "Moreover," Wright says, "the sex-starved mortal . . . insofar as he is abnormal . . . has little universal significance," while "the themes with which James dealt are uniformly those at the very heart of our being. They include, among other things, love and jealousy, selfishness and generosity, and, above all bewilderment." Wright is one of the many critics of psychoanalytic criticism who do not fully understand psychoanalytic theory, according to which the abnormal is only an exaggeration of the normal. Furthermore, the themes of love, selfishness, and the individual's bewilderment about his own motives are the very subjects of psychoanalysis as well as the very themes that Kenton and Wilson attempt to identify in "The Turn of the Screw." And in the Freudian psychology which Kenton and Wilson follow the passion of sex is the source for all the other emotions.

Wright, however, like Rahv and Liddell, accepts the possibility of multiple interpretations, so long as the critics do not limit the tale to these interpretations and

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as long as they account for all the incidents in the story. In the light of psychoanalytic theory this attitude is perfectly justified. A religious allegory, for instance, may have Freudian significance on one level and on another remain a religious allegory.

Several critics have used the Kenton-Wilson analysis of "The Turn of the Screw" as an illustration for a more general condemnation of the practice and theory of psychoanalytic criticism. They object, not only to this one application, but to almost all psychoanalytic interpretations of literature.

Elmer Edgar Stoll especially regrets the tendency of modern critics to ignore the author's intentions. Although Stoll is concerned mostly with criticism of Coleridge, his arguments are typical of many of the general arguments against Freudian criticism and are thus relevant to this study. Stoll says that Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is a traditional Elizabethan ballad and a "literary fairy tale" and asks, "what is present-day symbolism, with its 'ambiguity' or Freudianism, doing in either?" That is, since Coleridge did not know about Freudian symbolism, he could not have used it. Apparently, Stoll too misses the point of psychoanalysis and of symbolic interpretation. According to its adherents, psychoanalysis is not a body of dead doctrine that applies here and now, but not then and

there. It is the discovering and ordering of basic truths about man which are valid now and have always been valid. Psychoanalysts seldom argue that a poet intentionally used psychoanalytic symbols. Freudian images may have been used unconsciously by eighteenth century writers as well as by primitive African tribesmen.

Stoll devotes a large section of the essay to a summary of the hypotheses of Kenton and Wilson, concluding that they are "confounding art and reality," an objection which might validly apply to those critics who treat the characters as real people without reference to the author, but certainly does not describe Kenton and Wilson. Stoll objects specifically to Wilson's comment that only the governess sees the ghosts. It is the way of ghosts, he says, to appear to some and not to others, as in the bedroom scene in *Hamlet*. But he forgets that, unlike the governess, Hamlet does not insist that other people saw the ghost. Wilson admits that the governess saw the ghosts, whether they were hallucinations or not, but the problem is whether or not the children saw them. However, Stoll insists that Kenton and Wilson have retold the story to suit their own view and have ignored James's intentions (pp. 230-232), in spite of the fact that both these critics found evidence for their interpretations in James's own preface to the tale.

In an article in *Modern Language Notes*, Robert B. Heilman condemns the "airy castle of Miss Kenton's intuitions" and Edmund Wilson's efforts to provide evidence for
them. Like most of these critics, he ignores the fact that the two interpretations are essentially different—Kenton speculating that the whole story is a fantasy; Wilson, that only the ghosts are fantasies. He too charges that the "sly Freudian readers" ignore what James said in his letters and in his preface which indicate that he meant the tale to be a traditional ghost story. He accuses the Freudians of selecting a few ambiguous incidents in the book and then treating them as though they were unambiguous. To Heilman, problems such as the governess' failure to call the Master when the trouble began were merely failures of technical procedure on James's part. But Heilman is making an assumption to fill in a logical gap in the story, which, though different from the assumptions of the Freudians, is every bit as uncomplimentary to the author's craftsmanship. Furthermore, he insists that the Freudian hypothesis does not adequately deal with the suspicious behavior of the children, for, he asserts "the fact is that children of that age simply are not wide awake, imaginatively alert, and capable of strategic maneuvering in the middle of the night" (p. 440). The point is that Heilman's refutation is not well founded either. He too ignores evidence that does not fit his view, for instance, that even the governess herself fears that the children may be innocent.

The tone of Heilman's article leads one to believe that, like Stoll, he simply does not care for Freudian criticism and that his objection is, perhaps, religious. At one point, for example, he refers to Wilson as an "unwary liberal" whose "hysterical blindness" and "capacity for doctrinaire inflexibility" are a sign of the times in which he wrote. Like Liddell and Davis, Heilman notes that because in the intellectual climate of the 1920's and 1930's there was a strong suspicion of the irrational, of salvation, of supernatural evil, Wilson is trying to find a "scientific" way around these difficulties and in doing so transforms the story into "a commonplace clinical record" (pp. 434, 443-444). Heilman's objections to Wilson's essay remind one of the objections of the early clerics to Freudian theory--that the conclusions of psychoanalysis conflict with traditional religious concepts. To Heilman, evil is a supernatural force which acts in the universe apart from man. To Wilson as to Freud, nature, the universe, is amoral, and evil is the result of some "sickness" in the mind of man, in this case in the mind of the governess--in her distorted view of the world and in her suspicious nature, which leads her to cruel persecution of the children.

Heilman's own conception of the tale as a morality story dealing with the "primal and the universal" is probably partly valid in the sense that all James's stories are about morality. To say so, however, is not to say they are not Freudian, for Freud says that morality, as embodied in the
superego, is a vital force in human affairs. But in a later article, Heilman goes even further, interpreting the story in detail as a complex religious parable, a kind of modern Christian allegory in which the children represent "primeval man"; the ghosts, supernatural evil which threatens them; and the governess, their "priestess" and savior. Thus he is as far from seeing it as a simple ghost story as Wilson is.

And if we are to choose one or another of these "hidden meanings" as representing James's intentions, it is more logical to say that James was exploring human psychology than it is to say he was writing a religious allegory. After all, in his own life, James showed no interest in organized religion or in Christianity, except as the preserver of tradition. He did not go to church; he never wrote about religion; he never wrote an explicit and unmistakable Christian allegory. But he did mention his interest in human psychology. He did deal again and again with frustrated women (and men), as in The Bostonians and The Spoils of Poynton, and with abused children, as in "The Pupil," The Other House, and What Maisie Knew. He did write other ghost stories, like "The Private Life" and "The Jolly Corner," in which the ghosts are clearly identified by the protagonists as projections of their inner selves or as

13"The Turn of the Screw" as Poem," The University of Kansas City Review, XIV (Summer, 1948), 280-286, 289.
their alter egos.

In her book, The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James, Dorothea Krook devotes a long appendix to a discussion of "The Turn of the Screw" controversy in which she draws together and supports many of the major objections to the psychoanalytic interpretation while pointing out its favorable effects on later criticism of the story. Taking a broader approach than most critics of Wilson's theory, she emphasizes especially its historical significance as a typical specimen of the Freudian criticism which flourished in the late twenties and thirties, and draws from it, as she says, "many useful morals . . . for the principles and practice of literary criticism."

Although Wilson's theory is basically "wrong-headed, perverse and irresponsible," it is valuable because it draws attention to elements of the story that are of vital importance for its proper understanding.\(^{14}\) First, and most important, it draws attention to the story's most striking characteristic, its "pervasive ambiguity." Second, it shows that the governess is in some way guilty of Miles's death. And finally, it demonstrates that James's narrators are not always to be trusted, thus encouraging critics to examine their testimony more closely in all of his stories and novels (pp. 375-376).

But Krook objects to Wilson's theory as an example of

\(^{14}\) Cambridge, 1962, p. 370.
the kind of "incomplete interpretation" which James's works, like Shakespeare's, seem to attract. Wilson, she protests, ignores James's statement in the preface that he was writing a tale about the corruption of children by evil servants, and he fails to consider the negative evidence against his theory within the story itself. He disregards the testimony of Douglas who says of the governess: "She was the most agreeable woman I've ever known in her position; she'd have been worthy of any whatever. . . . We had, in her off-hours, some strolls and talks in the garden--talks in which she struck me as awfully clever and nice. . . ."15 Krook's final objection is that the great attention devoted to the children in the story condemns "as preposterous any suggestion that they are nothing but the instruments of the governess's sex-fantasy." Such a view, she says, supposes James guilty of "a clumsy inept lack of economy" (pp. 374-375).

Krook draws several morals from Wilson's essay. First, she recognizes Wilson's interpretation to be a result of the anti-Victorian prejudice of his time, of "preconceived notions . . . about the psychological make-up of the Anglo-Saxon spinster" (pp. 379-380). Secondly, like Heilman, she says that Wilson has appropriated, with "uncritical enthusiasm," the Freudian theory of the unconscious without concerning himself about the problems it raises for literary criticism. Specifically, she notes that Wilson has "no

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15The Novels and Tales, XII (1908), 149-150.
usable criteria" for distinguishing between the operations of the conscious and the unconscious; he simply falls back on the concept of the unconscious when there is a gap to fill. Krook sees this as a "misappropriation" of the Freudian method of analysis, but actually it is all too close to Freud's own method. And her charge is one of the most serious and telling that has been leveled at Freudian criticism. Finally, Wilson's essay, she says, illustrates "the disastrous effects of a misapplied theory upon the practice of literary criticism." It can nullify the critic's own perceptions, causing an honest man to ignore relevant evidence; it can paralyze his sensibility so that he ends up with "a crassly literal reading of an essentially literary, poetic text" and reduces the story to something "less profound, less subtle, . . . less interesting than it really is" (pp. 380-381).

Krook touches on a significant point, which she never explicitly mentions. That is that a critic's view of the story reflects his personal interests. If he is psychologically oriented, like Wilson, he sees it as a Freudian case study; if he is religiously inclined, like Heilman, he sees it as a disguised Christian myth. Like Walter F. Wright, Krook concludes that in either case the story fits. James intended "The Turn of the Screw" (as well as The Sacred Fount and The Golden Bowl) to yield "two meanings, both equally self-consistent and self-complete." Both Heilman and Wilson are correct: "... on one reading the
children are—not may be but are—corrupt, the governess is their good angel, and the apparitions are in some sense real, while on the other reading the children are innocent, the governess is a monster, and the apparitions are in some sense . . . hallucinatory." The major failure of Wilson, Goddard, and Heilman is their failure to recognize this (pp. 388-389).

Krook's discussion is important because, although she objects to Wilson's interpretation mainly in terms of its handling of the details of the story, she relates his approach to problems of literary criticism in general. Unlike many opponents of Wilson, she means by attacking his theory to attack psychoanalytic criticism itself.

Wilson and Supporters

James as "Case"

In spite of the many objections to Wilson's view, it has continued to be popular and has received support from any number of Jamesian critics. Frederick J. Masback remarks in 1960, "It has become rather fashionable lately to dismiss the hallucination theory, but the heavy guns which have been trained upon it have by no means demolished it or made it untenable" (p. 199). A few critics have treated this famous ghost story as a source of information about James's personal problems and as an unconscious confession, rather than as a deliberate psychological study. Two of these, F. R. Leavis and Yvor Winters, wrote before
1940 and are dealt with in an earlier chapter (see above, II, 81-84). Two others, Peter Coveney and Edmund Wilson, whom I will discuss here, have in common, as well, a belief that in this story James reworked the conflicts of his own childhood.

Although Peter Coveney, like Liddell, rejects Wilson's interpretation of "The Turn of the Screw" as untenable, he praises Wilson's emphasis on the "psychological quality" of the story.16 His essay provides further evidence that it is not necessary to accept the "hallucination" theory in order to psychoanalyze "The Turn of the Screw" or its author, for it reflects both Freudian and Neo-Freudian thinking, especially Fromm's emphasis on authoritarianism. In his introduction, Coveney comments on the concern of the modern European mind with the maintenance of individual integrity. The modern tendency to use the childish consciousness as a symbol of imagination and sensibility, he says, extends from Wordsworth's *Prelude* through Freud's essay on infantile sexuality (p. xiii). Thus he regards James and Freud as participating in the same historical movement.

In James's works he finds the recurrent situation of innocent life frustrated through ruthless egotism. The conflict in "The Turn of the Screw" is "between the repressed secret corruptions of the child and the hounding parent-like figure of the Governess." This theme is not the result of

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deliberate intention, according to Coveney, but is the "product of a seriously disordered sensibility," and the story is a more fitting subject for a psychiatrist than for a literary critic. Coveney imagines Miles's unspecified crimes to be "sexual depravities," particularly, homosexual activities (pp. 165-166). From its general tone, he assumes that the story is biographical and probably explains the neurotic element in James that led to his withdrawal from America and from life. In it, says Coveney, James unconsciously identifies with Miles and gets revenge on the pursuer, who at heart is no better than he. The ambiguity of the tale is therefore "the outcome of a deep psychological conflict within himself, between his sense of guilt, his desire for confession, and his self-justifying resentment of discovery" (p. 167). Thus Coveney, like Brooks, Geismar, and F. R. Leavis, uses psychoanalytic concepts to support an unfavorable evaluation of James as a kind of psychological "case" whose personal problems resulted in disaster for his works.

In the light of later criticism, Edmund Wilson twice added to his own essay. Wilson is as concerned as others with how well the details of the story support his theory, for he realizes that if it can be demonstrated by internal evidence that James intended the governess to be neurotic, then critics are justified in regarding him as a really clever psychological novelist. If not, the ambiguities and psychological elements in the tale are accidental and must
have resulted from the author's unconscious frustrations. In a section appended to the essay in the 1948 edition of *The Triple Thinkers*, he says that he sees from the recently published Notebooks that James consciously intended to write a genuine ghost story. Consequently, he restates his thesis: James, led by the failure of his plays to doubt himself, communicates this doubt unconsciously in the portrayal of the governess. In fact, says Wilson, James's work gradually gets away from the realism of his earlier phases, eventually becoming "all a sort of ruminative poem, which gives us not really a direct account of the internal workings of his characters, but rather James's reflective feelings, the flow of images set off in his mind, as he peeps not impolitely inside them" (p. 126).

Wilson notes further that in the works which extend from *The Other House* through *The Sacred Fount*, the favorite theme is the violation of innocence, with the victim usually a young girl (and a boy in the case of "The Turn of the Screw"). He finds some source for this preoccupation with immature girls in James's relations with his brother with whom he took a passive and feminine role:

There was always in Henry James an innocent little girl whom he cherished and loved and protected and yet whom he later tried to violate, whom he even tried to kill. He must have felt particularly helpless, particularly unsuited for the battle with the world, particularly exposed to rude insult, after the failure of his dramatic career, when he retreated into his celibate solitude. The maiden innocent of his early novels comes to life again; but he now does
not merely pity her, he does not merely adore her: in his impotence, his impatience with himself, he would like to destroy or rape her (pp. 128-129).

The inadequacies of James's later novels are due to the revival of a childhood feeling of helplessness and frustration as a result of the trauma of his playwriting fiasco.

Thus Wilson completely revises his early (1927, 1934) opinion that James was a deliberate psychological realist who understood his characters so well because he understood himself, and finds him to be rather a psychological case unconsciously describing his own neurosis through imaginary people. Some of the new material in Wilson's revision, especially that concerned with James's early feeling of failure, his adoption of a feminine role, and the pervasive castration theme in his works, reflects the influence of the psychoanalytic article by Saul Rosenzweig and has, in turn, provided several suggestions for the biography by Leon Edel.¹⁷

James as Psychologist

Many articles have been written in support of Wilson's original theory--that James knew what he was doing and intended the governess to be suffering from delusions. A few of these simply confirm the theory. Others provide more evidence from the story itself--symbolism or twists of plot that Wilson had overlooked and relevant arguments that he had not found necessary (before so much opposition arose).

¹⁷See above, Rosenzweig, III, 97; and Edel, III, 120-121, 123-124, 127-128.
Some critics even attempt to prove that the story reveals the author's interest in and knowledge of modern psychological theory. For most of them, as John Fraser says, the value of the "derangement theory" of "The Turn of the Screw" is that it shows that the governess' conduct is "by no means wholly exemplary," that it is more than a gallant display of virtue against evil, and that this story is one of James's most sophisticated works.¹⁸

Wilson himself ultimately reverted to his earlier position, as the result of an article published in 1957 by John Silver showing that the governess actually had had many opportunities to learn about Peter Quint before she saw his ghost.¹⁹ In 1959, when his essay was reprinted in Gerald Willen's *Casebook on Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw,*" Wilson appended a brief note stating that James knew precisely what he was doing and that in "The Turn of the Screw," as in "The Liar" (1889), "the mind of the narrator is warped, and the story he tells untrue."²⁰ Wilson's revisions were largely ignored by later critics, many of whom used the 1934 article as a springboard for their own theories. But these revisions demonstrate Wilson's essential desire to be objective and to account for James's intentions.


¹⁹ "A Note on the Freudian Reading of 'The Turn of the Screw,'" *American Literature*, XXIX (May, 1957), 207-211.

On May 3, 1942, Katherine Anne Porter, Allen Tate, and Mark Van Doren discussed "The Turn of the Screw" in a symposium broadcast on the CBS radio series, "Invitation to Learning." Like Dorothea Krook, these critics take the story on different levels: It is a plain ghost story, an allegory of the battle of good and evil, and a psychological study. In spite of minor differences, the three critics concur on several important points: that it is the governess who is evil and who, in order to justify herself, attributes her own guilt to the children but that, nevertheless, the "popular psychological explanation is too superficial," that the sense of evil in the story goes far beyond the Freudian explanation of it. Tate points out that James used the contemporary interest in the processes of the mind as the most convincing medium through which to dramatize the reality of evil. In addition, the increasing sophistication of his time made it necessary to present the ghosts as psychological (pp. 225-226). All three critics agree that James, like all major artists, "knew substantially all that Freud knew before Freud came on the scene" (p. 231). That such a discussion took place on radio and that in it three prominent literary scholars express their essential agreement with Wilson's hypothesis testifies, not only to popularity of the story itself, but to the psychoanalytic

Peter Penzoldt is the only critic to accept Wilson's interpretation and to use it to condemn the logic of the story. He says that James confuses the objective and the subjective, for his characters react to their hallucinations as though these were objective realities, even though his tales apparently are not intended to be orthodox ghost stories. In "The Turn of the Screw" he even demands a psychological interpretation. But he cannot have both, says Penzoldt; he must account for the ghost. He cannot imply that it is a hallucination and at the same time use it to study the governess' reactions to it as though it were an objective reality. Therefore James's story is a failure.22

Several critics provide support for the view that James intended the ghosts to be hallucinations by comparing "The Turn of the Screw" to other ghost stories by James and by pointing out that in these other stories the ghosts are clearly presented as figments of the mind.

In an article in Kenyon Review, R. P. Blackmur demonstrates that James's ghosts "were invariably the hallucinated apparitions of the obsessions that governed or threatened, or as we say haunted the men and women whose stories he told."23 For example, the ghost in "Owen Wingrave" is an

aspect of Wingrave's internal conflict over attempting the traditional family occupation of a soldier. In "The Friends of the Friends" (1896) the ghost is "one of those hallucinated hysterias, those terrible looming fixations, those deep abortions of the human spirit, which destroy the humanity in which they fester precisely by seeming real when they are only . . . experienced" (pp. 335-336). Marcher in "The Beast in the Jungle" is haunted "by the nothingness within him"; Spencer Brydon in "The Jolly Corner," by the ghost of his "unused possibilities out of the past" (pp. 338-340).

Thus, says Blackmur, James's ghosts "represent the attempt to give objective rational form--knowledgeable form--to all the vast subjective experience of our 'other,' our hidden, our secret selves which we commonly either deny, gloss over, or try to explain away (p. 333). In our society these are dealt with by the psychiatrist; in earlier times they were dealt with by the church. James exorcised them in his fiction through their objective representation as experienced by some normal, though obsessed, person (pp. 340-341).

In a review of six ghost stories written by James between 1891 and 1898, George N. Dove notes that in each there is a "haunted personality" characterized by one or more of these three qualities: anxiety over the security of

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their position, anxiety for the security of others, and curiosity. For example, in "Nona Vincent," the ghost of the title character appears to Allan Wayworth when he is most plagued by anxiety that his play will fail because he cannot make the leading lady be Nona Vincent, the heroine of the play. In "Sir Edmund Orme," Mrs. Marden, tormented by anxiety and guilt for having been false to a lover who consequently committed suicide, sees the ghost of this lover following her daughter.25

Curiosity is also an element in these tales. In "Sir Edmund Orme" and "The Private Life" there is a curious narrator. Peter Barron in "Sir Dominick Ferrand" is driven by curiosity to read the letters of Sir Dominick. The governess in "The Turn of the Screw" displays all three of these characteristics before the ghosts appear. Dove concludes "that there is, in the Jamesian haunted mind, a sort of psychological 'set' which precedes the haunted state" (pp. 104-105), and that, therefore, the ghosts can be seen to originate from the "obsessions and anxiety" of their victims (p. 101). Dove does not try to "prove" any theory about "The Turn of the Screw," but by tracing these themes through several of James's stories, he supplies support for Wilson's view that the governess is hallucinating and for the opinion expressed by critics like Krook, Edel, and

Penzoldt that James deliberately wrote the story to make Wilson's interpretation possible.

Two other critics, C. B. Ives and Nobushige Tadokoro (the "Turn of the Screw" controversy has extended even to Japan), analyze James's comments in the preface to support the hallucination theory. C. B. Ives notes a contradiction between the preface and the story. In the preface James says he will not depict "psychical" ghosts of the type "recorded and attested" in so many studies, because they are "as little expressive, as little dramatic, above all as little continuous and conscious and responsive, as is consistent with their taking the trouble . . . to appear at all." But, says Ives, the ghosts in "The Turn of the Screw" are not conscious and responsive; they simply stand and stare. James's ghosts are, after all, very much like the ghosts of psychical research, and we are justified in rejecting, not only this, but other aspects of the preface as well.

Tadokoro insists that "James's awareness of the phenomenon of hallucinations is intrinsically existent in the work and only this fact justifies the new theory of the dual structure." In the preface to "The Turn of the Screw,"

where he describes the genesis of the story, James regrets that "the good, the really effective and heart-shaking ghost stories" have all been told and that the new type, "the mere modern 'psychical' case" is "washed clean of all queerness as by exposure to a flowing laboratory tap." According to Tadokoro, James indicates his hope that by combining the two he can recover the effect of the "beautiful lost form" which will arouse "the dear old sacred terror."\(^29\) Tadokoro says that this attempt had nothing to do with Freud and notes that, according to The Oxford English Dictionary, the term "hallucination" in the pathological sense appeared in English as early as 1646. He further suggests that James had read the works of a French author, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-1873), who wrote psychological ghost stories, in one of which, "Green Tea," a character, Mr. Jennings is haunted by a beast—a monkey (pp. 25, 27). Tadokoro points out that in "The Beast in the Jungle" James uses the term "hallucination" to refer to Marcher's "beast." At the end of the story, Marcher sees the beast leap, and "instinctively turning, in his hallucination, to avoid it, he flung himself, face down, on the tomb."\(^30\)

In one of the two full-length books devoted entirely to this short story, Thomas Mabry Cranfill and Robert Lanier


\(^30\)Tadokoro, p. 30. See The Novels and Tales, XVII (1909), 127.
Clark, Jr. analyze "The Turn of the Screw" page by page, detail by detail, to support the theory of Edmund Wilson. Most of their analysis is a systematic compilation of points noted by earlier writers. They indicate that, in spite of what James said to the contrary, he did not regard the story as negligible. For instance, in the preface to the New York Edition, he devoted eight pages to a detailed and earnest discussion of it, compared with two pages for "The Liar" and "The Two Faces" (1903) altogether.31

They note the evidence provided by other critics that James was familiar with the psychology of his time from his reading and from his understanding of the case of his sister Alice.32 They mention as one of the books he might have read, Hallucinations and Illusions by Edmund Parish (London, 1897). According to Parish, most hallucinations appear to women of twenty to twenty-five years of age, generally as the result of "morbid emotional states," "mental or physical exhaustion," "expectation," and "the hypnogenic tendency of prolonged reading." Cranfill and Clark recall that the governess is twenty years old and, according to the text, goes for ten nights without sleep, often reading into the early morning (pp. 36-39). She comes from a narrow and restricted home, and she has an "urgent, pathetic need to


32 See, e.g., below, West, IV, 199; Edel, VI, 281-282; and Cargill, VI, 283-289.
love and be loved" manifested in her constant and often frantic physical displays of affection—her hugging and kissing and sobbing over the children and Mrs. Grose. She is given to extremes of emotion verging on the "manic depressive"; even before the ghosts appear, she is "nervously unstrung" (pp. 28-32). Finally, she becomes completely insane, laughing and moaning for no apparent reason, a "victim of hebephrenia," often "a prelude to dementia praecox." Mrs. Grose and the children do what they can—go along with her, soothe her, pet her, and entertain her. But at the end, Flora becomes ill and Miles dies because of "prolonged, helpless, lethally dangerous exposure to the mad governess" (pp. 160-161, 169). Cranfill and Clark do not claim to have any knowledge of psychiatry. It is just that for them "James's magnificent art in this story is inseparable from his subtle treatment of the governess' devious, probably diseased, and certainly terrifying mental processes" (p. 35).

Symbolic Analyses of "The Turn of the Screw"

A few critics have chosen to study "The Turn of the Screw" through its symbolism and imagery. One of these, Herbert Feinstein, writes a rather unimpressive article in the Freudian vein, demonstrating that both Henry James and Mark Twain used the glove as a phallic symbol, that they are "secret sharers," "unconscious users" of "a funded
'analogical matrix.'" He cautions, however, that the glove may not always be a phallic symbol; it may also be a female symbol. Also in some places it may be simply a glove. He does not explain how we are to know when it is what.

Feinstein, recalling that the governess sees the second apparition of Quint when she returns to retrieve her gloves before going to church, notes that Freud always emphasized the importance of the item lost. (Is Feinstein suggesting that James knew Freud?) He finds other sexual symbolism in the same scene; for instance, her going downstairs may mean coition, a glove may represent the desire to cover nudity, or five phalli, or the opposite. Symbols like this, he says, represent the compromise of art between what the author thinks he wants to say, what he really wants to say, what he permits himself to say, and what the reader prefers to believe he is saying. The symbol is thus a "subterranean link," a way to avoid the barriers of communication (pp. 375-376).

But how or why the symbol makes this link---of what significance to James, to the governess, to the reader the glove is as phallic symbol in "The Turn of the Screw"---Feinstein does not tell us. Thus his essay, although interesting as a typical example of the kind of Freudian "symbolic interpretation" in which symbols are arbitrarily identified

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but never interpreted, contributes nothing to the understanding of the story or its author.

Three critics, however, analyze the symbolism and imagery in order to draw some conclusion about the author's intentions in writing the tale. A. W. Thomson finds it hard to believe that James unconsciously wrote a psychological case study, but, noting that we can never discover James's intentions from his own statements on the subject, he looks to the work itself for evidence that James knew what he was doing. He mentions the Freudian significance of the fact that Quint almost always appears from the waist up, symbolizing the governess' inhibition, and suggests the sexual significance of the phrase "the turn of the screw." He comments on the parallels which identify Miles with Douglas and insists that Douglas participates in the story, for the governess identifies him with the dead Miles.\(^34\)

In a survey of the criticism of "The Turn of the Screw," Hans-Joachim Lang accepts the interpretations of Goddard, Bewley, and Edel, and with reservations, of Wilson and Cargill. He investigates the narrative tradition in which the story was written and analyzes the imagery to prove that the critical doubt of the governess' reliability was not just an invention of the twenties, that "it had nothing to do with James Joyce, . . . but rather with a whole

\(^34\)"The Turn of the Screw: Some Points on the Hallucination Theory," A Review of English Literature, VI (October, 1965), 28-34.
tradition of American fiction, and a highly sophisticated one." He compares "The Turn of the Screw" to Irving's "Adventure of the German Student" and Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart," in both of which the narrator turns out to be insane. But James was more subtle; he did not want to make the reader doubt the governess' sanity from the beginning. He wanted to be ambiguous. In the preface to "The Turn of the Screw," he called the story an "irresponsible little fiction," "a piece of ingenuity pure and simple." Lang notes that in 1887, writing about Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, James applied very similar wording to a comment that might be relevant to his own story: "Is Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde a work of high philosophic intention, or simply the most ingenious and irresponsible of fictions? It has the stamp of a really imaginative production, that we may take it in different ways, but I suppose it would be called the most serious of the author's tales."

Hawthorne too, Lang says, was deliberately ambiguous in his tales, as in "The Wives of the Dead," "Young Goodman Brown," and "The Minister's Black Veil." "Possessiveness," the "violation of human personality," was a sin for both


36The Art of the Novel, pp. 169, 172.

Hawthorne and James. In Hawthorne's "The Birthmark," Aylmer strives for impossible perfection until he ruins his beautiful and loving wife. The governess is the same—"what the ghosts do to the children is problematical, potential, speculative, what the governess does to them can be demonstrated by results" (p. 121).

In discussing the imagery, Lang notes the number of times the word "turn" is used in the story, and he takes it as the central metaphor. He places it in the traditional group of maelstrom images used by Poe in *Arthur Gordon Pym*, commenting that "the maelstrom is the best pictorial equivalent for that sound psychological observation: a spot of danger and destruction which attracts and which sucks in the voyager with accelerating speed" (pp. 124-125). James shows the governess going around in that spot of danger.

The governess calls up the ghosts by her curiosity concerning sexual matters. Lang suggests that James was inspired by the trial of Oscar Wilde and that the "crimes" at Bly were homosexual: "Can we doubt that such a situation was also an object of curiosity and at least a titillation for James, a few years after his successful rival on the stage had scandalized the British literary world?" But, he says, James "de-psychologizes" for cover, and being "somewhat cautious in his pronouncements, . . . may have persuaded himself that the story was more harmless than it actually was once one began to read it in a specific way. But it was surely a triumph of narrative art; it was— to use a sort of
Joycean lingo—a story that gave him complete artistic sexual faction" (p. 128). Thus Lang, like A. W. Thomson, uses symbolic analysis to support the view that James deliberately and consciously filled his story with psychological overtones which hint at sexual perversion. He does not reject the possibility, however, that James may have been satisfying his own needs in the process.

Hildegard Domaniecki develops Lang's comments about the "turn" imagery into a full-length article defending the theory that it was James's conscious intention "to create a controlling atmosphere of a maddening spiritual disorder in the narrative of the governess."38 James provides "an atmospheric clue" to his intentions by using "turn" imagery to indicate confusion and "straight" imagery to indicate immediate and determined action. Domaniecki notes that at the beginning the governess is described as constantly "turning things over in her mind," but at the end of the story, she acts immediately and with increased certainty. The imagery is reversed for the children: they do not "turn" at the beginning, but as the tension in the story increases, they are increasingly characterized by images of "turning" (pp. 206-214). Thus, through a careful investigation of the language and imagery as the source of the tone and meaning of the tale, Domaniecki finds a clue to the author's

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intentions which supports the psychoanalytic interpretation.

"The Turn of the Screw" as Social Comment

Some critics, while they will not go so far as to say that she is neurotic, take a hint from Wilson's identification of the governess as a type of "thwarted Anglo-Saxon spinster" who coerces those beneath her, to analyze her as domineering and naively Puritanical (see above, Wilson, II, 73). Charles G. Hoffman says that the irony of the story is that the governess, with her "overdeveloped sense of duty," causes evil to come out into the open and thus destroys those she wants to protect.\(^{39}\)

Joseph J. Firebaugh sees the story as a picture of the miseducation of charming and intelligent young children under the care of incompetent adults—the irresponsible Harley Street Uncle, the naïve governess, and the ignorant Mrs. Grose. The governess is falsely guided by a stern and unyielding sense of duty to "save" the children from knowledge that she herself fears; but her "imposition of Original Sin on innocent children, standing here for the human race, assures not their salvation, but their destruction."\(^{40}\)

Other critics accept the psychoanalytic view of the story and use it, as Lewisohn, Spender, Michaud, Wescott,

\(^{39}\)"Innocence and Evil in James' The Turn of the Screw," The University of Kansas City Review, XX (Winter, 1953,), 104.

\(^{40}\)"Inadequacy in Eden: Knowledge and 'The Turn of the Screw,'" Modern Fiction Studies, III (Spring, 1957), 63.
and Wilson had done earlier with James's works, to support a
critical attitude toward the "typical Puritan" or the
"typical Victorian." They insist, moreover, that James
shared their view and condemned through the governess the
adverse effects of the severe moral code of Victorian
society. Although their works are part of the critical
trend begun in the 1920's and 1930's to use psychoanalysis
to condemn Puritan rigidity and repressiveness, now such
critics tend to base their conclusions less on Freudian than
on Neo-Freudian principles, especially on those of Erich
Fromm, who associates the authoritarianism of Puritan society
with the rise of modern capitalism.41 The comments of
Osborn Andreas and Marius Bewley, for example, contain a
Neo-Freudian emphasis on individuality and the development
of the self, on the importance of the full life.

According to Andreas, James despised the disrespect
for human individuality which makes one person use another
for his own advantage,42 which, according to Fromm, is char­
acteristic of human relations under modern capitalism.43
James rejected love and presented it as deadly, Andreas says,
because he felt that it turns people into cannibals who prey
on one another and serves to create limits, to deter rather

42Henry James and the Expanding Horizon: A Study of
the Meaning and Basic Themes of James's Fiction (Seattle,
43Fromm, p. 102.
than help the full life. For example, in The Bostonians, Olive's grooming of Verena for a public speaking career in the interests of women's suffrage, "instead of being a fostering of the personal and spiritual development of the girl, is really a warping of Verena's true nature, a sublimated and disguised lesbian feeding on Verena" (p. 34). In "The Turn of the Screw" the governess, who tries to "devour" the children emotionally with "a jealous and clutching love," becomes "a symbol of that rapacity which peoples its private world with emotions torn from their context and filched from the persons of those whom it has victimized" (pp. 47, 50). Thus Andreas accepts the Freudian view of "The Turn of the Screw" and uses it to support his theory that James is diagnosing a sickness of modern society: the exploitation of others for selfish purposes.

Marius Bewley says that James, in the American tradition of Hawthorne and Poe, used ambiguity of expression to call into question the validity of appearances. In "The Turn of the Screw" he depicts the "seige of innocence," of childhood, "that is undertaken by the malign representatives of 'the world's artificial system.'" The ghosts are "objective symbols of the governess's distorted 'moral sense,'" external projections of her own repressions; and, notes Bewley, her determination that the children "shall confess to seeing the demons that haunt her own vision is, in effect,
a determination to shape their innocence to her guilt." The governess, desiring to possess the children "in a way which, for . . . James represented a violation of human personality," is very similar to Gilbert Osmond in The Portrait of a Lady and to Olive Chancellor in The Bostonians (p. 110).

John Lydenberg rejects Wilson's Freudian interpretation but substitutes for it a New-Freudian interpretation derived from the psychology of Fromm. However, his insistence that the governess, not the children, is evil derives from Wilson's essay, and it no doubt occurred to him to apply Neo-Freudian psychology to "The Turn of the Screw" because Wilson had previously applied Freudian psychology to it. It is interesting to note how well the tale also fits this view.

Lydenberg describes the governess as a classic case of Fromm's "authoritarian personality," as "a compulsive neurotic" with a martyr complex—"masochistic in that she delights in receiving the tortures of an 'expiatory victim; . . . and at the same time sadistic in her insistence on dominating the children and Mrs. Grose." She lives in a world of extremes in which she can function only as either


master or slave; and she gives herself over to the ghosts of Quint and Jessel because they allow her to avoid the fearful freedom and responsibility entrusted to her by the master by projecting her uncertainties onto something external: "They take her out of herself, making action automatic, something she does, not as herself but as an instrument" (p. 53).

The governess is essentially a Puritan, convinced that "depravity inheres in everyone"; and filled with a sense of her righteous duty to fight it, she bears down on the children with a "rigid will" (pp. 47-48). She is unable to offer the children "the positive, sympathetic love which might have helped them develop as humans and accommodate themselves to the evil with which all men must by their nature live," but can only tighten "the screws of Puritan discipline and suspicion until the children fatally crack under the strain." If we accept Heilman's interpretation of the story as a Christian allegory, says Lydenberg, we must see it "as a covert, if unconscious, attack on one strain of Christianity, a New England strain with which James was most familiar" (p. 58).

Like many early critics of James, Lydenberg uses psychoanalysis—although that of Fromm rather than of Freud—to reveal the governess as a type of Puritan which he dislikes. He feels, like Michaud, that James too resented the authoritarianism, the restrictiveness, the dismal view of human nature which was supposedly characteristic of New England Puritanism.
In an article entitled "Turning the Freudian Screw: How Not to Do It," Mark Spilka replies to Lydenberg's essay, condemning the "imaginative poverty of much Freudian criticism, its crudeness and rigidity in applying valid psychological insights, its narrow conception of its own best possibilities." In short, he says, the "Freudian critics have not been sufficiently Freudian." He proposes that critics drop the emphasis on the governess' neurosis, and regard her as "chiefly prurient," particularly sensitive, not just to evil, but to sexual evil. According to Spilka, the governess sees Bly as a kind of Eden and wishes it could go on forever, but the "sex-ghost, Peter Quint" intrudes. Quint represents the "sexual 'horrors'" which in Victorian society are invested with religious dread, "the fearsome side of romantic love, the disruptive threat to the world of garden and park." His appearance to the children suggests the basic Freudian principle of infantile sexuality, which James anticipates. Spilka wonders that the Freudians themselves have ignored this principle, while conventional critics defend it. The Freudians, he says, have been strangely Rousseauistic, insisting on "Original Innocence" which Freud would have denied. The children are guilty.

But so is the governess, for she represents the "failure of Victorian domestic sainthood in coping with erotic horror" (pp. 106-107). The situation in "The Turn of

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46 *Literature and Psychology*, XIII (Fall, 1963), 105.
the Screw" dramatizes the prudery of the Victorian home, in which "domestic affections were cooked up to a high pitch," while "sexual feeling was severely repressed and talk about sex forbidden, the whole matter kept under strict taboo," and in which, Spilka says, "conditions were just about perfect for producing sexual neurosis, if we can agree with Freud that every child tends normally to love his parents or siblings of the opposite sex, and to hate those of the same sex as rivals." The Victorian home "intensified that normal conflict" while impeding its normal resolution. Love was identified as affection; sex was accounted for as sinful (pp. 108-109).

Thus many Victorians longed to return to a childhood in which there was no guilt, and the cult of childhood innocence flourished. Spilka concludes that James's own childhood, his injury, his "bachelorhood and secretiveness" place him in this cult. In his novels sex is often depicted as an unnecessary evil which true love apparently can exist without. However, although his young boys and girls often die when confronted with it, or often they enter into "sexless compacts," they are always exceptionally interested in simply perceiving adult sexuality. Thus, in his work he expressed "the peculiar tensions of Victorian childhood" from which he had suffered.

According to Spilka, in his later years James abandoned the "Victorian" values on which he had patterned his own life, finally, in The Ambassadors, coming "to accept sex
as the necessary source of charm and loveliness in a relation he had tried to see in terms of sexless virtue" (p. 109). "The Turn of the Screw" is a step toward his recognition of the impossibility of an adult life that excludes sex. It is a fable of the Victorian home in which two children are exposed to sexual evil in the form of ghosts. The innocent and "prurient" governess fights this evil "in the name of hothouse purity and domestic sainthood." And, Spilka excuses her: "That she destroys the children in saving them is understandable: her contemporaries were doing so all around her, and would do so for the next six decades" (p. 110).

Thus, Spilka, like Lydenberg, returns to the view of earlier writers like Michaud and Lewisohn that James depicted in his work the adverse cultural conditions of which he was the unhappy product. To Spilka, James is a kind of sociological and psychological critic who anticipated Freud in condemning the Victorian home for its restrictiveness and its deliberate blindness to the facts of normal human sexuality.

In a reply to Spilka's article, Lydenberg rejects for himself the label of "Freudian," except, he says, as "all of us today are in part Freudians, as we are all in some respects Marxists." Actually, Lydenberg, although he does not say so, is not Freudian at all; he is Neo-Freudian, Frommian, and naturally ignores such concepts as prurience and infantile sexuality. The governess, for him, is an
"authoritarian personality," not a sex-starved spinster. However, in his reply Lydenberg praises Spilka for giving full recognition to both the sexual and religious overtones by showing how the two were combined in the Victorian mind.\(^47\)

In the same vein, J. A. Ward notes that to James the evil which is latent in every man manifests itself in the domination of one person over another. His ghosts stand for this "terrible hidden self," the same "hidden self" which James defeated in his youthful nightmare.\(^48\) Ward points out that in the middle period of James's writing, his heroes and heroines are increasingly unpleasant, consistently evaluating their own conduct as heroic and romantic, while ignoring their own flaws, often dominating in order to "save" others. They represent evil concealed by apparent good. In *The Awkward Age*, Nanda Brookenham insists that Mitchey marry Aggie and ruins both their lives. Fleda Vetch in *The Spoils of Poynton* "saves" Owen Gereth by ruining his and his mother's chances for happiness. Like them, the governess in "The Turn of the Screw" is a naïve, self-centered, over-bearing type of person, not necessarily neurotic, but surely incapable of dealing realistically with life's problems. She represents, Ward believes, a type James despised and


condemned. 49

Frederick J. Masback and Robert M. Slabey essentially repeat Lydenberg's analysis. Masback says that James would have regarded as "almost obscenely immoral" the governess' aim of forming, dominating and possessing the children. In addition, he incorporates into his analysis Spilka's observation that the governess thinks about sex all the time and seriously accepts Jones's facetious suggestion that she is suffering from "pedophilia erotica." 50

Robert M. Slabey agrees that the governess is characterized by a shallow Puritanism and is incapable of solving this moral dilemma because of her "egotistically conceived messianic ideal." He accepts all the interpretations of the story: as a ghost story, a psychological study, an allegory of good and evil, or a combination of all three. 51

Some Variations on Wilson's Theory

We have already reviewed a number of interesting variations on the original Kenton and Wilson theory about "The Turn of the Screw." As Douglas M. Davis points out, 49 "The Ineffectual Heroes of James's Middle Period," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, II (Autumn, 1960), 318-322.

50 Masback, pp. 194, 214 and n. See Jones, above, IV, 149.

51 "The Holy Innocents' and The Turn of the Screw," Die Neueren Sprachen, XII (April, 1963), 172-173.
the theories tend to become more ingenious as time passes, for Wilson's essay seems to inspire all sorts of wild speculation not necessarily justified by Freudian psychology. (See below, Davis, IV, 196.) For instance, Jeannette H. Foster, in a book called Sex Variant Women in Literature: A Historical and Quantitative Survey, says that there is nothing ambiguous about the story; it is, she maintains, the first appearance in literature of the lesbian corruption of a young girl by an adult, "and is probably attributable to the increasing publication of clinical case studies." In spite of Foster's assurance, she is the only critic to have come up with such an interpretation.

The bizarreness of Miles's death, which has perplexed many critics, has provided the stimulus for several reinterpretations of the story according to which Miles does not die—a theory first put forth by Edna Kenton, who suggested that the whole story was a figment of the governess' imagination. This is the position taken by Carvel Collins, Louis D. Rubin, and Stanley Trachtenberg—who further speculate that Douglas is Miles grown up. The first two of these accept the Kenton-Wilson theory and add to it, so that their suggestions have meaning only to adherents of the Freudian view.

Carvel Collins speculates that Miles, still alive at the end of the story, returns to school, while the governess, 

52 New York, 1956, p. 111.
Mrs. Grose, and a "placated Flora" remain in the country. At twenty, Douglas, who is Miles, revisits Bly and discusses the experience with the governess. Collins finds evidence for this explanation in the text: first, Douglas is very emotional about the whole story; second, according to the text, when Miles is ten years old, the governess is about twenty, and Douglas is described as being ten years younger than the governess; third, the governess teaches Miles's sister and Douglas mentions that she has taught his sister. Finally, Collins says, because Douglas is the only one to whom the governess reveals her story, he seems to be excessively involved in it. He has some unnamed reason for his long silence—probably love for the governess.53

Louis D. Rubin, Jr. agrees with Collins that James was deliberately subtle and psychological, "that when Henry James placed details and people in a story, he usually did so by deliberate intention," and that the parallels between the Miles-governess relationship and the Douglas-governess relationship are therefore fully significant. The governess tells her story to Douglas because it is a story of her love for Miles, and Douglas is Miles. Rubin concludes that she is an "out-and-out psychotic," who has sublimated a strong sexual desire for Miles in her hallucination of the ghosts.54

53"James' The Turn of the Screw," Explicator, XIII (June, 1955), Item 49.

In a footnote, Rubin adds this comment: "I am still not quite convinced that James was familiar with Freudian theory in the late 1890's, but I do feel that he must have had some idea of what he was dealing with along this line. Here, of course, we get into the whole question of just what the creative imagination is and how it functions. Whichever way one decides, one marvels at the uncanny appropriateness of James's symbolism" (p. 322, n. 10 continued from p. 321). Rubin notes the significant fact that the character who speaks the last words of the story, usually taken to be Miles, is actually unspecified. It could be the governess who says, "Peter Quint— you devil!" and identifies the ghost. As James intended, the riddle is finally insoluble.

Stanley Trachtenberg accepts Rubin's identification of Miles as Douglas, but, like Spilka, reverts to the original view that the children are evil. The story is Miles's (or Douglas'), not the governess'. Douglas is haunted by a childhood sense of guilt for an unspecified offense, which he finally confesses in the guise of this story. The ghosts "are personifications designed to bring the symbolic evil within the compass of the children," and the governess' perception of them indicates her discovery of the children's guilty secret. Thus, "The Turn of the Screw" is about the "corruptibility of children" and "the continued

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55 Rubin, p. 327. See The Novels and Tales, XII, 309.
guilt of silence," finally resulting in "a symbolic deathbed confession, while the attending guests perform a priestlike absolution around the cleansing fire of the hearth."56 Trachtenberg has ignored psychoanalysis completely, and yet has succeeded in coming up with a fantastic interpretation. His essay truly seems an exercise in ingenuity, an unfortunate outcome of the Wilson hypothesis.

In a satirical analysis, Eric Solomon makes fun of these tricky interpretations of James's tale by insisting that the reader, like Sherlock Holmes, should look for the "least obvious suspect," who is, of course, Mrs. Grose—her motive is greed; her crime is murder. Let us, he says, "watch the incredible become elementary,"57 for "once alerted to the possibility of duplicity in Mrs. Grose's actions, we see it in her every word and deed." Ambitious to retain the position of the head of the household, and fearful of losing Flora, she resents the arrival of the governess and only acts happy in order to cover her hatred. She curtseys, but, Solomon says, "the curtsey is ironic," and her "reply to a question about the previous governess is virtually a threat. '"The last governess? She was also young and pretty--almost as young and almost as pretty, Miss, even as you.'" [My italics]" (p. 206). Thus Solomon takes Mrs. Grose's state-


57 "The Return of the Screw," The University Review, XXX (Spring, 1964), 205.
ments out of context and applies a far-fetched interpretation to them, italicizing words that are not given any stress by James, in a manner only too similar to that of many of the other Freudian critics of this story.

It is Mrs. Grose, he notes, who identifies the ghost of Quint and who tells the governess that Quint is dead. She is trying to drive the governess mad. James gives us a clue to her identity when the governess says, "... if my pupils practised upon me, it was surely with the minimum of grossness. It was all in the other quarter that, after a lull, the grossness broke out." Mrs. Grose murdered Miss Jessel, and she is responsible for the death of Miles; she is the "most clever and desperate of Victorian villainesses" (p. 211).

What is particularly amusing about Solomon's essay is that he makes a pretty good case against Mrs. Grose if one has not read the story recently. It is certainly no more far-fetched than many others that have been put forth in the course of this long controversy. In fact, Richard Rees, in "Miss Jessel and Lady Chatterley," seriously regards the governess as a deluded villainess, who is misled by Mrs. Grose's account of the romance between Quint and Miss Jessel. Mrs. Grose, he says, is motivated by jealousy and class

58 Solomon, p. 209. See The Novels and Tales, XII, 169, 220.
C. Knight Aldrich, M.D., a psychiatrist, also expounds a view identical to that contained in Solomon's satirical analysis—that Mrs. Grose hates the governess and is trying to drive her mad. In a postscript, the editor of Modern Fiction Studies, in which the article appears, points out that Aldrich wrote his essay unaware of the article by Solomon; but, the editor says, "the two essays complement each other in an amusing and unusual way. Without knowing that a case against Mrs. Grose had been made previously, Dr. Aldrich has used the tools of the professional psychiatrist to provide 'scientific' evidence that corroborates a thesis so shocking that the professional critic had to present it in the form of a mock-serious spoof."60

Aldrich describes Mrs. Grose's conversation and behavior in a way to show its suspicious nature. Although, he says, most of the interpretations of "The Turn of the Screw" have accepted without question the complete veracity of Mrs. Grose, it is she alone who identifies the ghost, she who describes Flora's indecent language. He speculates briefly on the question of James's intentions, suggesting two possibilities: The first is "that James himself was deceived, that his unconscious, not his conscious mind,


60 "Editor's Postscript," to "Another Twist of The Turn of the Screw," Modern Fiction Studies, XIII (Summer, 1967), 177-178.
determined the real character of Mrs. Grose." In this case, Mrs. Grose may represent his mother, who as Edel notes was "in reality a destructive woman, . . . of whom James was so afraid that he had to repress his perception of her evil characteristics and consciously could only see her as good."

The second, "less dramatic" but more reasonable, is that James assumed that he had made Mrs. Grose's villainy sufficiently clear but had simply misjudged his readers (p. 173).

Aldrich suggests further that the governess is not hysterical but paranoid, for her hallucinations and delusions are more typical of paranoid psychosis than of hysteria. He says, "A crucial factor in paranoid psychopathology as outlined by Freud in the Schreber case is the projection onto others of a homosexuality unacceptable to the patient."61 Unconsciously or intuitively, James "caught the thread of the paranoid psychopathology, as the governess, aided by Mrs. Grose, weaves the fabric of her delusional system around the presumed homosexual relationships of the departed servants and the children" (pp. 174-175). Aldrich further speculates that the children may be the illegitimate offspring of the master and Mrs. Grose, from a time when she was younger and prettier, thus accounting for her strong attachment to them. In this, Aldrich goes about as far as any other critic in

rewriting the story; but it must be said in his favor that he does so rather half-heartedly.

Douglas Davis attributes the extent of the "Turn of the Screw" controversy and the extremes to which critics have gone, to the attractions of the "'explication racket'." Critics are simply looking for something to write about, and to further explicate "The Turn of the Screw," they must become more and more ingenious and striking. He relates this issue to a broader professional concern about the purpose of explication and the importance of the author's stated intentions. Unfortunately in this case, the author's own statements are so ambiguous that one wonders if it was not his very intention to stir up speculation, to create just such a controversy.

To some degree, Davis' point is valid: many of these Freudian interpretations are simply clever but imperceptive variations on the original insights of Kenton and Wilson. But they do achieve publication and apparently are read. We certainly cannot attribute all the interest in this subject to a desire to publish. Somehow or another, Kenton and Wilson and their followers have found a way of looking at this story that awakens a response in modern readers and critics, which perhaps addresses a general concern about the nature of experience.

The second of the two full-length books on "The Turn

62 *Graduate Student of English*, II, 7, 11.
of the Screw," both of which essentially support Wilson's interpretation, was written by Muriel West, who also published an article proving that the excited and violent behavior of the governess—her constant hugging and clutching and shaking and throwing herself upon the children—is, directly or indirectly, the cause of Miles's death.63

In her book, A Stormy Night with "The Turn of the Screw," she reviews the whole controversy in a kind of impressionistic manner—a kind of tongue-in-cheek "free association" on the story and the criticism—to demonstrate that "The Turn of the Screw" was intended to call up associations, to act on the reader in terms of his own background and experience. She implies further that, because the tale was intentionally complex and ambiguous, drawn from many sources in order to have meaning on as many levels as possible, it is impossible to establish any final, "true" interpretation of it. Her book provides an excellent summary of the various conclusions drawn by critics about this story, and for this reason I have placed it last in this chapter.

West purports simply to be publishing a manuscript which she found in a box of books purchased at an auction. This manuscript is supposedly the notes and impressions recorded by some unnamed critic on reading "The Turn of the Screw," in his effort to write a definitive article on it.

63 "The Death of Miles in The Turn of the Screw," PMLA, LXXIX (June, 1964), 283-288.
The manuscript is signed with the initials H. K. Y., which are those of a previous discoverer and annotator, not of the original author, who is haphazard and flippant in dealing with his subject. By thus imitating in her analysis the third-hand method in which the original story is told, West suggests (but never states openly) that perhaps James used this method in order to achieve the ambiguity and variety of meaning that often develops when a story is retold and reinterpreted several times by different people.

The author of the manuscript begins his speculation by recalling James's interest in the Gothic and by noting that the governess has been reading Gothic tales, and has thus prepared herself to see ghosts. He assumes that there are two governesses—the "lovely and languid governess-novelist of the preamble and the nervous wreck of the tale proper." The first is telling a story about the second, who is probably an imaginative projection of herself into a Gothic novel: "One might say that the tale she tells shows her own fears of what might have happened to her if she had ever let a roomful of old books get the best of her" (pp. 16-17). He wonders if the story might not be a satire on the Gothic novel and on the rage in the 1890's for unexplained phenomena, on the psychologists and the simply superstitious, even on William James, who investigated these phenomena so seriously (pp. 34-35).

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64Phoenix, Arizona, 1964, p. viii.
The governess reminds this critic of other "whiffs of ancient tradition" (p. 21). She is like the old persecutors of witches, only with something clinical added to the picture. In F. W. H. Myers' work, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, there is a description of a case of thirteen-year-old Felda X who had a split personality. In one personality she was serious and hard-working, in the other, she was carefree and gay. Perhaps in a similar way the governess "blanks out" or hypnotizes herself to change her personality. And the "annotator" of this essay, H. K. Y., recalls that Myers was the founder of The Society for Psychical Research of which William James was a member (p. 33n), so that Henry James could very well have been familiar with his works. Perhaps, suggests this critic, the governess was a case of hysteria being cured by a clever hypnotist; in this case, "The Turn of the Screw could certainly be taken as a satire on the whole mix-up: ghosts, discarnate spirits, hallucinations—who could say?—and if hallucinations, self-induced, post-hypnotic, spontaneously somnambulistic, or simply insane?" (p. 38).

However, he does not really like the governess and condemns her as one who ruthlessly imposes her will on others. Her "incessant pressuring of Mrs. Grose," he notes, "resembles Freud's pressuring of recalcitrant patients, pressure sustained or repeated until they told him exactly what he wanted to know" (p. 44). With her "insatiable curiosity," she seems "like an expert at psychological analysis—
torturing the 'victim' of her 'lucidity' to death before she gets what she's after" (p. 70). Moreover, she behaves, he insists, more like a beast than the ghost does, finally killing Miles "as a child might kill a kitten--carrying it around by the neck; as a big old dog might 'worry' a puppy to death--playing with it; or as a Frankensteinian monster might strangle a child in resentment and rage--or just for kicks" (pp. 64-65).

Our critic recalls other associations. He compares "The Turn of the Screw" to A Midsummer Night's Dream, thinking of it now as a fairy story, "a fantasy that cool reason cannot comprehend." The "goings-on at Bly preserve the logic of dreams where almost anything is rather more than likely to happen," where ambiguities and inconsistencies make perfectly good sense (p. 55). The value of such an interpretation, says this critic, is that he "needn't 'go about to expound' those parts of it that didn't come clear" (p. 57). He says, "... I called myself an ass again for trying to expound ... characters composed of bits of this and bits of that ... of gathered themes, gestures, names, character traits, words said, situations, or parts of them, found in old novels or plays or scientific arguments about the human personality's survival of bodily death, hypnosis, lucid somnambulism, and the various états mentaux" (p. 61).

The relationship of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel reminds him of the similar relationship in James's "Gabrielle de Bergerac" (1869) between Pierre Coquelin, a tutor, and
his charge's aunt. Perhaps "The Turn of the Screw" is a social novel about class distinctions; he says,

I couldn't take hold in the right place. How could I work around to the social comment: that even ghosts are the victims of malicious gossip, that a governess may go crazy as much from her ambiguous social status as from reading fiction, that James, old die-hard that he is, reworks, but in reverse, the favorite old fairy-tale theme of youngest son of poor woodchopper finally winning the hand of the king's daughter, Cinderella finally getting her prince charming, and James's own tales of boobus Americanus of either sex finally getting or not getting the Italian prince or princess--and tying the theme in with popularized case histories of women with hysterical fixations on absurdly idealized members of the opposite sex?

His ideas are scattered. He decides that social comment is not intrinsic in James's works, that "what mattered to him was how a clever alert human mind works in trying to cope with an impossible--or at least a difficult--problem." Yet he sees the story as an allegory, in which the children and the master represent the aristocracy, "the housekeeper the masses, and the governess the jealous clergy--rabidly eager for more power and more social recognition" (p. 69).

He concludes that he cannot write "any neat, conclusive, scholarly piece" (p. 40). Random thoughts pop into his mind. He falls asleep and dreams of being tortured with thumbscrews by a woman who identifies herself as a "savior." He must confess something, but he does not know what. She strangles him, and he wakes up (pp. 71-75).

In this religious, psychological, sociological study, West covers every possible interpretation. She does not accept the literal interpretation; but she accepts many of
the others, of Kenton, Goddard, Wilson, and Edel, all piled on top of one another. She seems to be making fun of all the speculation and to be agreeing with it at the same time. She does stick to certain major points: the governess in the story is hysterical and mentally unbalanced; the governess in the preamble is a different person who makes up the story or dreams it. The governess in the story kills Miles by strangling him in her enthusiasm. There are many possible interpretations of "The Turn of the Screw" that are all partly satisfactory, but none completely so. James was deliberately ambiguous and complex and was fully aware of the psychological implications of the governess' condition. Critics like West, who see James's stories as intentionally, though ambiguously, psychological, tend to give him credit for a tremendous and almost superhuman subtlety and insight. Therefore, Wilson's article has ultimately led to a favorable evaluation of James as an artist.

Ghosts and the Modern Reader

In 1944, Edmund Wilson wrote an essay in The New Yorker on the revival of interest in horror stories. In it he indirectly agrees with and responds to the charge made by Heilman and Liddell that modern readers want scientific explanations for phenomena previously explained in terms of the supernatural. He concurs with their belief that recent critics tend to see James's horror stories, "The Turn of the Screw" and "The Jolly Corner," as psychological thrillers
because today's readers prefer them as such. It is true, he says, that in the present-day world of electric lights, the only dark corners left for ghosts to hide in are in our minds, and a collection of horror stories designed for moderns would have to include those in which writers "have achieved their effects not merely by attempting to transpose into terms of contemporary life the old fairy tales of goblins and phantoms but by probing psychological caverns where the constraints of that life itself have engendered disquieting obsessions."65

Other critics support Wilson. For instance, Q. D. Leavis agrees that it is natural to interpret a writer in the light of contemporary interests, and praises Wilson's "Turn of the Screw" essay because it draws attention to the ambiguity of James's works.66 Woolcott Gibbs also prefers to read "The Turn of the Screw" as a study in abnormal psychology, in which the governess' hallucinations result from her "guilty obsession with the uncle" and in which "her final murderous hatred of her young charges . . . was brought on by her frenzied realization that she had failed." Gibbs prefers this interpretation because it is more shocking than the supernatural hypothesis; "maniacs being, to my taste,"

65 "A Treatise on Tales of Horror," The New Yorker, XX (May 27, 1944), 75.

he says, "considerably more disturbing than ghosts." In 1961, "The Turn of the Screw" was made into a movie called *The Innocents*, with Deborah Kerr as the governess. The writers were Truman Capote and William Archibald. What is interesting for us is that the movie follows Wilson's interpretation by setting forth the story ambiguously. The ghosts are represented in such a way that they can be taken as hallucinations of the governess or as real. To justify Mrs. Grose's identification of Quint, a scene has been added in which the governess discovers a photograph of Quint and Jessel together before they appear to her as ghosts. In addition, the governess is presented as an extremely nervous person who is infatuated with the master, and who is abnormally affectionate toward little Miles. The writers apparently thought that the addition of a little sex and insanity would appeal to the modern viewer, who, although he would reject a psychical ghost as unbelievable and even dull, would understand and appreciate the horrors of Freudian madness.

Modern readers are conditioned to think of evil in terms of abnormal psychology rather than in terms of supernatural forces. They are very likely to reject a mere ghost story, for they no longer accept a world view in which ghosts have a significant part. Thus, even if Henry James did not

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67 "Black Magic and Bundling," *The New Yorker*, XXV (February 11, 1950), 44.
intentionally write a psychological ghost story, the interpretation of it as such may be more "true" for the modern reader than the view that it is simply a ghost story. A great work is, after all, one that so reflects the eternal and recurring patterns of experience that it not only withstands such reinterpretations, but profits by them. A. W. Thomson praises this work of James's which "can be interpreted so variously, and yet gain from every interpretation," and concludes, "... though its early popularity may have been that of a ghost-story in the context of that peculiarly nineteenth century genre, it is plain that its importance is now on these terms." That is, the story has value now because it can be explained in terms of modern depth psychology.

As we have seen earlier, there is a certain justification for believing that James himself had a modern attitude toward ghosts. In fact, in his other ghost stories there is no question but that the ghosts are projections of the minds of the people who see them. It is significant that it was possible for the movie writers to make "The Turn of the Screw" into a Freudian drama about a neurotic governess without changing any of the basic details of the story. Furthermore, in the preface to this story, James indicates that he provided the ghosts as vague forms on which a reader might project his own evil thoughts:

68A Review of English Literature, VI, 36.
There is for such a case no eligible absolute of the wrong; it remains relative to fifty other elements, a matter of appreciation, speculation, imagination—these things moreover quite exactly in the light of the spectator's, the critic's, the reader's experience. Only make the reader's general vision of evil intense enough, . . . and his own experience, his own imagination, his own sympathy (with the children) and horror (of their false friends) will supply him quite sufficiently with all the particulars. Make him think the evil, make him think it for himself, and you are released from weak specifications.69

James's vagueness and ambiguity is a challenge which the modern reader has accepted and answered in his own way, according to his own understanding of evil.

Cranfill and Clark comment, "If scope, variety and abundance of critical comments are tests of the quality of a book, then Henry James's The Turn of the Screw (1898) is a deathless work of art."70 It was the essays of Kenton and Wilson that first drew this critical attention to James's story. One feels that surely they must have hit on an important truth—either in James or in the mind of the modern reader, or both—to draw so much enthusiastic support and condemnation. Surely, the quantity of the critical response to Wilson's essay, as well as the adoption of his theories by modern critics and movie writers, demonstrates the present popularity of psychoanalytic interpretation. And a review

69 The Art of the Novel, p. 176.

70 An Anatomy of The Turn of the Screw, p. 3.
of this criticism provides a good picture of the achievements and failures of psychoanalytic criticism. Critics of Wilson's hypothesis, like Krook, Heilman, and Stoll, have pointed out the failures of Freudian criticism in general—its reductiveness, its tendency to degenerate into wild and unfounded speculation about the story and its author—failures often only too well illustrated by the psychoanalytic essays themselves. Even the supporters of Wilson reflect differing attitudes toward psychoanalysis and various degrees of acceptance of psychoanalytic principles. Some of these variations on Wilson's original theory result from changes in psychoanalysis itself, as for example, Lydenberg's insistence that the governess is "authoritarian" rather than sex-starved. But most of the literary critics use psychoanalysis as they see fit, as it suits their taste or their attitude toward James, without regard for any orthodox psychoanalytic theory.

As a result, critics applying Freudian psychology under the influence of Wilson have reached a variety of conclusions both about "The Turn of the Screw" and about James himself. Some of the conclusions about the story are: that the governess is neurotic, that she is completely insane, that she is only temporarily confused. She is sex-starved; she is authoritarian; she is a Lesbian. The ghosts are hallucinations; the ghosts are real; it does not matter whether the ghosts are real or are hallucinations. The governess loves the master; she loves Miles; she loves Flora.
The children are evil; the children are innocent; the children are both evil and innocent. The governess murders Miles; Miles is still alive. The governess is the villainess; Mrs. Grose is the villainess and the governess her dupe. Quint and Jessel are still alive. The whole story is true; the whole story is a fantasy.

Critics have also arrived at different conclusions about James. He was a deliberate and knowledgeable psychologist; he was a social critic. He was a Puritan; he rejected Puritanism. He was intentionally ambiguous and planned every detail of the story; he was simply a neurotic writing out his own wild fantasies, and the ambiguity in the story is merely that of any dream or neurotic fantasy, a result of the action of the censor filtering out and distorting the expression of unacceptable unconscious desires. Many of these analyses, though Freudian, arrive at conclusions not necessarily in agreement with Wilson's interpretation or, indeed, with any other "Freudian" interpretation--pointing up a major fault of psychoanalysis: its inexactness, its ability to serve as "proof" for many different interpretations of the same person or the same work. Although often suggestive and illuminating, psychoanalytic theory is not consistently applicable, even to one writer or one story.
CHAPTER V

OTHER WORKS BY JAMES: JAMES AS "CASE"

An unfortunate result, perhaps, of Wilson's essay has been an overemphasis on "The Turn of the Screw" and a corresponding neglect of James's other works, so that all the psychoanalytic criticism of all the other works by James does not equal in quantity that devoted to this one little tale of horror. Critics have preferred to reapply Wilson's theory to "The Turn of the Screw," rather than to demonstrate its essential truth in terms of James's many other novels and stories. In fact, there is no large amount of psychoanalytic criticism devoted to any one work by James except for "The Turn of the Screw." Thus in the two final chapters of this dissertation, I have divided the psychoanalytic criticism of other individual works by James into two major groups, not according to the work criticized, but according to whether the critic treats James as a kind of neurotic case or as a deliberate psychologist. I deal with the first group in Chapter V, and with the second in Chapter VI.

Chapter V is divided into two parts. In the first part, I deal with that psychoanalytic criticism of single works by James which contains a biographical element, in which the critics analyze James's works for clues to his
character, as a psychologist might study the "self-expression" of a neurotic patient. Naturally, much of the criticism discussed in the first part of Chapter V reflects the conclusions drawn by biographers and critics of James—Wilson, Rosenzweig, Dupee, Edel—reviewed in earlier chapters. For example, Wilson's theory and methods have often been simply readapted by critics to explain other stories and novels by James. More important, we find that these essays fall into three groups, corresponding to the divisions of James's psychological life made by other biographers of James, notably Leon Edel, into three periods: pre-Guy Domville, post-Guy Domville, and, finally, in some cases, into a third period of "reawakening," or renewed strength and self-confidence. In connection with this final period, I will discuss, at the conclusion of Chapter V, a small body of Jungian criticism of James's works, which although it is applied only to the works without reference to the author, deals almost exclusively with those which might be said to fall into his period of "reawakening," and thus has some biographical significance.

James as "Case"

James's Early Works: Before Guy Domville

Critics of the stories and novels written before 1894 find many of them to be tales of frustrated passion, of cold, unemotional, and aggressive women, and cold, unemotional, and retiring men. These themes were indicated in early James
criticism by Spender, Lewisohn, Wilson, and Edel, and to some extent were repeated by critics of "The Turn of the Screw." Some critics—Philip Rahv, Isadore Traschen, Lionel Trilling, Irving Howe, Albert Mordell, Patrick F. Quinn, and Stephen Reid—follow the practice, established by early psychoanalytic critics, of identifying these characters with James and of reading their stories as testimonials of James's own reactions to his family, to his country, to sex, to his own role in life.

In 1943, Philip Rahv followed Wilson's lead and identified James's male characters with the author's less masterful side and with a certain "masochistic tendency to refuse the natural gifts of life." No one, he says, can "overlook the repeated appearance in James of certain sad and uncertain young men who vie with each other in devising painfully subtle motives for renouncing their heart's desire once it is within their grasp."¹ Carrying this further, Isadore Traschen, like Stephen Spender, says that in The American James reveals his unconscious attitudes toward sex and the male role of lover. Christopher Newman does not carry Claire off, but waits for her to leave her family. When he acts, he acts aggressively, for aggression is James's conscious view of the male role. But unconsciously, James

¹"The Heiress of All the Ages," Partisan Review, X (May–June, 1943), 233.
imagines this role as passive and receptive. Traschen's view agrees with Edel's analysis of James as an observer of life rather than a participant, whose own reaction to experience, especially to love, as in his relations with Minny Temple, was invariably passive (see above, Edel, III, 124).

Lionel Trilling is one of the few critics to apply to a work by James anthropological and Jungian methods of analysis—according to which the truth of a work is revealed through an exploration of its primitive mythological content—along with a consideration of the author's personal psychology (in keeping with the Jungian emphasis on two levels in art).

In an essay on The Princess Casamassima, Trilling compares Hyacinth Robinson to "the Young Man from the Provinces" type of folk hero, who sets out to seek his fortune, "which is what the folktale says when it means that the hero is seeking himself." This folk hero is usually in some doubt about his parentage; his real father is not the poor woodcutter who raised him, but a man of noble estate, in Hyacinth's case, an English Lord. Like a knight in medieval romance, Hyacinth must be tested by involvement in great affairs. Thus, his story, says Trilling, "has its roots both in legend and in the very heart of the modern actuality."  

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Trilling suggests that James intentionally reproduced this recurrent pattern of life and legend—what Jung later identified as an archetypal pattern of experience—for James was a storyteller, concerned to create an illusion, to enchant the reader, and "he understood primitive story to be the root of the modern novelist's art" (p. 65).

Like Geismar and Edel, Trilling finds also that James's tale reflects a personal fantasy based in the author's family situation. Hyacinth, with his three sets of parent figures—Lord Frederick and Florentine, Miss Pynsent and Mr. Vetch, Eustace Poupin and Madame Poupin—suggests James's concept of himself as the child who is constantly pushed aside by adults. Trilling notes too that the choice Hyacinth must make between political action and the "fruits of the creative spirit of Europe" was also important to James, for in the James family, Henry James, Sr., Alice James, and William James, all favored the active life and looked down on the artist; Henry alone chose art over action. In *The Princess Casamassima*, Paul Muniment and the Princess stand for William and Alice, while Hyacinth represents the type of the artist. And it is significant that, in the end, it is Hyacinth who is entrusted by the "secret powers" of the revolutionary movement, while Muniment and the Princess are slighted, even though they fancy themselves in the center of things (pp. 75-80). Trilling, then, sees *The Princess Casamassima* as a mild act of revenge on Henry James's family for having made him feel foolish in his choice
of a way of life. Thus, before Geismar, Trilling discovered in this novel the theme of the orphan prince, later used by Geismar as a weapon against James; but in the manner of the Neo-Freudians he treats the theme as a means through which the author was able to work out his personal conflicts, and in the manner of the Jungians, as an example of James's great ability as an artist.

In the same tradition, but less complimentary, Irving Howe, calls Hyacinth Robinson "a projection of James's vulnerability," a snob who expects something from life, but who waits passively and wistfully for it. He is the "trapped spectator," the "poor sensitive gentleman," the "fine intelligence which quails before the betrayals and vulgarity of the world," which thrives on renunciation.  

Albert Mordell says that James's sensitivity to unpopularity influenced his literary criticism as well as his fiction. According to Mordell, literary critics often unconsciously choose for subjects people with whom they have some intellectual, psychological, and moral affinity, and they may project some of their own values onto their favorite authors. This is what James did. He praised authors, like Turgenev, who used the same methods as his own, and then attributed his own mental processes, ideas, theories to the writers he praised. For instance, he "found support for his

own intelligence by projecting himself upon Sainte-Beuve and unconsciously ascribing his own ideas to him, thus really unknowingly, nay naively, confirming himself in his own views." Mordell thus seems to imply that for projection to occur there must be initially some similarity between the critic and his subject. However, in dealing with specific critical works by James, he fails to say how much James's method and theory really are like those of the writers he admired, to what extent he projected and to what extent he was objective.

Mordell is an extreme example of the type of critic who thinks that he can reconstruct the personality and even the life of an author by making a superficial psychoanalysis of the works, without bothering himself to explore the available biographical information. In an analysis of "Madame de Mauves," which, he says, reveals a "hidden chapter" in the author's life, Mordell makes wild leaps from James's work to James's life and insists on confusing the writer with Longmore, the hero of the story. He says that Longmore's rebellion against the principle of asceticism in his personality, which has caused him to renounce his love for Madame de Mauves, reflects James's own feeling that he had remained virtuous out of fear and weakness. Quoting Longmore's thoughts, Mordell implies that they are also James's:

Longmore wonders, "Was a man to sit and deliberately condemn his future to be the blank memory of a regret, rather than the long reverberation of a joy? Sacrifice? The word was a trap for minds muddled by fear, an ignoble refuge of weakness." Mordell fails to present any evidence at all from James's life to justify associating him with Longmore, although, no doubt, such evidence does exist.

But Mordell makes other assumptions for which no evidence can ever be found. Summarizing the dream in which Longmore tries to reach Madame de Mauves but is prevented by some unspecified trickery of her husband, Mordell says, "It does not take a profound knowledge of Freud's theory of dreams to tie up this dream . . . with some possible event in the author's life that he wanted unconsciously to forget" (p. 409). It takes a more profound knowledge of Freud than Mordell's not to make this tie-up. A psychoanalyst might say that the dream, because of its vividness and because of its vague similarity to certain aspects of James's life, is an interesting and possibly a valuable clue to the personality of the author as well as to that of the character. He certainly would not assume, on no more evidence than this, that it was James's dream. And even if it were James's dream, a psychoanalyst would have to know the facts of James's life even to begin to interpret it. He certainly

According to Mordell, the dream hints that James may once "have been in love with an unattainable woman and in his unconscious, faced temptation." The dream was "a fulfilment of a wish to have that woman" (p. 409); the anxiety in the dream arose from the inability to attain her. Again Mordell's psychoanalysis is faulty. According to Freud, the anxiety in dreams arises from guilt feelings, the same guilt that caused the repression, not from a feeling of failure. Mordell's irresponsible use of psychoanalytic concepts, his sweeping generalizations about Henry James, unsupported by any evidence from the author's life and works, often gives the impression that he has just read about Freud, has learned some of the basic concepts, and applies them indiscriminately but enthusiastically wherever he finds an opportunity. He certainly does not follow the careful method of detailed analysis of a work in relation to the author's life and to his whole body of writing that more serious psychoanalytic critics insist upon. Consequently, his analysis is incomplete. A curious reader would want to know and a psychoanalyst would certainly try to find out who the woman was and why she was forbidden, why James repressed this experience, and how the experience fits in with his early family relationships.

The Spoils of Poynton and The Portrait of a Lady are often discussed together because they are both about the
same subject—a woman who rejects love because of adherence to rigid moral standards. Several critics feel that James intended Isabel Archer and Fleda Vetch to be admired, that he admired them himself, and conclude that there is something seriously wrong with him. Patrick F. Quinn and Stephen Reid, writing on The Spoils of Poynton agree that James's own outlook on life was as "unbalanced" as that of Fleda Vetch, that through Fleda, James was unconsciously describing himself.

Stephen Reid notes an ambiguity in James's moral intentions in The Spoils of Poynton and The Portrait of a Lady, and repeats Yvor Winter's complaint that some of James's characters, like Isabel Archer and Fleda Vetch, adhere so violently and passionately to rather trivial and foolish ideals, that the reader is compelled to assume that something is wrong with them. Actually, he says, they adopt a severe moral code to rationalize their "fear of the phallic man." Both Isabel and Fleda are obsessively concerned with the value of the spoken vow—a concern which, Reid says, might derive from a childhood fear of desertion by parents. A child, finding that the spoken pledge of love gives security, might transform his need for love and protection into an obsession with the spoken pledge. Reid further speculates that James himself was disturbed by the memory of broken promises, and that these stories reveal his own fear of loss of love, his own anxiety about sexual assault and
Reid does not, however, substantiate his speculations with any proof from James's life. And there is no justification, even in psychoanalytic theory, for speculating about the possible sources of neurotic obsessions in the hypothetical childhoods of fictional characters and for then applying these speculations to an analysis of the author. Like Mordell, Reid has allowed his enthusiasm for psychoanalysis to carry him beyond the limits of reason.

Another critic, Patrick F. Quinn, says that Fleda Vetch is "a study in the psychology of ethical absolutism." He agrees with Edel that in this story James unconsciously developed a picture of possessive and domineering women—Fleda Vetch and Mrs. Gereth. Fleda likes Owen because he can be imposed upon and molded. However, when Owen reveals his love, Fleda responds with hysteria and a need to escape, for "her zeal for perfection in herself and in Owen was only her way of possessing him and of keeping life at a safe distance from herself." Quinn speculates that "the outlook of Henry James was similarly unbalanced," for his comments in the preface show his sympathies are with Fleda. Nevertheless, the result is "a brilliant analysis of the destructive energies that may be brought into play when unconscious motives and needs are served by a stern devotion


to high ideals" (pp. 575-576). It is interesting that the comments of both Reid and Quinn on Fleda and Isabel are very much like those by other critics on the governess in "The Turn of the Screw"--as though all three heroines were the same woman placed in different situations.

James's Stories Written after Guy Domville

Many critics have noted that the failure of James's play, Guy Domville, marked a turning point in his life and brought about a personality change that is reflected in certain of his stories, like What Maisie Knew, The Other House, and "The Turn of the Screw." They take these stories --about innocent children crushed by the thoughtless cruelty of the adults around them--as evidence of James's personal despair, his sense of having been outcast and rejected by his family, his country, and worst of all, his reading public. Essays by Mark Kanzer, on "The Figure in the Carpet," Harris W. Wilson on What Maisie Knew, Henry Silverstein on "The Great Good Place" (1900), Stephen Reid and Robert Rogers on "The Beast in the Jungle," support and provide evidence for the theory of Geismar, Edel, and Wilson, that during this period James regressed emotionally to relive his childhood in his writings.

The criticism of Mark Kanzer M.D., a Freudian, is a good example of the projection by the critic of his personal views onto his subject, of which Mordell accused Henry James. According to Kanzer, in an essay entitled "Autobiographical
Aspects of the Writer's Imagery, each artist is impelled to write in a certain way and thus his repetitive patterns of imagery, which reveal this impulse, are "of potential value as a projective test of his personality, creative processes, and life history." This, Kanzer asserts in a later article, was fully realized by James, who referred to his own pattern as the "figure" in his work.

In "The Figure in the Carpet," Kanzer believes, Hugh Vereker's "figure" agrees with the psychoanalytic idea that in his themes, metaphors, language and phraseology, a writer "explores and works through variations of a single theme which attracts him and is rooted in an infantile fixation that he seeks to master repetitively in his phantasies" (p. 339). One might object that his is probably not what Vereker, or James, meant. Vereker talks of his "figure" as something completely conscious, and surely James was not saying that the whole basis of his writing was a conscious reworking of his childish sexual fantasies. He would not have accepted this as a theme sufficiently noble, elevated, or fine to warrant the devotion of a lifetime.

Kanzer finds the meaning of Vereker's famous "figure" set forth in the chain of events in the story: George Corvick, who discovers Vereker's secret, reveals it to his

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10. "The Figure in the Carpet," The American Imago, XVII (Winter, 1960), 340-341. The page numbers in my text refer to this article.
bride, Gwendolyn Erne, shortly after their marriage. He dies. Gwendolyn remarries, and then dies herself, without having revealed the secret to her second husband. Thus, Kanzer says, the "figure" represents secret sexual knowledge which is punished by death. The narrator fears marriage—"Ah, that way madness lay!"—so he never learns the secret. He concludes that the story depicts "the child's traditional search for sexual information and the guilty repression of knowledge that he has actually attained" (pp. 343-344).

Kanzer is another critic who has no qualms about jumping from James's fictional characters to James himself. Vereker, he says, is the father; the other characters who pursue the secret with the narrator may represent William and Alice James. He notes that James, too, never married, never learned the secret: "Rather it was the passionate development and investment of habits of indirect observation and inference which he developed into an art that drew off his libidinal energies." The period in which this story was written, after the collapse of his theatrical hopes, was a period of frustration and failure for James. His work was no longer popular, "and his response was to increase his recourse to sublimation," to produce more and more. A desire for "more direct libidinal gratifications" is expressed in "The Figure in the Carpet" and "The Middle Years." In these

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11Kanzer, pp. 342-343. See The Novels and Tales, XV, 265.
stories, as well as in "The Next Time" and "The Death of the Lion," suicidal fantasies appear. According to Kanzer, "There is little doubt that . . . in bringing his readers to life and dying exhibitionistically before them, erotic satisfactions were made available." These satisfactions derive from a "negative oedipus [sic] complex" which was revived in this period of discouragement (pp. 344-345).

Kanzer, like Geismar, writes the kind of criticism that may offend the ordinary reader by seeming to belittle James's achievement. Actually, Kanzer shows a great deal of respect for his subject and probably has no intention of "reducing" James, but, like Rosenzweig, may seem to do so because he takes no account of the author's conscious thought processes.

According to Harris W. Wilson, the stories written by Henry James just after the failure of Guy Domville "defy assured and certain interpretation," for there is "too much to be discerned" in them, too many overtones, symbols, and "disturbing implications." For example, What Maisie Knew is another story on the theme of "the violation of innocence" treated by James in "The Author of Beltraffio," "The Pupil," "The Turn of the Screw," and The Awkward Age. H. W. Wilson disputes the theory that Maisie remains innocent, and notes the Freudian implications of the fact that Maisie promises

12"What Did Maisie Know?" College English, XVII (February, 1956), 279.
to wait for Sir Claude by the "gold Virgin." What she knows at the end is that she wants Sir Claude for herself; his weakness is sexual promiscuity, so she offers herself to him (pp. 281-282). Peter Coveney agrees that because in What Maisie Knew, as in "The Turn of the Screw," the adults "operate in a psychological void," because no explanation is given for their behavior, the plot seems "something of a compulsive fantasy in James himself."\textsuperscript{13}

Henry Silverstein finds such a compulsive fantasy--a sexual one--in "The Great Good Place." Leslie Fiedler found in this story a typical American myth of a womanless paradise; Silverstein takes it as an expression of the author's personal desires, for the hero, George Dane, has banished eros from the realm of his dreams. But, says Silverstein, "the door of man's sexual life cannot be shut tight for any ostensible or real motive without exacting a toll, heavy or light, from his psychic life as a whole." Thus certain images in the dream show "traces of psychological regression associated with erotic restriction"; Silverstein quotes:

\begin{itemize}
  \item (1) They sat there as innocently as small boys confiding to each other the names of toy animals.
  \item (2) The intelligence with which the Brother listened kept them as children feeding from the same bowl.
  \item (3) The good Brother sighed contentedly . . . "It's a sort of kindergarten!" "The next thing you'll be saying that we're babes at the breast!"
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{13} Poor Monkey, p. 164.
"Of some great mild invisible mother who stretches away into space and whose lap's the whole valley--?"

"And her bosom"--Dane completed the figure--"the noble eminence of our hill?"14

These same images of regression, appearing as well in "The Beast in the Jungle," "The Jolly Corner," and "Crapy Cornelia" (1910), may be connected, says Silverstein, with the fact that a few years earlier, in 1896, James had retreated from London society to Lamb House at Rye.15

Two of these stories written after 1900, "The Beast in the Jungle," and "The Jolly Corner"--tales of lonely, anxious men who regret having missed out on life--are often taken by critics as personal confessions of the author. Edmund Wilson, Saul Rosenzweig, Clifton Fadiman, F. W. Dupee, and Maxwell Geismar say the stories resulted from the sense of defeat, of having cheated himself of significant experience, which oppressed James during his middle period.

Stephen Reid compares James's "The Beast in the Jungle" and James Joyce's "A Painful Case," both of which are about the popular twentieth-century theme of the inability to love, of the isolation and frustration of the individual, and, specifically, of a man's rejection of love offered him and his realization too late of what has been lost. In each, the hero feels himself alone, avoids sexual

14See The Novels and Tales, XVI, 238, 242, 258.

contact, and rationalizes his refusal to accept love.

Going further, Reid suggests that John Marcher's hallucination about the beast in the jungle is an animal phobia. He quotes the psychoanalyst, Otto Fenichel, to the effect that the phobic person often projects onto a dangerous animal the fear and hostility arising from the Oedipal conflict with his father. Thus the phobic personality is always one who is strongly inhibited, who is anxious at the thought of sexual activity, and who consequently desires to return to childhood, to the external protection provided by seemingly omnipotent adults. For Marcher, the relationship with May Bartram provides such protection, without the threat of sexual involvement. Although Reid insists that the precision and clarity of presentation indicate a great deal of objective control, he suggests that Marcher's phobia may be partly a naive projection of James's own anxieties, noting that in 1896 James wrote to A. C. Benson: "But I have the imagination of disaster—and see life as ferocious and sinister" (pp. 235-236).

Robert Rogers interprets "The Beast in the Jungle" and "The Jolly Corner" very much like Reid, but with more detailed symbolic analysis. He intends, he says, to illustrate the conclusions of Rosenzweig and Edel by highlighting the neurotic pattern woven into the fabric of James's art.

16"The Beast in the Jungle and A Painful Case: Two Different Sufferings," The American Imago, XX (Fall, 1963), 221-224, 228-229.
Both stories reflect James's sense of despair at not having lived the full life. The hero in "The Jolly Corner" is filled with an inexplicable sense of dread which can be completely accounted for only if we regard the story as a dream in which the affects of the dream thoughts derive from a deep personal problem which the dreamer has avoided representing directly.  

Rogers follows the practice of accepting fixed symbolic interpretations, usually sexual, for various elements in the story. Brydon's return to the home of his childhood Rogers identifies as "a return to the womb in phantasy." The skyscraper which is being built on another property of Brydon's is "obviously a phallic symbol" (p. 436). As proof, Rogers quotes from "The Jolly Corner" with his own comments inserted in brackets:

Brydon

... loafed about his "work" undeterred, secretly agitated; not in the least "minding" that the whole proposition, as they said, was vulgar and sordid [i.e., sex is sordid--there is nothing sordid about building skyscrapers], and ready to climb ladders [coitus], to walk the plank [coitus], to handle materials and look wise about them, to ask questions [childish curiosity about sexual matters], in fine, and challenge explanations [early ones from parents to child about sex] and really "go into" figures [coitus] (p. 437).

Rogers' entire analysis is in the same vein: Brydon's wanderings in the house represent sexual activity. Doors

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are feminine symbols; Brydon fears doors; he has a key to the door of the house. Marcher's frequent refusal to open important letters shows, says Rogers, that he (and his creator) has never had sexual relations.

To make his analysis, Rogers tells us, he looks for clusters of imagery and special words that recur. He notes, for example, that the word "erect" occurs often in James's works, often in a sexual context. Brydon's alter ego, the ghost, stands "erect" in a niche. In "The Turn of the Screw" Peter Quint appears "erect." This is Roger's idea of a sexual context. How else could Peter Quint have appeared? And if he had been sitting or lying down, would that not have been even more significant?

Rogers identifies the beast metaphor which appears again and again in James's work as an Id figure "associated with sexual activity" and with the elder James's "vastation": "This hideous beast which crouches in a jungle suggests the male penis, crouching—ready to spring—in a dark jungle of pubic hair" (p. 445). He repeats the observation made by earlier critics that "no important marriage in James's works is both consummated and good" and that "James' writing is full of mother surrogates," like May Bartram and Alice Staverton, who protect the helpless "child" from life (p. 432). On the basis of this analysis, Rogers concludes: "Throughout his life James was haunted by the beast because in the Oedipus situation he identified himself with his father in an unsatisfactory way, became helplessly fixated
on his mother in such a manner as to inhibit normal sexual activity, and thus had to face the beast figure of an unsatisfied sexual drive the tremendous energy of which was channeled into possessing his mother in the phantasy of his writing since he could not possess her in reality."

In addition, he used his writing "to repeat repressed material which is painful to him." In "The Turn of the Screw," for example, "Miles and Flora represent James exposed as a child to sex and evil." Peter Quint and Miss Jessel are "beast figures." Instead of regression at the end, "Miles (the projected guilt figure) is killed in expiation of his guilt . . ." (pp. 451, 452-453). Rogers is among those critics who use psychoanalysis to support the traditional view that the children are evil.

Rogers' psychoanalysis of James is of the type that Edel calls "offensive" to readers. He uses psychoanalytic jargon, and he reduces the author to a kind of neurotic and his works to mere personal sexual fantasies. But it is he who has made all the sexual associations to this story, not James. And to many it may seem that it takes a certain kind of imagination to make them at all.

It can be said in defense of Rogers that he is frankly writing a psychoanalytic essay, not a work of literary criticism, that his essay is published in a psychoanalytic journal, and is therefore, presumably, written for psychoanalysts, not for the general public. A Freudian analyst is going to be concerned primarily with unconscious sexual
motivation, for that is his subject matter. And, as a conse­quence, he will naturally ignore other aspects of behavior. But it is unfortunate when he gives the impression that he believes there are no other aspects.

Furthermore, one can question the validity of Rogers' approach in terms of scientific procedure and in terms of providing valid information about the story or its author. In the first place, his interpretation adds little to the story, for the idea of Brydon's returning "home" to face the ghost of his more "masculine" self is evident in the tale. And the connection of the ghost with James's father is not evident anywhere, as Rogers inadvertently demonstrates in his efforts to prove it. To make such a connection, an analyst must provide some proof in the patient's or artist's own associations, in his own words, perhaps expressed in free associations on the analyst's couch or in autobiographical writings. But Rogers has not done this. It hardly seems valid, considering Freud's insistence on having the dreamer's associations to his dream (which Rogers notes on p. 443), to draw conclusions about James from a few of his stories.

Critics like Rogers and Kanzer, who take an orthodox Freudian approach, though they may know Wilson's theory, are not necessarily influenced by it in their criticism of James's works. They are more likely to be influenced by the theories of Rosenzweig and by the biographical information provided by F. W. Dupee and Leon Edel. The type of criticism they do on James's works, however, is typical of many of the psycho-
analytic articles found in journals like *The American Imago* and *Literature and Psychology*.

**The Later Novels**

The major novels of James's later period—*The Sacred Fount, The Wings of the Dove, The Ambassadors, and The Golden Bowl*—are often, we have seen, mentioned together in connection with the view of James as a neurotic, as products of some alteration which took place in James's inner life, a change which resulted from the failure of his play. Van Wyck Brooks notes that the style in the late novels—obscure, evasive, cautious, hesitant—reflects James's disappointment with himself and his fear of failure. Edmund Wilson agrees with Brooks, at least on this point, that the male characters in James's later stories and novels represent James himself, in their coldness, timidity, and prudery, and that the late style, the increasingly dreamy "psychological atmosphere" in his stories, was James's method of covering over his inability to face his own problems, to confront his emotions directly. In 1960, Leslie Fiedler said that the characters in the later novels, the innocents oppressed by evil, reflect James himself. 18

These later novels, however, have received no really comprehensive and detailed Freudian analyses, although they are often mentioned in psychoanalytic studies of James's

18 See above, Brooks, II, 51-52; Wilson, II, 74-75; and Fiedler, III, 134.
Critical essays and reviews on James's later novels tend to be either general or to focus on small points of characterization or imagery. Few critics have discussed the "psychological atmosphere," the perverse "données," or the rich symbolism in these novels. As a result, there have been no detailed analyses directed toward clarifying these elements or relating them to James's life or his intentions as an artist. No psychoanalytic critic has attempted the difficult task of analyzing, for example, *The Golden Bowl* in terms of the central and obvious Freudian symbol mentioned in the title.

The reason for this neglect is likely the same reason that many readers avoid these later novels: they are too complex, too long, too vague, too suggestive, and too difficult for the type of close analysis directed toward *The Turn of the Screw.* The failure of critics in regard to these later novels is disappointing, however, because these are the very works by James for which readers would appreciate an explanation, for in large parts of them, especially *The Sacred Fount* and *The Golden Bowl,* it is difficult to understand even what is going on. Freudian critics of James would have been more useful and perhaps more happily received if they had applied themselves to explicating these works rather than to repeating what had, in effect, already been said about *The Turn of the Screw.*

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19 See Wilson, above, II, 74-75; and Warren, below, V. 234.
Each of the three essays devoted exclusively to one or several of the later novels—by Austin Warren, Jean Kimball, and Sister M. Corona Sharp—deals with only one aspect of the novels. Austin Warren, for instance, writing under the influence of psychoanalytic theory, provides an explanation for the difficulties of James's later style slightly different from that of Wilson's. He says that it was the result of a switch by James from writing to dictating. This process of dictation, begun by James with *The Spoils of Poynton*, had psychological origins and consequences: "A timid, slow-speaking, stammering boy, Henry had rarely been able to make himself heard at the parental breakfast, at which the other males talked so opulently. Dictation offered dictatorship: his own voice, uninterrupted by those of more rapid speakers, enabled him to have his oral say in a style which is nearer to his father's than to William's..." 

In showing that by dictating his later novels, James not only saved time and effort, but satisfied his oral needs and asserted himself in a way he had never been able to at home, Austin Warren supports the theory that in later years James had a kind of revival of spirits, a new period of self-confidence.

Leslie Fiedler identifies the innocent heroine of *The Wings of the Dove* with James himself and with Minny Temple.

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(see above, III, 133). Perhaps he got his clue from an article by Jean Kimball, who says that Milly Theale was "a powerful symbol" to James because he associated her death with his "obscure hurt," and because her death intensified his own fear of dying. By thus identifying Milly Theale with both Minny Temple and Henry James himself, she places herself in the psychoanalytic tradition of Jamesian criticism.

Most of the Freudian critics of The Golden Bowl have focused their attention on the peculiar relationship between Maggie Verver and her father, Adam Verver. Stephen Spender, for instance, noting the peculiar conflict of marriages, concludes that in this story James expressed his final acceptance of physical love (see above, II, 80). Austin Warren says the story is an unconscious picture of an incestuous love situation: "There are données of The Bowl which are perverse and scarcely to be accepted. Since James can't really bring himself to realize a union at once sexual and 'good,' the loves of the book are the passion of Charlotte for the Prince and of Maggie for her father."

Sister M. Corona Sharp makes Edel's biography the basis for an article on the fathers in James's novels as reflections of the author's personal attitudes. She accepts

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22 Kenyon Review, V, 565.
Edel's conclusion that the elder James was often a subject of scorn in his family. In his pictures of the relationships between fathers and daughters—in *Washington Square*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, *What Maisie Knew*, *The Other House*, and *The Golden Bowl*—James scorns the father as a result of "his disesteem for the male sex, to which he accords in his fiction little success in life and no heroism whatever." Adam Verver "figures in positions that are subtly degrading," and his success as a father corresponds to his failure as a husband. James seems to question the wisdom of such paternal love which stunts Maggie's maturity, and nearly ruins her marriage. His is a love, Sharp says, "that skirts the unmentionable" (pp. 288-289).

Dr. Sloper in *Washington Square* and Adam Verver, says Sharp, "exemplify the trend in James's writing: progressively to turn inward, and to make the drama of consciousness become the essence of his work. Penetrating ever further into human consciousness, James came face to face with the bare essentials of humanity, the types and figures of which lie embedded in the human psyche. There he encountered the type of the ogre, who devours his child, and the type of the father-lover, who in his daughter renews the romance of his own youth" (p. 291). In regarding James as a kind of intuitive psychologist, who by a natural process of develop-

ment turned into himself to discover some of the basic sources of human motivation and some of the essential human "types," Sharp resembles the Jungian critics, whom we will discuss shortly.

Before dealing with the Jungian critics of James, it is necessary to mention a problem which often comes up in connection with the psychoanalysis of the stories and characters of James by both Freudians and Jungians—that is, the question of James's intentions. Many who analyze James's stories fail completely to account for his purpose in writing them or to indicate the extent to which he was conscious of what he had actually achieved. How much, for example, did he actually understand about the relationships he portrayed between characters like Maggie and her father? How much did he mean to indicate by his suggestive symbolism? Was he really a psychologist or simply a naïve but perceptive student of human nature? Or did he only seem to be perceptive because he was writing about himself and accidentally hit upon some ideas of interest to psychologists?

In an investigation of the many sexual images that appear in James's works, Robert L. Gale takes the position that James was simply very naïve and therefore unconscious of the sexual significance of what he was saying (a possibility which might be applied to his emotional letters to Hendrik Christian Anderson). Gale lists over thirty of

24See above, Swan, III, 104-105; and Edel, III, 128-129.
these symbols. He notices that male symbols are rare, although there are a dozen or more in *Portrait of a Lady*, usually connected with keys and bolts. For instance, after Gilbert Osmond meets Isabel Archer, he says, "I'm perfectly aware that I myself am as rusty as a key that has no lock to fit it." In *Watch and Ward* (1878), Nora Lambert regards her cousin Fenton "with something of the thrilled attention which one bestows on the naked arrow, poised across the bow." The most numerous of the sexual images, according to Gale, are the female symbols, a point which lends support to those like Neider who feel that James was essentially feminine in his thinking. They are mostly of doors, gates, windows, buildings, and books. For example, Paul Overt in "The Lesson of the Master" is shocked to learn that his ex-girlfriend is married: "He had renounced her, yes; but that was another affair—that was a closed but not a locked door." Merton Densher, in *The Wings of the Dove*, compares Kate Croy to "an uncut volume of the highest, the rarest quality."

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27 Gale, p. 185. See *The Novels and Tales*, XV, 88.

28 Gale, p. 186. See *The Novels and Tales*, XX (1909), 222.
The awkwardness of a number of these unconscious sexual images forces Gale to conclude that James was very naïve. For example, in "The Velvet Glove" (1910), John Berridge describes his initial elation in the presence of Amy Evans: "It was as if she had lifted him first in her beautiful arms, had raised him up high, high, high, ... pressing him to her immortal young breast while he let himself go. . . ." At one point in "Crapy Cornelia," White Mason is described in this way: "He had hesitated like an ass erect on absurd hind legs between two bundles of hay. . . ." Because more than two-thirds of these images appear in the works written before the middle of James's career, about 1890, Gale speculates that as he grew older, James became less naïve and so avoided such figures.

Gale does not impose fixed symbolic interpretations on the images, but attributes a symbolic sexual meaning to an image only when that meaning is indicated in the context in which the image appears, nor does he use these images as a basis for describing James's sex life. The only point he insists on is that James, consciously or unconsciously, used sexual imagery to reinforce and illustrate the sexual overtones of certain situations between characters. By thus limiting his conclusions, Gale avoids making any unfounded generalizations about his subject. However, his belief in

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29 Gale, pp. 187-188. See The Novels and Stories, XXVIII (1923), 233, 337.
James's basic naïveté provides support for those who choose to regard the works as unconscious revelations of the author's personality.

With many critics it is difficult to determine whether they regard James as psychologist or patient. Trilling and Sharp do not mention the problem directly, but seem to accept him as both. In dealing with the Jungian interpretations, however, and with many Freudian and Neo-Freudian analyses (such as many reviewed in Chapters IV and VI), we find many critics who treat the characters in the novels as though they were real people, analyzing their personalities, speculating on their motives, reconstructing their childhood traumas, without acknowledging that their existence depends on the author who created them. The situation can be particularly ridiculous in the case of psychological critics because their very subject matter is ultimately, not the structure, the language, the form of a work, but its psychological implications for both the writer and the reader. But however silly it may seem for a critic to make a long detailed psychological analysis in order to prove some point about the personality of a character who does not really exist anyway, his doing so is doubtless an indirect compliment to the author's ability to depict human beings realistically. The Jungians, in fact, follow the method of analyzing characters and imagery without reference to the author for just this reason—to demonstrate the essential "truth" of the artist's vision.
So far in this investigation of the psychoanalytic criticism of Henry James, we have come across only four critics whose comments reflect the influence of Jungian psychology—William Troy, Leslie Fiedler, Lionel Trilling, and to some slight degree, Sister M. Corona Sharp. Trilling's discovery of the theme of the birth of the hero in *The Princess Casamassima* is the only mythological interpretation of one of the early works. And Trilling's essay, like Wolf's, is actually as much Freudian as Jungian in that he relates the mythological theme to James's early family relationships.

A really significant development in the psychoanalytic criticism of James in the 1950's and 1960's is the publication of a number of Jungian analyses of several stories written by James after 1894—"The Altar of the Dead," *What Maisie Knew*, "The Great Good Place," "The Beast in the Jungle," "The Jolly Corner," "Crapy Cornelia," and *The Ambassadors*. In the last five of these, written by James after 1900, critics have discovered a "rebirth" theme. A few of these stories have been analyzed almost exclusively by the Jungians. And these are the only stories by James to receive any really detailed mythological analyses by Jungian critics, perhaps because Jungian analysis explains them so

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30 See above, Troy, III, 93; Fiedler, III, 131-135; Trilling, V, 212-214; and Sharp, V, 234-236.
much more satisfactorily than any other approach. Mary Ellen Herx says that James's images in "The Great Good Place" "cry out at once for a primordial myth to explain them." Strangely enough, there are no Jungian or anthropological analyses of "The Turn of the Screw," perhaps because Jungian psychology does not apply so obviously to this story as it does to some others, does not account so thoroughly for every detail as does Freudian or Neo-Freudian analysis. A particular literary work may be better explained by one theory than by another. "The Turn of the Screw" is best explained by Freudian theories of sex repression or the Neo-Freudian concept of the authoritarian personality. "The Great Good Place" is particularly suited to Jungian archetypal analysis. Each work receives the treatment it seems to demand.

These Jungian critics do not comment on James's personal life or on his intentions in his art—as Jung would have it, they explain the art, not the artist. But because their analyses are applied almost exclusively to the works of this period of James's life and because their conclusions accord with those of other critics about changes in the author's personality during this period, I have placed them in Chapter V, along with studies of James as a psychological case. The very fact that this group of tales has attracted

31 "The Monomyth in 'The Great Good Place,'" College English, XXIV (March, 1963), 442.
the notice of Jungians supports the belief of some Freudian critics, like Edmund Wilson, Alfred Ferguson, Leon Edel, and Sister M. Corona Sharp, that after the failure of his play, James withdrew into himself and wrote almost exclusively about the workings of his own mind. Perhaps a Jungian would put it this way: that many of James's stories, especially those written early in his career, are simply "psychological," realistic studies drawn from the observation of conscious human experience—but that, during the despair of this one period, his art lost its predominately "psychological" character and became almost exclusively "visionary" in that the content is drawn from the Racial Memory, from the timeless depths of man's mind. Thus it is of interest to the Jungians as the symbolic representation of recurring patterns of experience which link modern man with the eternal sources of all life.

The mythological pattern discovered by these Jungian critics, a pattern which may have some personal psychological significance as well, is the archetypal theme of death and rebirth. Analyzing "The Great Good Place," Joseph M. De Falco finds that in it James "uses a dream sequence . . . to project the protagonist into a journey through the unconscious . . . the deep recesses of the psyche, where the ego, overwhelmed by the pressures of the conscious world, is

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32 See above, Wilson, II, 74-75; and IV, 162-164; Ferguson, III, 113; Edel, III, 127, 129-130; and Sharp, V, 234-236.
healed by the tender care of the Great Mother archetype and emerges reborn." The story is a representation of the eternal life-death-rebirth pattern. When George Dane first arrives at the Great Good Place in his dream, he bathes in a still, warm bath—a symbolic womb from which he is born into the cloister, to be nourished by the "Great Mother."

"Thus," says De Falco, "James seems to suggest, each man must make his own ritualistic journey through his own psyche, where he becomes the celebrant and communicant himself, at the breast of the archetypal Great Mother" (p. 20).

Like De Falco, Mary Ellen Herx searches for the "spiritual truth," the "naked myth," that underlies the "archetypal adventure" of George Dane. The story is completely authentic, she says, in terms of dream psychology and as the expression of a typical and primordial mystical experience of a hero's departure from the material world, his initiation into the realm of his spirit, and his return, revitalized, to his everyday existence. Dane hears the call to adventure in his growing dissatisfaction with the material world. A young man, a "helper," appears, "the agent (crone or godmother or hermit or ferryman in myth)" by whose assistance he will cross into the spiritual world of "age-old dreams," where he must lose the traces of his former self (pp. 440-441). In the Great Good Place, Dane transcends the .

limitations of the natural world: "In a mystical marriage with the universal mother-source of all life, the hero enjoys a spiritual nourishment and a divine peace so deep as to be akin to his unconscious memory of the maternal breast and the enfolded arms of his childhood, and even of the still contentment of his prenatal existence." When Dane is ready to return, he wakes up, or in mythical terms, is reborn, with the aid of another "helper," his servant Brown. He has "penetrated the depths of his own soul" and is ready to face life again (pp. 442, 443).

Neither De Falco or Herx comment on the writer himself, except to note his skill in using typical dream images to suggest an archetypal pattern. They do not say whether James does so consciously or unconsciously, but their interpretation accounts for every detail of the story so well as to suggest that James had remarkable perception of the unconscious processes as described by C. G. Jung.

Another critic, Edwin Honig gives a mythological interpretation to "The Jolly Corner," "The Beast in the Jungle," and "The Altar of the Dead." He claims only to be following Frazer, not Jung, but mythological interpretation is typical of Jungian criticism, and is often difficult to distinguish from purely anthropological criticism. For example, Honig finds the same death and rebirth theme that De Falco and Herx, both Jungians, found in "The Great Good Place."

Honig shows that these three stories follow Frazer's
discussion of the Dionysus myth of regeneration. In the early cults of Dionysus, a symbol of the god's former self was sacrificed to the god, paralleling the myth in which Dionysus took the disguise of an animal and was torn to pieces by the deities. He became a "regenerative symbol," a symbol of life, death, and rebirth. Honig notes that "in each story there is . . . the desire of the central character to realize total selfhood by discovering or rediscovering the value of the self in some other than its present form." In each, a man, obsessed by some relic of his past, is led by the "woman-agent . . . to reconstruct the image of a lost or potential part of the self into a supra-personal ideal" (p. 95). In "The Jolly Corner" Spencer Brydon, becoming disturbed about his past, returns to the scene of his childhood to encounter the ghost of what he might have been, of his rejected self, of "the vulgar world" in him. Alice Staverton serves as the mother-figure, who encourages Brydon on his "search through the dark womb of the past." With her help, he sacrifices "the animal, the beastly self" so that the human self might flourish (pp. 86-87).

Honig's aim is to demonstrate that James, concerned primarily with the universal consequences of art, writes "a type of moral drama as rich in implications as anything out of Shakespeare or Greek tragedy," for James's ritualization

of the ideal of men facing their deeper selves, "through the striking means he uses to dramatize it, invests with new relevance the culture myths of man's beginnings and the discarded fables of childhood" (p. 96). Unfortunately, Honig's interpretation, though interesting and suggestive, is confused and difficult to read, mainly because he is unable to draw many explicit parallels between the stories and the myth of Dionysus; the stories reflect something of the general idea but not the whole context of the myth or the ritual connected with it.

John W. Shroeder, in "The Mothers of Henry James," avoids this problem by looking for a "recurrent symbolic pattern" in four stories by James, without trying to compare them to any specific myth. Shroeder notes that in "The Beast in the Jungle," "The Jolly Corner," and "Crapy Cornelia," there is a male character who carries a burden of some kind. In each, there is a woman who has known the man in the past, has disappeared for several years, and has returned to receive his burden. Although he loves her, there is never any serious suggestion of marriage. 35

Although "The Great Good Place" does not contain all these elements, it provides the key to the others as tales of quest, return, and rebirth, in which the woman is a mother figure. For in it, George Dane, exhausted by the

burden of life, retreats symbolically to the maternal depths and is reborn without his burden. Shroeder wisely prefers not to push this parallel too far, simply suggesting that these stories provide examples of "the archetypal mother-quest as an integrative symbolic element in the work of Henry James" (p. 431). He believes that James included this symbolic element in "The Great Good Place," at least, with full awareness of what he was doing: "The various details—the loss of identity, the presence of 'Brothers' only, the gradual dawn of sense, the imagery of submersion, the image of the 'great mild invisible mother,' the images of death and childhood, the arch—are almost too pat to support the assumption that James was betrayed by his subconscious mind" (p. 427). To Shroeder, James is among those early writers who anticipated the modern use of symbolic imagery inspired by the works of Freud and Jung.

The later novels have been neglected by Jungian critics, as well as by the Freidians, although we find brief comments on The Sacred Fount and The Ambassadors. James Reaney refers to the "glorious archetypes" in James's The Sacred Fount. Giorgio Melchiori also notes the deliberate and complex use of symbolism in this novel, which, he says, is necessarily ambiguous because its subject is the impossibility of knowing. James arrived at the symbols

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unconsciously. On one level the story parallels the medieval legend of the quest for the Holy Grail; and on another is linked with the vampire theme, that vitality can be transferred from one person to another. Thus, Melchiori concludes, James's work, embodying the symbolism of ancient ritual, goes far beyond American or French "symbolist" writing and "approaches the visionary and mystic symbolism of William Blake" (p. 313).

Analyzing *The Ambassadors*, Robert A. Durr provides an explanation by archetypal analysis for a difficulty that disturbed Yvor Winters—Strether's unrealistic and unmotivated refusal of Maria Gostrey (see above, II, 83). His interpretation of Strether's adventure in Paris as a "night journey" into the "regions of mystery," following the archetypal pattern of death and rebirth, provides a link between this novel and the short stories previously discussed, which have also been shown to follow such a pattern. According to Durr, the hero, Lambert Strether, seeks "the power of an enlarged consciousness." Waymarsh is a father-figure, an ogre, "tyrant Holdfast," whose restrictive power must be outgrown before the hero can attain full stature. Mrs. Newsome symbolizes the "devouring mother" who


later becomes the "birth-giving" mother in the symbol of Maria Gostrey, whom Strether also outgrows when he takes his man's role and gives up his "regressive wish." To succeed in his quest, Strether must achieve union with the goddess, represented by Madame de Vionnet, but it is too late; he cannot stomach the revelation that will end his innocence (pp. 33-36).

The emotive force of the novel, says Durr, is due to the fact that it follows this mythical pattern, not to the language or the plot. Durr does not comment on James's personal and private interest in this myth, for, he believes, it is the critic's job to reveal the universal form underlying the individual technique. What he wants to do, like Jung, is to show how a great work of literature is based in universal patterns of experience.

More than one critic, then, has discovered in one or more of James's later stories a death and rebirth theme associated with the presence of a "symbolic mother," and has implied that perhaps James hit upon this mythological theme because it was a pattern of human experience to which he was particularly sensitive. The discovery of the rebirth theme by the Jungians supports the belief held by a few critics\(^\text{39}\) that James recovered from his depression after the failure of his play, that he considered it simply a temporary

\(^{39}\)See, e.g., above, Wilson, II, 75; Troy, III, 92; Lind, III, 112-113; and Edel, III, 129-130.
setback, perhaps similar to his father's period of nervous depression. It was a "night journey," a preparation for a new beginning, in which he determined to write, not to please others, but for himself and from himself.

The above interpretation finds some support from James himself. After the failure of Guy Domville, he wrote in his Notebooks: "I take up my own old pen again—the pen of all my old unforgettable efforts and sacred struggles. To myself—today—I need say no more. Large and full and high the future still opens. It is now indeed that I may do the work of my life. And I will." And about a month later he wrote: "I have my head, thank God, full of visions. One has never too many—one has never enough. Ah, just to let one's self go—at last: to surrender one's self to what through all the long years one has (quite heroically, I think) hoped for and waited for—the mere potential, and relative, increase of quantity in the material act—act of application and production." And according to the Jungian analyses, James embodied in these later stories an eternal and recurring pattern of human existence—the archetypal pattern of death and rebirth—in the symbolic record of his own period of despair and recovery.

It is interesting to note that many of these seemingly

40 Entry of January 23, 1895, The Notebooks of Henry James, p. 179.

41 Entry of February 14, 1895, Notebooks, p. 187.
esoteric analyses of James's works, based on a knowledge of modern psychology or anthropology, are published in general literary journals. We have come across only a few essays from journals devoted to both psychology and literature, like Literature and Psychology and The American Imago, and only one from a publication devoted strictly to psychoanalysis—The International Journal of Psycho-analysis.42 Henry Silverstein writes of sexual repression and "psychological regression" in The New England Quarterly; critics like Herx and Schroeder write of archetypal images, searches for the mother, and rebirth patterns, apparently in the belief that they will be understood by the readers of College English and American Literature,43 who can be assumed to know a great deal about literature but little about psychology as a field of study. This can be done because the principles of Freudian and Jungian psychology have become so much a part of modern thinking that any intelligent and fairly well-read adult must be aware of them. In fact, Parker Tyler, attempting to explain The Sacred Fount as a revelation of James's concern for the "passion" of intelligence, describes this "passion" in terms of "Freud's libido." He says, in effect, in this reverse Freudian analysis, that The Sacred

42See above Kanzer, V, 220-223; Reid, V, 225-226; Rogers, V, 226-231; Gale, V, 236-239; and De Falco, V, 242-243.

43See above, Silverstein, V, 224-225; Herx, V, 241, 243-244; and Shroeder, V, 246.
Fount is a tale of "erotic experience," of love as intelligence. It is a significant illustration of the present-day popularity of Freudian thinking that Tyler feels that only by making such a comparison—of love as intelligence with love as sex—can he convey to the reader the value of the idea of intelligence to James. Apparently, psychoanalytic concepts are still a very influential force in modern thinking and have not yet, by any means, lost so much prestige as to become a matter of purely historical interest among educated men.

CHAPTER VI

OTHER WORKS BY JAMES: JAMES AS PSYCHOLOGIST

In Chapter VI, I discuss those critics who treat the stories and novels by James as though they were case histories recorded by a clever and perceptive psychologist. I have divided this chapter into two major parts. In the first, "James's Case Studies," I deal with those critics who find Freudian or Neo-Freudian themes in the stories but who do not speculate about the author's possible knowledge of modern psychological theory and practice. In this section, I have also included a number of critics who psychoanalyze James's fictional characters without making any reference to the author; for I assume that if they regard the characters as "cases," they must regard their creator as "psychologist," and I assume further that their treatment of the characters as real people is, as with the Jungians, a testimony to James's power to perceive and to portray accurately the subtleties of human nature. The second part of Chapter VI, "Henry James as a Freudian Psychologist," is devoted to those critics who analyze James's works in a deliberate effort to prove the author's interest in and direct knowledge of the principles of modern psychology.
James's Case Studies

Much of the criticism discussed in this chapter, some of which does not obviously follow principles of psychoanalysis, can be attributed to the influence of Wilson's essay on "The Turn of the Screw." First, and most important, Wilson strengthened the concept of James as a psychological novelist by indicating just how realistic, in terms of modern theory, was the depiction of human psychology underlying his works. Second, in pointing up the ambiguity of most of James's stories, his theory provided a new view of their content according to which the apparent meaning is a disguise for another "hidden" meaning, and thus encouraged close and careful analysis of the language and imagery, of the characters, and of the situations. Particularly, it led to a general distrust of the Jamesian narrator or "central intelligence" through whose eyes the action of the story is recorded. Robert L. Gale notes that when Wilson published his essay in 1934, "he provided scholars an intriguing method for approaching much modern fiction." He says, "the temptation to doubt the accuracy of the narrator or the central intelligence of a short story by Henry James is beguiling, fatally so sometimes; but succumbing to the temptress can give pleasure to the reader often and an enriched meaning to many a story."¹

A few critics, however, simply extending this one point of Wilson's theory to James's other works, create the unfortunate impression that they regard James, not so much as a psychological novelist, but as a kind of "trickster," concerned only with puzzling his readers with ambiguities and "hidden meanings." Several critics, for example, demonstrate in great detail that entire stories by James are simply the wild fantasies of the people who tell them, distortions of reality created by these characters in order to substantiate their neurotic delusions or to justify their extraordinarily naïve, almost eager acceptance of the lies told them by others.

One of these critics, William York Tindall, says that in stories like "The Turn of the Screw" and The Sacred Fount, James was writing about deluded narrators, who snoop and interpret in order to corroborate their ingenious obsessions. According to another, Jacob Korg, the narrator of "The Aspern Papers" is so obsessed that he is unable to see that there are no Aspern papers and that he is being made a fool of. Perry D. Westbrook, in a discussion of "The Figure in the Carpet" and "The Middle Years," also emphasizes the willing gullibility of the central character. In "The Middle Years," he says, the doctor only pretends to

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be making great sacrifices for Dencombe, and Dencombe believes because he so desperately wants to. Likewise, in "The Figure in the Carpet," Vereker lies about the "figure" to pacify the reviewer he had previously insulted. There is no such figure.\(^4\)

John A. Clair goes far beyond Wilson (and psychoanalysis) in pushing the idea of the deluded narrator or "center of revelation" in James's novels to the extreme of finding that they are all dupes, suspiciously compliant victims of some clever liar. In "Four Meetings" (1879), for instance, Caroline Spencer lies to the narrator about her first meeting with the "countess." Clair hints at sordid motives: "Certainly Caroline's depth of despair and the queer circumstances connected with her involvement with the 'countess' indicate a deeper relationship with her captor than her own testimony warrants."\(^5\) In "The Turn of the Screw," Mrs. Grose lies to protect the children from knowing about "the mystery of Bly—a mute, demented woman, possibly the insane, jealous mother of the children, and her keeper" (another interpretation! p. 39). In The Spoils of Poynton, Fleda Vetch is lied to by everyone—Owen, in order to get the spoils back, and Mrs. Gereth, in order to get at her son. Fleda, in return, deceives Mrs. Gereth in hopes of getting

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Owen. And her "renunciation" is a lie to save her own pride when she realizes Owen does not care for her (pp. 62-78).

Unlike Clair, other critics, although also following Wilson, place less emphasis on James as a trickster, slyly teasing his readers with riddles and double-entendres, than on James as a psychologist and social critic. Thus they are less concerned with whether the details of the plots are "true" or "false," with whether the narrators are deliberate liars or naïve dupes, than they are with showing how James depicted complex personalities whose "hidden meaning" and "unreliability" derive from their unawareness of their own deepest, often selfish and unsavory motives. In contrast to the critics discussed in Chapter V, they do not believe that James ever intended us to accept his heroes and heroines at their own valuations. Instead, they feel that he meant for his reader to arrive at a conclusion similar to that of Leo B. Levy, who regards the narrators of "The Aspern Papers," "The Patagonia" (1889), "The Turn of the Screw," and The Sacred Fount as "obsessed demons," convinced of their superior intellectual powers, cold and insensitive to the rights of others, and suffering from a kind of "psychic impotence," an inability to love.  

Several find these faults particularly evident in James's female characters. In an essay on The Portrait of a

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6"A Reading of 'The Figure in the Carpet,'" American Literature, XXXIII (January, 1962), 461-463.
Lady, William Bysshe Stein, following the Wilson tradition by reinterpreting the character of Isabel Archer in a less favorable light than had been customary in Jamesian criticism, points out that she is not so much the innocent and moral American victimized by a subtle and wicked Europe as she is a type of the modern sexually inert woman described by Henry Adams. She has "a compulsive fear of sexuality in which puritanical inhibition attires itself in the modest robes of morality." Her marriage to Gilbert Osmond is a negation of passion, an escape from the kind of masculine dominance represented by Goodwood, whose "animalistic sexual virility" she associates with "brutal rape," a "foreshadowing of death." According to Stein, James was condemning, through Isabel, the tendency of modern women to want to be independent, to compete with men, and therefore to deny the sexuality which would force them to submit.

R. W. Stallman, also rejecting Isabel's statements about the nobility of her own motives, follows William Troy by analyzing her character in terms of the symbols associated with her with the aim of discovering the author's true intentions. She is often symbolized, he notes, by the moon, and because of her name—Archer—figures as Diana, the huntress, goddess of chastity. At other times, she is described in terms of bolted doors, an indication that she

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is sexually frigid, and "a pretentious, shallow creature duped by her own presumptuous ideas."\(^8\)

Similarly, Robert C. McClean points out that Laura Wing in James's "A London Life" and Fleda Vetch in *The Spoils of Poynton* are characterized by a tendency to flee from life. Fleda is naïve and is repelled by sex. She plans to win Owen by her "moral fastidiousness and worldly tact," never by seduction. McClean agrees with Clair that Owen does not love Fleda—this is merely her misinterpretation—although Owen once suggests that he loves her in order to recover the spoils.\(^9\) Thus, again, we find a suggestion that James has written a story about a woman whose frustrated passion makes her an unreliable narrator.

Several critics of the later novels also find them to have a "hidden meaning" which can be resolved by a careful re-evaluation of the personalities and motives of the central characters. Two critics apply the Wilsonian re-evaluation of character to Maggie Verver in *The Golden Bowl*. Joseph J. Firebaugh believes that James was unsympathetic with both Maggie and her father. Maggie, he says, is not an innocent victim, but is a selfish, ruthless, acquisitive tyrant, who does all she can short of incest to keep her father for

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herself; in fact, her matching him with Charlotte is "symbolic incest," disguised under a "hard morality," which she insists, like the governess, in imposing on everyone. Jean Kimball likewise agrees that James intended Charlotte Stant to be the real wronged woman. Maggie and her father, Kimball says, like Gilbert Osmond, are collectors who do not discriminate between people and things. Although refusing to suggest the possibility of incest, Kimball notes a certain unpleasantness in Maggie's reactions to her father's marriage; their relationship is unnaturally close, and Charlotte is put in an impossible position in which her husband is more of a husband to his daughter than he is to her.

William Wasserstrom, however, finds no criticism implied, pointing out that this type of relationship is common in the fiction of the time, for to the genteel writer, to mention a girl's closeness to her father was a way to suggest that she was both a "good girl" and sexually attractive. For, he says, "Genteel literature is, after all, a kind of history of ingenuity, delicacy and obsession," in which the artists were able to speak of love only


indirectly, through symbolism. Thus, this relationship is "a fantasy, not a fact; a fantasy which identifies certain longings and attitudes in society," a symbol used by writers who ignored its real meaning and possible consequences. Wasserstrom wonders, however, if perhaps James was less naïve than his contemporaries, for in The Golden Bowl, Maggie Verver does suffer as a result of this peculiar attachment to her father (p. 471).

Some critics demonstrate that many of James's male characters as well are not what they seem, but are selfish, timid, cold, afraid of life and of sex, are perhaps even homosexual. In an essay on "The Aspern Papers," William Bysshe Stein says that the narrator of the story adores the memory of Jeffrey Aspern because Aspern was free of tradition, of the crude and provincial, of conventional Puritan morality. He is impelled in his ruthless search for the Aspern letters, not by the motives he claims, but by an "adolescent curiosity" and a desire to "relive vicariously" the writer's supposed amorous conquests. But he is a Victorian Don Juan: afraid of women and sex, he imagines Aspern and his female devotees as Orpheus and the Maenads. Stein's thesis reflects, to some extent, the theory of Maxwell Geismar on this story (see above, III, 137-138).


But Stein does not draw from it any adverse conclusions about James. On the contrary, in both this essay and that on Isabel Archer, he takes the attitude that James was fully aware of his characters' true motives, and that through his characters James was defining and illustrating a modern social sickness—the denial of normal sexuality—the same sickness diagnosed by the early enthusiasts of Sigmund Freud.

Similarly, Terence Martin, commenting on "The Pupil," finds more to the story than is revealed by the central intelligence, Pemberton, and concludes that Pemberton is a weakling, responsible for Morgan's death because he is incapable of the masculine, aggressive action needed to save the boy. John V. Hagopian, however, justifies Pemberton's behavior by noting that the relationship between the tutor and the pupil parallels the development of a heterosexual courtship. Pemberton begins to fear the responsibility this relationship imposes on him and develops a subconscious feeling of aggression against Morgan, which is revealed in remarks like, "My dear fellow, you're too clever to live." This friendship is an "unnatural alliance," says Hagopian, because of its homosexual element and because of the restriction it imposes on the tutor, who must escape some way.

in order to live a full life. Unlike Neider and Geismar, who also treat the homosexual theme in James's works, neither Martin nor Hagopian make any connection between the literary theme and the personality of the author.

Of the later novels, The Sacred Fount has received the greatest attention from psychological critics. Several of them—Littell, Wilson, and Tindall—have taken this novel to be another fantasy of an obsessed narrator, similar to "The Aspern Papers" and "The Turn of the Screw." As early as 1935, Edwin Marion Snell described the story as an objective study of the mentality of the homosexual narrator who pries into the sex life of others but is completely incapable of understanding it. More recently, Leon Edel calls it "a kind of mental detective story," in that the reader must rely on an ambiguous narrator. The narrator, he says, is "a prey to anxieties unless he can achieve a kind of intellectual superiority and omniscience over those around him. It is this which makes him feel secure." Thus, like most of

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16 See above, Neider, III, 102-104; Geismar, III, 139-140.

17 See above, Littell, II, 47; Wilson, II, 73-74; and Tindall, VI, 255.


19 The Psychological Novel, 1900-1950, pp. 69, 71.
James's fiction written between 1896 and 1900, *The Sacred Fount* is about people seeking to understand the world they live in. And, Edel notes further that "in locating his angle of vision in one specific consciousness," James anticipated many of the problems encountered by later stream-of-consciousness writers (p. 73). Robert A. Perlongo also finds that the narrator is not a trustworthy reporter, and he is a compulsive snooper.20

To some, the narrator is as sinister as Edmund Wilson's governess. Ralph A. Ranald characterizes him as a meddler, a busybody, a destructive neurotic, who would feed intellectually and emotionally on the lives of others, without compassion for their suffering, and who has the spiritual arrogance James despised.21 James K. Folsom agrees, comparing the narrator to a vampire unconsciously feeding himself on the sorrows of others.22 Another critic, Joseph A. Ward, finds that James wrote the story to point a moral: that evil is "the malign intervention of one person in the life of another," even though it is done unconsciously, through the pursuit of good. For according to James, Ward says, evil does not exist outside of human relationships, beyond the


level of the psychological, but is centered in the human soul.\textsuperscript{23}

Jean Frantz Blackall provides justification for the belief that this narrator is insane by noting that, at one point, he compares himself to "the exclusive king with his Wagner opera." Blackall identifies this king as Ludwig II of Bavaria, who reigned from 1864 to 1866.\textsuperscript{24} Ludwig II was completely insane and wild about Wagner, building hundreds of fanciful castles in which he maintained himself in a fairy-tale Wagnerian world. Like him, James's narrator in \textit{The Sacred Fount} has created an external symbol of himself which becomes an object of his devotion. Blackall says, "The portrait of the artist coexists with that of the inadequate ruler, the megalomaniac ruler . . . the crackpot with humorous implications, even that of the misogynist or the sexual aberrant. Hence it is unlikely that James would have made this allusion if he had wished the narrator to be taken seriously as a type of the artist, or his theory to stand as a work of art, because at best Ludwig is an ambiguous figure and at worst he is a ridiculous one" (pp. 112-113). If Blackall's theory is true, then in this novel we see James criticizing the type of artist whose art becomes

\textsuperscript{23}The \textit{Imagination of Disaster: Evil in the Fiction of Henry James} (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1961), pp. vii, 10-11.

\textsuperscript{24}Jamesian Ambiguity and \textit{The Sacred Fount} (Ithaca, New York, 1965), pp. 90-91. See \textit{The Novels and Stories}, XXIX (1923), 230.
nothing more than a monument to his own personal obsessions. And we can take Blackall's interpretation as providing further justification for a psychoanalytic approach to James's works.

Several critics take an almost purely clinical approach to the works they analyze. Arpad Pauncz, in one of the few psychoanalytic essays on James apparently not written under the influence of Edmund Wilson, studies thirteen literary works, including James's *Washington Square*, to find literary proof for his belief that parents can have sexual desire for their children, as well as children for their parents. Specifically, he looks for examples of what he calls "The Lear Complex," dealing with the father's sexual attraction to his own daughter.

Pauncz discovers Dr. Sloper in *Washington Square* to be an example of the type of "modern man who translates his basic libidinous insecurity into the certainty of intellectual subtlety," and who desires to be always on top, in control of every situation. Although he seems to despise his daughter, he deeply resents her falling in love with another man, and he expresses his resentment in little cruel remarks. By degrading her, he hopes to improve his chance of keeping her for himself.

Pauncz thus uses psychoanalytic theory and method

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based on the idea that people are incapable of knowing their own motives and that surface meaning is never the "real" meaning of a work of art, to discover a theme that is nowhere explicitly stated, filling in with a Freudian hypothesis the discrepancy in the story between situation and the characters' emotional reaction to it. His interpretation is probably justifiable as an effort to provide some reasonable and adequate explanation for Dr. Sloper's strange behavior. But Pauncz is motivated by a desire to contribute to psychoanalysis, not to literary criticism or to the study of Henry James; and one wonders at the scientific validity of his formulating and establishing a new psychoanalytic concept on the basis of evidence that can be uncovered only by psychoanalytic procedure whose value has never been empirically demonstrated, and further, on the basis of evidence drawn from a work of fiction.

Pauncz, however, while admitting that his procedure is not really scientific, nevertheless takes the attitude that his demonstration of the presence of the hypothetical "Lear complex" in these thirteen stories proves that it was recognized by the great artists and that the concept, therefore, is valid (p. 52). In any case, it is significant that Pauncz, a psychoanalyst, finds in James's story so much of the truth about human psychology that he can use it as partial "proof" for his hypothesis. Like many other psychoanalysts, he has a high opinion of the value of literature. Furthermore, although he is interested in James only as a
kind of natural psychologist, his analysis of the relationship between Catherine Sloper and her father lends support to the view held by Dupee, Edel, and Geismar that the author's sympathy was wholly with Catherine, and that, through her, James expressed his own resentments and frustrations. 26

Several critics find James's powers as a psychologist particularly evident in the story What Maisie Knew. Harris W. Wilson and Edward Wasiolek, though neither are really Freudian, deny that Maisie is innocent and reinterpret her conduct in the light of a sexual motivation previously only briefly noted. 27 John C. McCloskey treats the story as a kind of Neo-Freudian case study of Maisie's developing awareness of self. Maisie grows up learning to defend herself by secrecy and concealment, by withdrawing into an inner world for refuge from her feelings of danger. She learns to think about herself first and, when she grows up, to assert herself by trying to maneuver others into accepting what pleases her. She becomes hard, selfish, amoral, aware only of "the demands and satisfactions which the self can make and receive": "What she knows, at the end, is what she


wants." McCloskey's interpretation reminds us of Adler's theory that the neglected child often becomes selfish and develops a desire for power without developing any social sense or urge to cooperate.

Another critic, H. R. Wolf, puts forward a very complex interpretation of both psychological and mythological elements in *What Maisie Knew*, somewhat like Trilling's on *The Princess Casamassima*, but with little comment on the author's personal interest in these elements. He cannot be called a Jungian, however, for he deals with the myth as the expression of personal wish-fantasy rather than as some sort of mysterious presentiment from the collective unconscious. According to Wolf, James embodies in the story about Maisie Farange a fantasy common among the young, who, aware that their parents are not perfect, dream that they are stepchildren or adopted children whose real parents are of noble birth and of exalted social position.

He analyzes this mythic element by reference to Otto Rank's *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*: "Summarizing the essentials of the hero myth, we find the descent from noble parents, the exposure in a river, and in a box, and the raising by lowly parents; followed in the further evolution of the story by the hero's return to his first parents, with

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or without punishment meted out to them."30 James's novel contains five motifs, Wolf says, analogous to the myth of hero as described by Rank: (1) Maisie's "emotional abandonment" by her parents after their divorce corresponds to the mythic exposure. (2) Mrs. Wix takes the role of the humble parent who rescues Maisie. (3) Thus, "the theme of adoption" is central to the novel, and, Wolf says, "the splitting, or mythic 'decomposition,' of parent figures, a common feature of fairy tale and myth, indicates the degree to which the social world has disintegrated." (4) Sir Claude represents Maisie's "search for the parent of high birth." (5) Mrs. Beale and Sir Claude correspond in many ways to Maisie's real parents (pp. 228-229).

Furthermore, Wolf finds that in Sir Claude, James embodies the "ideal father of childhood fantasy with all its sexual implications." Sir Claude takes the place of Maisie's father, not only in the birth of the hero myth, but in the "Family Romance," that is, the Oedipal conflict. In "this complicated and deflected manner," James unconsciously uses the myth of the birth of the hero to explore the Oedipal conflict "in a 'safe' way." Because Sir Claude is not Maisie's real father, "she can more readily express her erotic responses to him." Thus, according to Wolf, "mythic

and psychological romance work towards building a moral, though sexually forbidden relationship" (pp. 230-231). The knowledge Maisie achieves in the last chapter is that she loves Sir Claude "in a way that precludes the presence of Mrs. Beale" (p. 232). Wolf, then, views James as a kind of unconscious Victorian psychologist who investigates the real sexual basis of human behavior under a moral guise, by which, like all great writers, he both conceals and reveals. We should note that at the beginning of the essay, Wolf declares that it was not written to repudiate the conscious elements in the story, indicating his belief that the unconscious meaning uncovered by him is not the only "true" meaning, that a work of art has significance on both conscious and unconscious levels.

Although his basic idea seems to fit Maisie very well, Wolf is perhaps less convincing than he might be because, in trying to apply the myth detail by detail to the story, he ignores those elements that do not correspond. For example, he fails to account for the fact that Maisie does not go back to her parents, but goes off with Mrs. Wix, the "lowly" foster parent. When he insists on making one to one correlations between Rank's formulation of the myth and James's literary use of it, he succeeds only in coming close to discrediting his own theory. His essay, however, provides an interesting approach which could be carried over into interpretations of James's other works—the discovery of a "universal theme" in a story which seems to many to have
only very limited significance.

In addition, Wolf's essay provides a good illustration of the fact that those critics who regard James as a psychologist often find the same themes as those who regard him as a "case." He draws no conclusions about James, but in saying that *What Maisie Knew* is about the Oedipal conflict, he supports the opinion that it is an expression of the author's own feeling about his family and represents a regressive tendency which appeared in his later years.

Using quotations and generalizations from Freud, another critic, Robert Marks, reinterprets James's later novels as though they were clinical case histories to show, like Clair, that James was a kind of "trickster" who deliberately followed a technique of exhibiting everything in double. For example, Marks characterizes the narrator in *The Sacred Fount* as "a case of incipient lunacy," whose ideas about the affairs at the country house are wishful fantasies, revealing a degenerated sense of reality.31 In *The Awkward Age*, he says, Mrs. Brookenham is merely seeming to try to discredit her daughter; actually, she does so only to make Mr. Longdon feel compassion and provide for the girl. Nanda misinterprets her mother's motives as a result of a typical adolescent resentment of the mother. Marks quotes Freud: "This step in development (Freud writes) is not

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merely a question of a change of object. The turning away from the mother occurs in an atmosphere of antagonism; the attachment to the mother ends in hate. Such a hatred may be very marked and may persist throughout an entire lifetime; it may later on be carefully overcompensated; as a rule, one part of it is overcome, while another part persists" (p. 33). Analyzing the character of Maggie Verver in *The Golden Bowl*, Marks again refers to Freud to prove that Maggie cares more for her father than for her husband, for, he says, "To use the nomenclature of Freud . . . she has remained in the Oedipus complex and is unable to withdraw sufficient love from her father to love anyone else" (p. 112). Vaguely amateurish psychological works of criticism are often sprinkled with this sort of generalization from psychoanalytic theory, as though for proof of the critic's interpretation, which in Marks's case seems to be that most of James's characters are neurotic, and that their creator, a kind of Freudian novelist, intended them to be so. Although Marks puts himself in the role of a clinical psychologist smugly pushing James's characters into psychoanalytic pigeonholes, his interpretation is apparently not indebted to his own interest in and experience of modern psychology, but in rather an unimaginative and insensitive extension of Wilson's analysis of the governess in "The Turn of the Screw." He does not speculate on any possible knowledge James might have had of modern psychological theory.
Henry James as a Freudian Psychologist

Many of James's critics, then, even some of the very earliest, like Frank Moore Colby and William Lyon Phelps, have admired him as a kind of novel-writing psychologist. Their approach reflects the Freudian view that artists are men with special insight into their own psychological make-up and thus into that of others. F. R. Leavis says that James "had the intuitive understanding of psychology that we find in all great literary artists." Some recent critics not only treat his works as case studies, but take special pains to demonstrate that he was essentially a modern psychologist, a psychoanalyst even, by pointing out explicitly how his themes, characterizations, and style parallel psychoanalytic concepts and methods, such as the concept of the unconscious, of the sexual motivation for behavior, and the methods of free association and symbolic analysis. For example, Austin Warren, Leo B. Levy, and Saul Rosenzweig insist that in his later novels, the increasing use of imagery and symbol, the vague allusiveness, the dreamy quality, are simply attempts to represent the workings of the unconscious mind.

Lyon N. Richardson regards James as a psychologist who, in his novels, reveals his understanding that evil

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32 See above, Colby, II, 32; Phelps, II, 34.
arises from psychical disturbances, as in The Wings of the Dove, for example, it arises from the frustration of sexual desire. Unfortunately, Richardson does not pursue this approach and ultimately does little more than to tack a popular Freudian concept onto James's work to show that the author was "modern" in sentiment.

Austin Warren, however, points out more precisely in just what way James's novels can be called modern. He notes that by revealing character relationships in two ways—the dialectical and the mythical—James suggests both conscious and unconscious levels of perception and reaction. According to the dialectical method, characters look at a situation from the outside and discuss their conscious reactions to it. But, Warren says, they also arrive at an understanding "personally, intuitively, imaginatively," expressed in symbols and images. Warren concludes therefore "that James thinks of all his characters as having an Unconscious, as having a world of instinctive, feeling reactions, reactions which in art must express themselves ... in metaphoric terms." Thus the characters are often rendered in terms of the impressions they make on one another: Mrs. Lowder in The Wings of the Dove is presented as a beast, Mrs. Newsome in The Ambassadors, as an iceberg. In combining the


35Kenyon Review, V, 556, 557.
dialectical and mythical methods, Warren concludes, James "incarnates the interrelations between the conscious and the unconscious, between the social and the subjective" (p. 568).

In his review of early Jamesian criticism, Richard Nicholas Foley notes that James was often misunderstood by early critics because he was essentially a psychological novelist, interested in studying meticulously the minds and emotions of his characters and in the exploration of the subconscious. Clifton Fadiman too, introducing a collection of James's short stories, praises James for his intuitive awareness of the unconscious and its effect on human behavior. In his notes on the stories, Fadiman views them as psychological studies, anticipations of modern psychiatry: "The Liar," for instance, is about lying as a "compulsive neurosis"; "The Pupil," a story of an "unconscious homosexual love," although neither theme is explicitly stated because of the conventions of the day, "which James, through his subtle magic, both obeyed and evaded." Again, James's ghost stories as well "anticipate and dramatize many of the findings of psychoanalysis" (pp. 185, 272, 643).

Joseph Warren Beach's The Method of Henry James, first published in 1918, was republished in 1954 with a long introduction reviewing the critics of Henry James. The


37 The Short Stories of Henry James, ed. with introd. and comments by Clifton Fadiman, p. xv.
writer, though not a psychoanalytic critic himself, admires the Freudians and justifies their approach by showing that James was a deliberate psychological novelist, who, like Freud, explored the "dark subterranean galleries of the mind." To understand him, Beach asserts, we must employ modern psychology, for "without the terminology of the psychoanalyst and without the assumption of his special premisses in regard to the libido, James has given us types that would fit neatly into the psychologist's categories, and his artist's imagination works with the surgical precision and sharpness of the Freudian scalpel to lay bare the state of being of his patient." For example, James's mysteries are psychological: his ghosts are often projections of the mind of the person who sees them. In "The Beast in the Jungle," Marcher's anticipation of the coming of the beast is "simply his 'super-compensation,' as the psychologists say, for his sense of inferiority." James never, however, pins on a psychological label; rather, Beach notes, he "leaves it to us to do that and thereby to derive a gratification such as we can never derive from the labelled specimens of the clinic." 38

In an essay on "The Enduring Fame of Henry James," Leon Edel likewise proposes as one reason for James's present popularity "his anticipation of the more subtle findings of

According to Edel, James's psychological subjects were: the evil created by those who meddle in others' lives or prey on others, "the erosion of loneliness and anxiety, the conflicts of the drive to power." James understood "interpersonal relations" long before psychologists began to be interested in them, and "he knew how society 'conditioned' the individual. Before Freud he subtly studied, and described, anxiety, fear and guilt in his tales." His works, Edel says in this essay, are dramas of "the struggle of ego with ego, of 'states of mind,' of the conflict of the individual with his own nature" (pp. 16-17).

Although, in opposition to the Freudians, F. O. Matthiessen insists in his biography of James that as a writer James dealt solely with the fully conscious mind, with the intelligence rather than with the "welling up of the darkly subconscious life that has characterized the novel since Freud," he nevertheless concedes that James can be seen to have been moving in the direction of modern psychology and anthropology, especially in his suggestion through the image of "'the sacred fount' of the springs of sexual vitality." James occupies, says Matthiessen, a "border line between the older psychologists like Hawthorne..."

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or George Eliot, whose concerns were primarily religious and ethical, and the post-Freudians" (pp. 72, 93).

In contrast, Leo B. Levy, like Austin Warren and Joseph Warren Beach, insists that, in spite of the fact that James seemingly had no theory of the unconscious, "yet, as everyone recognizes, both conscious and unconscious life came to exist in his work as spheres of mutual and interacting influence." And he has come to be regarded, along with Proust, Kafka, and Joyce, as one of "the modern masters of the 'psychological' novel." Levy finds that in the early stories, like "My Friend Bingham" (1867), "Osborne's Revenge" (1868), and "A Passionate Pilgrim," the idea of the unconscious exists only as an "unformed implication." But these stories, he believes, show that James began early by experimenting quite deliberately "with pseudo-medical and psychiatric attitudes toward character," certain titles, like "A Most Extraordinary Case" (1868), even indicating a "clinical perspective."41

According to this article by Levy, by the time of the writing of Confidence in 1879, James had developed into a more systematic concept his belief that unconscious forces shape human behavior. In this story, "directed solely by James's desire to extend his vision of the psychological boundaries of character" (p. 358), the author explores the

hidden motives of one character, Gordon Wright. His technique of presenting these motives is also significant, says Levy, for Wright reveals his state of mind to Angela Vivian in a manner very similar to the "free association" method of the modern therapeutic interview between patient and psychotherapist. Furthermore, he points out that although a "cure" is not sufficiently provided for in the story, yet in depicting the reactions that accompany the discovery of Wright of important unconscious truths about himself, "James clearly perceives the potential danger of the repression of conflict" (pp. 350-353).

Thus, Levy maintains, James ultimately came to conceive of the human mind as extending from consciousness, on one end of the scale, to unconsciousness on the other. In later stories like "The Jolly Corner" and "The Beast in the Jungle," he represents the unconscious "through the emblematic forms of the supernatural and apparitional." The obscure style of the longer novels, like *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Golden Bowl*, likewise results from his efforts to represent the unconscious, in this case by means of the "unverbalized clashes through which opposing figures move in complex rituals, suggesting through imagery and symbol the obscure and powerful currents of life which are closed off to the interplay of conscious probing and debate" (pp. 353, 356).

Levy speculates that James derived his knowledge, not from nineteenth-century psychological concepts of the
unconscious, but from the opinions of his father and brother, and from his observation of the nervous disorders of Alice, which "gave inescapable testimony to the workings of unconscious life" (p. 352). According to Levy, James was interested in understanding and depicting human psychology, but he was not a psychologist in the sense that his whole life was directed to the systematic exploration of the mind and the formulation of theories about it. He was not a student of psychology; he was a student of human nature, who drew his knowledge from personal observation and understood it through the kind of natural intuition and insight which Freud attributes to all great artists.

In contrast to Levy, some critics have gone so far as to try to prove that James was well acquainted with modern psychology, considered himself a psychologist, and wrote as one. As early as 1949, Edel showed that James's having chosen to portray in his novels characters who are the victims of unconscious obsessions may have resulted from his familiarity with the new psychology of the French doctor, Jean-Martin Charcot, with whom William studied in 1882, especially from "Charcot's concepts of the idée fixe and of repressed reminiscence, which were to have such large consequences in the work of Janet and Freud." Even if Henry James did not hear of Charcot from William, Edel speculates that he could have read of him in Maupassant's tales or met him at the home of Alphonse Daudet, to whom Charcot was a friend and physician; for James was a frequent visitor to
Daudet's home in the 1880's. Furthermore, notes Edel, Daudet's novel, L'Evangeliste, to which James admitted indebtedness for The Bostonians, is dedicated to Charcot.\textsuperscript{42}

Other critics have found enough similarity to suggest a closer link between the work of Henry James and that of Sigmund Freud. In 1956, Oscar Cargill published an essay, "Henry James as Freudian Pioneer," suggesting that James had used his sister Alice as a model for the governess in "The Turn of the Screw."\textsuperscript{43} In 1963, he revised and expanded the article, which, although its subject is "The Turn of the Screw," I am including here rather than in Chapter IV, because its primary object is to provide evidence that James was a deliberate psychologist who wrote, not only from personal observation, but also from direct knowledge of Freud's works.

In the revised article, Cargill characterizes the governess as "a demonstrable, pathological liar, a pitiful but dangerous person, with an unhinged fancy" whose mind is "singularly susceptible to evil suggestion." She lies, for example, about having written to her employer concerning the situation at Bly, and she accepts without question Mrs. Grose's tale about the relations between Quint and Jessel which could easily have been the result of petty jealousy.


\textsuperscript{43}Chicago Review, X (Summer, 1956), 13-29.
among servants. Cargill says, "Fiend she is, but a sick young woman, too," whose actions are motivated by her passion for her employer, and who throughout the story describes herself as distressed, excited, and nervous. Also, things are not going well at home; James even hints that her trouble is hereditary, for she describes her father as "eccentric." Therefore, Cargill concludes, Kenton and Wilson "were profoundly right in their characterization of the governess: ... the phantoms are creations of an hysterical mind, they are hallucinations" (p. 248).

Recalling the writing of his tale, James confessed to many "intellectual echoes," adding that the story draws behind it "a train of associations . . . so numerous that I can but pick among them for reference." One of these influences, Cargill says, is that of Sigmund Freud: James's creation of the governess "combined the perceptions of genius with some actual technical knowledge" (p. 243). Because of the early date of the story, 1898, Cargill looks to Breuer and Freud's Studies in Hysteria (1895) for a possible source, and finds it in "The Case of Miss Lucy R." Miss Lucy R. was the governess of two daughters of a factory superintendent in Vienna. She was "an English lady of rather delicate constitution," who suffered from depression

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44 "The Turn of the Screw and Alice James," PMLA, LXXVIII (June, 1963), 241-243. The page numbers in my text refer to the revised article.

45 The Art of the Novel, p. 173.
and a subjective sensation of the smell of burnt pastry, a smell later discovered to be associated with some pastry which had burned while she and the children indulged in a friendly scuffle over a letter. The governess further confessed that the other servants in the house despised her because they thought she was too proud for her position. It turned out ultimately that she had fallen in love with her employer as the result of an early interview with him in which he had been extra cordial and had told her how much he counted on her. She had thought about him constantly, and about pleasing him, but their talk was never followed by any other sign of interest on his part. In fact, at one time he was most unpleasant to her during a situation which she associated with the smell of cigar smoke. On two different occasions he berated her for allowing visitors— one time a man, another time a woman— to kiss the children on their lips.

Cargill points out the resemblance between "The case of Miss Lucy R." and "The Turn of the Screw." Both are presented as case histories, within a frame. In each, a woman becomes instantly infatuated with her employer after an interview with him in which he gives her a sense of trust, and each woman fears that her employer will discern her feelings. There are other similarities: The valet and the former governess of "The Turn of the Screw" correspond to the kissing male and female visitors of the case study. The business about the letters in James's story--the letter from
Miles's school and the governess' letter to the master—may derive, Cargill speculates, from the episode of the letter in Lucy R.'s account, and the impatience of the children's uncle, from the impetuosity of the Viennese manufacturer. The letter dismissing Miles from school shatters the governess' hopes of intimacy with her employer, just as the rebuke to Miss Lucy destroys her romantic illusions. It is the same type of "traumatic experience."46

According to Cargill, James understood this type of woman because the illness of his sister Alice encouraged him to read modern psychology and because he observed his sister's illness at first hand. He points out that, as a victim of violent attacks of hysteria, beginning before she was twenty, Alice James underwent many of the different treatments for hysteria being tried at the time, with no results. In 1891, she was treated by Dr. Charles Lloyd Tuckey who hypnotized her to relieve the pain and suffering caused by cancer. Cargill notes that hypnotism, as a treatment for hysteria, had been used by the French doctor J.-M. Charcot, with whom James had had occasion to become acquainted. As evidence for James's familiarity with the work of Charcot, Cargill points out that he had apparently modeled the neurotic Olive Chancellor in The Bostonians on the neurotic Mme. Autheman, a character in Daudet's

L'Evangeliste, who, in turn, was derived from the studies of Charcot. Cargill concludes that Henry knew as much about Charcot's therapy as his brother William did. And he suggests further that James became acquainted with the work of Breuer and Freud when it succeeded that of Charcot, noting that it was Henry's friend, F. W. H. Myers, who wrote the first review of their book in English. Although Alice died in 1892, Cargill speculates that Henry James may have read Studies in Hysteria because of his continuing interest in the subject. We know, he says, that William was early acquainted with Freud's works, and he might have brought them to his brother's attention (pp. 246-247).

In any case, Henry was well acquainted with Alice's illness, for after the death of her father, Alice moved to England where Henry looked after her until her own death. Cargill says, "In the fortitude of Alice James facing her destiny James may have got the inspiration for making the governess the heroine of his tale and the confessor of her own terrible burden to her lover." To shield Alice's memory he altered the picture so that even his intimate friends could not identify the source, and referred to the story as an "irresponsible little fiction" (p. 248).

Cargill's suggestion is bound to seem far-fetched. There is certainly not enough evidence to support a connection between the governess in "The Turn of the Screw" and Alice James or Freud's Miss Lucy R. However, as a suggestion it is valuable. Both Alice and the governess do fit
well into Freud's picture of the hysterical woman, which is not necessarily completely uncomplimentary. According to Breuer and Freud, adolescents who are later to become hysterics are usually lively, talented, and full of intellectual interests before they become ill. Strong-willed, restless, intolerant of monotony and boredom, and craving sensations and mental activity, such women have an excess of nervous energy, which if not constantly made use of, overflows into physical symptoms like nervous palpitation of the heart, a tendency to fainting, to excessive blushing and turning pale. Much of this energy is sexual, and yet these people are often those with high ethical standards who tend to view sex as something dirty: "They repress sexuality from their consciousness, and the affective ideas of such content which have caused somatic phenomena become unconscious." 47

In such people hysterical attacks are often brought on by the performance of monotonous and routine tasks which encourage daydreaming. Or they may occur when an interesting set of ideas, derived from books or plays intrudes into the subject's thoughts. This intrusion may be especially vigorous if the extraneous ideas carry with them strong emotional connotations, such as worry or the longing of someone in love. Miss Lucy R., for instance, was "an over-ripe amorous girl, whose love was too rapidly awakened through a

In addition, non-sexual emotions of fright, anxiety and anger can also lead to the development of hysteria. Hysterical attacks may be of short duration and then end never to return. Or, a state of equilibrium may be reached between the unconscious and conscious so that hysterical attacks and normal life go on side by side without interfering with each other.  

The governess, then, can easily be seen as an hysterical woman; she is easily upset, often turns pale and is extreme in her emotional reactions. She is an active and intelligent girl placed in a dull and restricting environment where she is reduced for entertainment to daydreaming, reading and doing needlework—all conducive to neurosis. She is lonely and frightened, anxious about her job, and in love with an unattainable man. If we are to believe Douglas, her hysteria lasts only during her stay at Bly; later, she is charming and clever.

Thus Cargill adds more justification for the belief held by Anna R. Burr that James was acquainted with the hysterical type, as he saw it in his own family, but also as he read about it in the psychological works of his day (see above, Burr, II, 84-87). It is for this reason that Cargill's work is valuable. For, if he does not succeed in proving that James was directly influenced by Freud, he does

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48 Ibid., pp. 173-174, 194.
49 Ibid., p. 12.
indicate that James was a part of the same Zeitgeist as Freud and that he too shared the late nineteenth-century interest in exploring the motivations and emotions of the inner, unconscious man concealed behind, but often inadvertently revealed through, the outer facade of social respectability and moral conformity. And thus critics who regard James's novels partly as "case studies" of certain personality types may be right.

An even closer connection between, not the subject matters, but the method of Freud and the style of Henry James is suggested by Saul Rosenzweig in an article on "The Jameses' Stream of Consciousness," in which he investigates the three most illustrious members of the James family--Henry, Sr., William, and Henry, Jr.--to determine if anything in their ideas might be of interest for psychologists. He is particularly interested in Henry, Jr., whose devotion to art, he says, "was permeated by an implicit philosophy and psychology that may prove to excel in subtlety and durability the corresponding accomplishments of father and brother," and whom he characterizes as "essentially a clinical psychologist who worked professionally as a novelist." 50

He regards each of the three eminent Jameses as one part of a multiple personality, a good example of the "concinnity of minds each wrestling with the same problems,"

50 *Contemporary Psychology*, III (September, 1958), 250, 253. The following page numbers in my text refer to this article.
though they dealt with the problems in different areas—theology, philosophy and science, and art. As such, he says, they might also provide a source for the study of the division of mental labor, of inherited abilities, of "the family-mind," and of "mutual family influence" (p. 250). And he stresses especially the tremendous influence of Henry James, Sr. on the style and content of the writings of the two sons.

He notes that, perhaps as a result of this "mutual family influence," both the sons were interested in "the stream of consciousness," William having, in fact, formulated the concept, and Henry having used the stream of consciousness technique in his memoirs and in all of his later writings. Indeed, according to Rosenzweig, an "appreciative understanding" of Henry James's later style of writing is a first step to understanding his personality. To this end, he quotes a letter written in 1905 by Owen Wister to the psychiatrist-novelist S. Weir Mitchell defending James's style:

I explain to myself his bewildering style thus: he is attempting . . . to produce upon the reader, as a painting produces upon the gazer, a number of superimposed, simultaneous impressions. He would like to put several sentences on top of each other so that you could read them all at once, and get all at once the various shadings and complexities, instead of getting them consecutively as the mechanical nature of his medium compels. This I am sure is the secret of his involved parenthesis, his strangely injected adverbs, the whole structure, in short, of his twisted syntax.51

Rosenzweig agrees with Wister that James's later style is not a result of neurosis, but is the deliberate attempt by a complex mind to deal with a single situation in all its subtlety and intricacy.

In this connection, Rosenzweig speculates that a common source affected both the brothers, and may have affected as well the theories of Sigmund Freud, who along with William James influenced the development of the stream of consciousness technique used by modern novelists such as James Joyce. He insists, in fact, on the importance of the interplay of these men's theories in the field of psychology itself, finding in certain similarities in their wording evidence that the Freudian method of free association may have been indebted partly to William James's formulation of the concept of the stream of consciousness. In Freud's *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, published in 1905, but actually written in 1901, Freud says that he asks the patient to tell the story of his life. Then he says: "This first account may be compared to an unnavigable river whose stream is at one moment choked by masses of rock and at another divided and lost among the shallows and sandbanks." "Gaps" in this account, he says, must be filled in during treatment.52 Earlier, in Chapter IX of *The Principles of Psychology*, William James had written, "Consciousness . . .

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flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life." Later, he describes "gaps" in the stream. Although Rosenzweig does not suggest any far-reaching influence, he feels that the "common metaphor of the river" and the "gaps" in the "subjective life," support the hypothesis of some exposure of Freud to James. During the 1890's, he notes, Freud read voraciously in the psychological literature of Germany, France, England, and America, and perhaps got a hint from William James. Not being concerned with issues of priority, he would not necessarily have acknowledged his debt (pp. 255-256).

Rosenzweig suggests further that Freud, as well as the James brothers, may also have been influenced by Dr. J. Garth Wilkinson, who in 1857 published a volume of verse, Improvisations from the Spirit. Wilkinson said that in writing this volume he followed a "Method of Impression," according to which the author chooses a theme, and then writes down his impressions on the theme as they occur to him. Freud at one time denied such influence, but admitted to a youthful knowledge of a satirical essay by Ludwig Börne, "The Art of Becoming an Original Writer in

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54 London, pp. 397-398.
Three Days" (1823), in which Börne describes a method very similar to Wilkinson's.55

We know, says Rosenzweig, that Wilkinson was a close friend of the elder Henry James. Both men were Swedenborgians, and James's third son was named after Garth Wilkinson. Rosenzweig suggests that Wilkinson's method of impression was known in the James family, that it influenced William's concept of the stream of consciousness, and that it is described by Henry Jr. in his novel The Bostonians in which Dr. Tarrant coaches his daughter Verena who speaks publicly by improvisation (p. 256). Thus Rosenzweig, suggesting a continuous line of influence from Wilkinson, to Henry James, Sr., to his two sons, William and Henry, Jr., and from Wilkinson and William James to Sigmund Freud, establishes a connection, however tenuous, between the work of Henry James, Jr. and the psychology of Sigmund Freud. In doing so, he asserts his belief that Henry James was as consciously and deliberately a psychologist as Freud himself, and that, in fact, simultaneously with Freud, he had hit on some of the same principles and methods, not naively or intuitively as critics like Burr, Wilson, or Levy suppose, but as the result of the same forces and influences which led to the development of psychoanalytic theory.

Some support for at least part of Rosenzweig's theory

is provided in a doctoral dissertation by Perry Earl Gragg, who studies the works of William and Henry James to show where the psychologies of the two coincide. He notes that in "The Art of Fiction" Henry says, "There are few things more exciting to me, in short, than a psychological reason." Gragg sets down several of William's psychological principles that he finds illustrated in Henry's novels, such as William's recognition of the existence of a subconscious part of the mind and his insistence that we cannot accept a person's own testimony about his reactions. From the evidence in Henry's novels, we can see that he also shared with William the belief "that the objects surrounding an individual are revelations of himself; the recognition that the mind can do several things at a time; the discussion of one's decreasing capacity for emotion as he increases in age; the realization that people change" (pp. 67-68). William felt too that each object is regarded differently by different people and by the same person at different times. The importance of the object, then, lies in the individual's regard for it. This philosophy is reflected in Henry's The Spoils of Poynton in which the objets d'art

56 See Selected Literary Criticism: Henry James, ed. Morris Shapira, p. 64.

at Poynton hold such different meanings for different people (pp. 21-22, 131).

Gragg presents evidence that Henry knew William's works. For instance, F. O. Matthiessen notes that James commented on a review in *The Nation* of William's *Principles*, and in 1879 he wrote to his mother that he had read William's articles "Are We Automata?" and "Brute and Human Intellect." Although, pointing out that because there is no evidence that Henry ever read the whole book, we must be cautious in making connections, Gragg concludes that "all the important ideas in William's *Principles of Psychology* are found before 1890 in rudimentary form in Henry's novels." After this date, says Gragg, "Internal evidence in the novels ... indicates a very close relationship between William's formulation of principles and Henry's applications of the very same principles in his novels" (p. 215).

Whether or not James knew any of Freud's works (or even those of his own brother) has not been clearly determined. Considering that Freud did not even begin to publish until 1895 and that critics have found no mention of Freud in any of Henry James's novels, stories, literary criticism, letters, notebooks, or autobiographical writings, it is probably logical to conclude that he did not—a conclusion which, however, in no way detracts from James's significance as a psychological novelist and in no way proves that James did

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not share with Freud certain psychological principles. We can still concur with the many critics who, as we have seen, have argued that James simply anticipated Freud, either as the result of his special insight into his own problems, so much like those of interest to the Freudians, or of his remarkable ability to see beneath the surface of human behavior, or because he was part of a tradition, the romantic tradition, of which Freud was also a part.
CONCLUSION

In reviewing the psychoanalytic criticism of James, I have tried to show that the great diversity among the critics in the manner and degree of their application of psychoanalysis to James is a result of the interaction of various factors—the period in which the critic writes, his knowledge and understanding of psychoanalysis, his preference for one branch of psychoanalysis over another, the influence of other Jamesian critics, and his attitude toward Henry James. In the first place, the period in which the critic writes affects both his use of psychoanalysis and his attitude toward James. Psychoanalytic criticism of James has tended to respond to changes in psychoanalytic theory and practice as well as to changes in the popular acceptance of psychoanalytic concepts. For example, in the 1920's and 1930's, when the young were rebelling against the Puritanism and Victorianism of their elders and when Freudian psychology was accepted wholeheartedly as a scientific justification for this rebellion, we find many critics, like Van Wyck Brooks and Ludwig Lewisohn, relying on the Freudian theories about the importance of childhood to the adult personality and about the evils of sexual repression, to demonstrate that James, as a representative of a way of life distasteful
to them, was somehow mentally sick.

In the 1930's and 1940's, when the enthusiastic reception of Freudian theory was beginning to cool, when the reaction against the Genteel Age was no longer felt necessary, and psychoanalysts were beginning to explain and elaborate on their theories of literary creativity as well as to modify many of the principles of Sigmund Freud, we have the studies by Edmund Wilson, Saul Rosenzweig, and Leon Edel. Their work reflects a more serious and sober use of psychoanalysis as only one among many valid approaches to explaining human behavior, and a consequent tendency to treat James as a complex human being rather than, like Brooks and his followers, to brush him off as an ineffective neurotic or, like Alfred Richard Orage and John Crowe Ransom, to praise him unreservedly as an intuitive psychologist. In addition, the work of some critics like Rosenzweig and Edel and their followers—Clifton Fadiman, Joseph Warren Beach, R. P. Blackmur, and F. W. Dupee—reflects the trend in this period among psychologists and laymen to combine Freudian theories about unconscious motivation, the Oedipal conflict, and the baneful effects of sexual frustration, with the more recently expounded Neo-Freudian ideas about sibling rivalry, the inferiority complex, the drive to power or self-fulfillment, and the significance of conscious motives in directing human behavior.

Critics vary too in their degree of devotion to and knowledge of either the study of psychoanalysis or of
literature. Some critics of James write more as psychoanalysts than as literary critics—Saul Rosenzweig, Edward Wasiolek, Robert Rogers, C. Knight Aldrich, Mark Kanzer, and Arpad Pauncz—and, more concerned with contributing to the study of psychoanalysis than to the study of literature, they tend to treat James's works as "case histories," either, like Rogers and Kanzer, reducing them to the sexual fantasies of the author, or like Pauncz and H. R. Wolf, revealing the psychoanalytic "truth" of the principles followed by James. In many cases, in analyzing individual works by James, these critics choose those which best fit the theory they prefer, the Jungians concentrating, for example, on the later tales to which the "rebirth" archetype is easily applied.

Most of the critics I discuss as psychoanalytic are primarily students of literature whose knowledge of psychoanalysis varies widely and who tend to use psychoanalytic principles as they see fit, according to which theory is currently popular or to which they feel best explains James or one of his works. Many, like Edmund Wilson, F. W. Dupee, Stephen Spender, and Leon Edel, are well acquainted with the field of psychoanalysis, and their application of psychoanalytic theory is accurate in terms of the principles and methods of modern schools of psychoanalysis. Others, like Van Wyck Brooks and Albert Mordell, however, seem to have only a very shallow knowledge of psychoanalysis, often misinterpreting basic Freudian concepts, as for example with Lewisohn's assumption that Freud advocated sexual
freedom. Still other critics apparently have little interest in psychoanalysis itself, but have read the work of Kenton, Wilson, Spender, Rosenzweig, and Edel, and found an approach which suits their fancy, which seems to them to explain James and his work better than anything else. Thus much of their work is devoted to supporting or reapplying the theories of these other writers. Most of the critics I have discussed as psychoanalytic, especially in the last three chapters, fall into this group. Although some of the better ones, while working on premises established by earlier critics, add information to the study of James, provide further insights, or resolve difficulties in the earlier interpretations—for example, Yvor Winters, Joseph Warren Beach, Thomas Mabry Cranfill and Robert Lanier Clark, Jr., Hans-Joachim Lang, Muriel West, Clifton Fadiman, R. P. Blackmur, Leo B. Levy, and William Bysshe Stein—relatively few of the many psychoanalytic critics of James have done anything really original, many imitators of Wilson, for example, failing to venture in their imitation beyond merely reapplying his ideas to "The Turn of the Screw."

In fact, it is significant that most of the vast amount of psychoanalytic criticism applied to Henry James is derived from the contributions of only a few influential critics. Some of these are Van Wyck Brooks, who established the stereotype of James as the expatriate artist, and Anna R. Burr, whose emphasis on the Civil War and the James "family neurosis" shows up in later criticism by Rosenzweig and Edel.
The essays of Edna Kenton and Edmund Wilson, who are responsible for the present emphasis on "ambiguity" as a major characteristic of James's works, along with those of Glenway Wescott and Stephen Spender in the 1934 special issue of *The Hound and Horn*, with their emphasis on sex and on James's ambivalent attitude toward his own repressive upbringing, resulted in a rush by critics to apply psychoanalysis to the works of James. Since 1940, the work of Rosenzweig, who stressed the relationship between the Civil War and James's feeling of failure, and of Leon Edel, who sifted and combined all these various theories into a complete and balanced biography, have been the most effective in establishing critical attitudes toward James.

It is interesting that even the theories of these most influential critics can be attributed to suggestions provided by early, but less influential, writers. Thus, if we trace an idea through the criticism of James, it seems to follow a kind of pattern. It occurs first in a brief, rather disinterested comment by an early critic—a mere suggestion or speculation, neither fully developed nor carefully supported—for example, that James was essentially a psychologist, or that his personal isolation is reflected in his work, or that he was essentially feminine in his thinking. Then it is thoroughly elaborated by one fairly prominent critic who is generally given full credit for it (and who deserves credit, at least, for recognizing its importance to a full appreciation of James), after which it reappears again
and again in Jamesian criticism and biography, often as the main theme of minor critical essays such as most of those which are discussed in the last three chapters of this dissertation. Such is the case, for example, with the hallucination theory of "The Turn of the Screw," which first appears in suggestions by early critics—Henry A. Beers, Virginia Woolf, and Fred Lewis Pattee—that the governess is insane, and which, since Kenton and Wilson, has been expanded and elaborated in every conceivable way, causing Douglas M. Davis to conclude that many critics are simply looking for an easy way to produce a publication.

This is not to say that these theories are not essentially valid, either in terms of the critic's own interests and needs or in terms of James's intentions. Various theories are produced, read, and expanded because they appeal to the psychological, social, and literary prejudices of the audience of a particular time period. The popularity of psychoanalytic criticism of James parallels a modern reaction against the Victorian ordered and cultured way of life and the Genteel novel of manners which glorified it. Brooks' "alienation theory" appealed to critics at a time when nationalism and the American scene was a leading concern of American writers and critics. The enthusiasm for the hallucination theory of "The Turn of the Screw" corresponds, as Robert B. Heilman, Elmer Edgar Stoll, and even Wilson himself have pointed out, to the modern rejection of supernatural faith and the modern desire to explain
supernatural phenomena in psychological terms. Thus critics explain the works in terms which are meaningful to them and which they believe others will find meaningful. There is some evidence that James would have approved of such an approach, for example in the preface to "The Turn of the Screw" where he indicates that he intended for the reader to interpret the vaguely defined evil of the story in terms of his own experience and attitudes.

In any case, as Heidi Specker points out, the rise in the popularity of James ran parallel to the rise of Freudian psychology. One reason is, of course, the provocative essays by Wilson and Rosenzweig; but these critics simply recognized what later became obvious, that James's life and works were particularly amenable to psychoanalysis. First, his own life and the lives of the characters he created reflect personal problems that are of particular interest to the psychoanalysts. He was the very type of person by whom and for whom psychoanalysis was created—a member of a cultured and intelligent upper-middle class Victorian family and a victim of the typical restrictions and repressions, especially concerning sex, applied to children of his day, who seemed, moreover, in his writing, to regard physical passion as something "vulgar" and dirty. His apparent lack of sex life, the disguised sexual implications in his work, naturally lead anyone even slightly acquainted with Freud to wonder why he was celibate and what effect his celibacy had on his work.
In other ways as well, his work calls for psychoanalysis. Yvor Winters noted, for instance, that the emotionalism of his stories is often far too great for the situation, a Freudian clue that something important is hidden beneath the apparently trivial surface. Also, his stories are often deliberately ambiguous and are open to almost any interpretation, although in many cases these ambiguities involve what could easily be interpreted as sexual situations—such as the relationship between the ghosts and the children in "The Turn of the Screw," or between Olive Chancellor and Verena Tarrant in *The Bostonians*. After the Freudian reader explains these situations in terms of sex, then he is inspired to wonder about the reason for the ambiguity and to explain it, again, in terms of some personal problem of the author's. Edmund Wilson's essay was effective because it cleared up for the modern reader those ambiguities in "The Turn of the Screw" centering around the governess' strange reactions to the children's innocent activities, and in doing so, pointed the way to a better understanding and appreciation of many of James's other works.

Furthermore, the psychoanalytic method of diagnosing mental illness through the symbolic interpretation of dreams is easily and fruitfully applied to James's stories, for James often centered the presentation of a character, a situation, or a whole story around one suggestive symbol, such as a houseful of furniture, a garden, a golden bowl. And his characters' attitudes and reactions to one another
are frequently expressed in symbolic terms—of keys and locks, of open and closed doors, of birds, beasts, money, flowers, houses. Psychoanalysts have indicated the universality of many of these symbols in dreams, neurotic fantasies, and myths, and have provided interpretations of them. It is easy and natural, then, simply to apply these interpretations to James's symbols and to explain the stories in terms of them, as William Troy has done with the garden symbol and Wilson with the tower and lake in "The Turn of the Screw." Unfortunately, in a few cases, such as those of Herbert Feinstein, Robert Rogers, and Mark Kanzer, the mechanical application of Freudian symbolic analysis results in interpretations which are simply shallow and reductive.

In later criticism, the circumstances of James's childhood and family life—his speech impediment, his chaotic upbringing, the presence of a strong older sibling—and the situations and symbols in his novels—his rather consistent depiction of older brothers as incompetent, noted by Edel, and the number of stories about persecuted children, noted by Wilson and Geismar—were also found amenable to a Neo-Freudian interpretation, applied either alone or in connection with a Freudian one. Some works, especially those of James's later period, have been shown by the Jungians to illustrate the archetypal theme of death and rebirth; and although the Jungians avoid making any reference to the author's intentions, conscious or unconscious, the fact that a certain group of stories has received only Jungian analyses and has
responded so well to Jungian interpretation, indicates that the death and rebirth theme does perhaps have some validity in terms of James's personal psychological development.

Even in the very earliest psychoanalytic criticism of James the problems develop: how well did James understand himself? How closely are his personal idiosyncracies related to what he writes? To what extent was he aware of the psychological themes and symbols in his art? In short, was he a psychologist or a neurotic case? These are questions, however, which cannot be answered satisfactorily without some clear and straightforward statement of intention by the author himself, which in James's case we do not have. Nevertheless, critics do attempt to answer them and in doing so have come up with wildly diverse conclusions, ranging from those of men like Brooks and Geismar that James was completely neurotic, a psychological "case" unconsciously recording his private fantasies in his art, to those of critics like Frank Moore Colby, Alice Duer Miller, William Lyon Phelps, Cranfill and Clark, Muriel West, Leo B. Levy, Oscar Cargill, and Saul Rosenzweig, that James was essentially a psychologist whose works are scientific explorations of the human mind in artistic form. Their answers often reflect their own personal prejudice, a prejudice which often derives from preconceived notions (sometimes derived from psychoanalysis) about what the "artist" is or should be, or from a preformed value judgment of the author and his works based on the critic's personal reaction to him. Wilson's criticism,
for example, reflects his belief that the artist is a kind of neurotic set apart from, usually above, the ordinary man; but his favorable application of this theory to James no doubt results from an independent respect for James's ability as an artist. True, there are a number of psychoanalytic critics who in analyzing the works, their symbols and characters, do not mention the author, but since psychoanalytic criticism by its very nature is concerned with the relation of the work to the author, in dealing with it we must assume that these critics take some attitude toward him, if only that this knowledge of psychoanalytic principles which they find illustrated in his tales resulted from an intuitive understanding of human psychology.

Thus, some psychoanalytic critics analyze the author himself, using his works as revelations of his character. They accept the psychoanalytic theory that a work of art reveals the personality of the artist like a dream reveals the dreamer. To them, if James's works show psychological insight, it is because he was writing about himself and his own problems. It is their criticism which is, often justly, condemned as reductive. In some cases, such as those of Peter Coveney and Robert Rogers, they tend to discuss the works in terms of neurotic fantasy, analyzing only the unconscious, subjective elements, without considering that a work of art takes a great deal of deliberate and objective planning on the part of the author. They often ignore considerations that might also be relevant—historical, ethical,
aesthetic—apparently regarding these as insignificant beside the work's unconscious personal elements. In many cases, even critics who have no intention of "reducing" James—Saul Rosenzweig, for example, in his early essay—appear to do so because they fail to mention conscious aspects of his writings or to take account of other possible interpretations.

A few critics, it is true, tend to psychoanalyze James as a neurotic in order to belittle him, as do Van Wyck Brooks and his followers, Ludwig Lewisohn, Leslie Fiedler, and Maxwell Geismar, whose real objection to him is that he was isolated, either from his own nation, from real social problems, or from a mature and normal sex life. Their work illustrates the unfortunate tendency of critics to use psychoanalytic theories to support value judgments, many of which are outside the concern of psychoanalysis. In fact, much of the reaction against Freudian criticism comes, I believe, as a reaction to the dogmatic attitude of critics like these, who forget that by describing James's Oedipal conflict they have not fully accounted for the man or proved anything about the quality of his writing. Their dogmatism arises from a belief that psychoanalysis is a proven and acceptable science, but paradoxically, one which they are free to select from and revise to suit their own purposes. Their criticism illustrates a failure of Freudian theory itself—that it is easily misinterpreted and misused to support a variety of interpretations, some of which, like the advocation of the free expression of the sexual impulses,
Freud himself would have opposed, and that in the hands of many it often serves more as a justification for preconceived prejudices than as a basis for a reliable and objective analysis of the author in question.

Nevertheless, even that psychoanalytic criticism which is the most critical and reductive has ultimately had a beneficial effect on James's reputation. For example, even Brooks's unfavorable evaluation drew attention to James, which he might not otherwise have received. Furthermore, those critics who have called James a neurotic have been responsible for almost completely destroying the early idea that his characters are cold and unemotional, "only winged busts," with "all the weight of the flesh absent,"¹ or that his novels are only mechanical, objective, and scientific dissections of human motive. In fact, the very basis of much psychoanalytic criticism of James, from Kenton to Edel, is that his characters are hysterically over-emotional, and that his novels are often the unconscious expression of his own frustrated, but very intense, passions.

In contrast to those who regard James as a neurotic, there are a number of critics who concentrate on analyzing his works, especially the characters depicted in them, to show that these characters illustrate some psychological "truth." To them, his ambiguity is not the result of an

unconscious desire to "cover up" the real subject of his stories, but is intentional, resulting from a conscious and deliberate effort to depict the complex workings of the human mind. In many cases—for example, those of Alice Duer Miller, John Crowe Ransom, J. H. Lewis, Edmund Wilson, Stephen Spender, H. R. Wolf, and Joseph Warren Beach—they attribute James's psychological insight to an intuitive understanding which enabled him to anticipate the "scientific" findings of modern psychology. A few critics, like Oscar Cargill, have gone so far as to suggest that James read and deliberately applied the psychology of Freud. Because no critic has, however, provided sufficient evidence to support the speculation that James knew anything at all about Freud, it is therefore reasonable to assume that he did not. But it is, nevertheless, possible to agree with those critics—Heidi Specker, Frank O'Connor, Leon Edel, Leo B. Levy, and Saul Rosenzweig—who place James and Freud in the same tradition, who find they shared the same interest in exploring the hidden and often sordid motives underlying human behavior, in the unconscious, in the power of the sexual drives, in sexual perversion and insanity, which Lionel Trilling identifies as characteristic of nineteenth-century Romantic literature.

Furthermore, there need be no contradiction between those who find that James was a deliberate psychologist and those who find that he worked out his own frustrations in his art. Some critics reconcile the two by treating him as
a human being with human problems who, nevertheless, had a remarkable conscious insight into the nature and processes of his own personality, and thus into the personalities of others—an insight of which he made full use in his depiction of character. In this connection, a number of critics—Harold C. Goddard, Regis Michaud, Edmund Wilson, John Lydenberg, and Mark Spilka—find James to have been a kind of social critic, who, recognizing the failures in his own upbringing and the consequent inadequacy of his own development, illustrated them in his art. His interest in such problems is, nevertheless, part of the increasing attention being given to the processes of the human mind, both normal and abnormal, that characterized both the literature and psychology of the time, a psychology which he had ample opportunity to become familiar with through his brother William, the writings of Charcot, F. W. H. Myers, and the publications of the Society for Psychical Research. The major psychoanalytically oriented Jamesian critics prefer this more complex, but more satisfactory explanation—Edmund Wilson, Stephen Spender, Saul Rosenzweig, and Leon Edel.

Psychoanalytic critics have shown how James, by treating of universal human themes, creates an emotional response in his readers. They have demonstrated that James is a great writer because he is a great psychologist, because he understands human nature, and in the case of the Jungians, because he has access to the Universal Mind. Thus they have succeeded in establishing a more favorable view of James's
writings by evaluating them, not as art, but as psychology. For as valuable as psychoanalysis has been in increasing understanding of James and in improving his reputation, it is not adequate for a whole interpretation of James or any other author, any more than purely socialist criticism is. A critic who wants to say why James's work is great as art, to praise his style, his handling of language, his aesthetic appeal, is forced to do so outside the psychoanalytic context, simply because psychoanalysis has no place for such considerations. It is in this way that psychoanalysis can be truly said to be reductive. For any practical critic or biographer who wants to throw the most light on the whole of James's works, to account for all the influences on his personality and art, to evaluate him thoroughly and effectively, must combine the personal analytic approach of psychoanalysis with a broader and more flexible biographical approach and a more inclusive critical theory.
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Approved:

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