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Henry James's "The Jolly Cornee" a critical analysis

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**HENRY JAMES'S "THE JOLLY CORNER":
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

—by
Susan Linda McGinty

A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate Committee

of Lehigh University

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the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

September 12, 1969
(date)

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To Dr. Carl F. Strauch for his friendship, patience, and "eminently sane" guidance I dedicate this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the criticism written since 1944 that deals with Henry James's short story "The Jolly Corner." In analyzing the criticism, three main areas of discussion are covered: the tale as an autobiographical presentation of James's attitudes and experiences; an autobiographical - Freudian study of Henry James, as revealed through the protagonist, Spencer Brydon; and the technique James utilized in writing the tale as a deliberate "ghost" story, centering on a man discovering his true self.

The conflict of culture between Europe and America is one of the major areas of criticism. Since it is obvious that James was influenced by his experiences and at times used them in part for his stories or novels, there is a certain accuracy in some critics' statements that there is a parallel to James's life in "The Jolly Corner." However, in studying the tale, it appears that there is only a suggestion of James's life in the story and that any life parallels and Freudian studies of Henry James (Spencer Brydon) trying to rid himself of an American influence do not hold up to close examination. Instead, the mastery of James's technique becomes evident in his description of Spencer Brydon as a man in search of himself after a useless life.

The feminine character Alice Staverton has also been a puzzling figure of the critics. Most criticism dwells on Alice's faithfulness and her maternal qualities; however some critics have attempted to create

a new role for Alice, as being sexual mother-lover symbol or as the integrative force in a Dionysian cycle of sacrifice. What is ultimately revealed by James is that Alice has become so much a part of Spencer Brydon's life that she can foresee what will happen to him because of his actions and statements when he is with her. In this sense, she is capable of "dreaming" of the ghost as Brydon is viewing it, and she comes to his aid.

The ghost itself has created a number of speculative studies by scholars. Since there was so much critical conflict over the interpretations of the ghost, a closer study was necessary to either clear up the confusion or to ascertain who had analyzed the story most accurately. Both Alice and Spencer recognize the ghost as the real Spencer Brydon, which means that this is probably just what James intended. Why then is there so much difference in critical opinion? It stems from James's use of the language and also from his very vague and eerie description of the ghost. What most critics have done is read the description of the ghost believing that it is, in fact, some other aspect of Spencer Brydon, when it is merely a reflection of the real Spencer Brydon. With this thought in mind, the story then ends on a note of self-acceptance, as well as a start of a new life for Spencer Brydon and Alice Staverton.

The problem in most studies of Henry James's stories is to separate fact from fiction, and this is what some critics have failed to do. To read Henry James, one must keep his technique in mind - a technique that includes life experience, as well as fictional ideas. Thus, the writing

3.

of James is that of a man who studies life and then utilizes it to his artistic advantage.

4.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CONFLICT OF CULTURE: EUROPE VS. AMERICA

Henry James's story "The Jolly Corner" has been the object of much criticism since 1945. The tale has been interpreted as an autobiographical account of a childhood dream, as well as a revelation of James's attitudes toward "modern" America, specifically, American business. Other interpretations combine the autobiographical material with a psychoanalytical approach, resulting in a Freudian study of Henry James, the man. Finally, there are those interpretations dealing with the story itself and James's technique. It is this aspect of criticism that will be developed here. Other ideas and theories will be studied and criticized, but the body of the thesis concerns the tale, one of James's most difficult and most intriguing.

The paper is divided into four areas of discussion, beginning with the conflict of culture between Europe and America. Spencer Brydon epitomizes this conflict through his two houses; one of them is old, holding memories for Brydon of the elegant past, which is what Europe symbolizes for him, and the other house is in the process of being remodeled and modernized, which brings out in Brydon a latent aptitude for business. His search for the past (the old) while being involved in the present (the new) becomes a source of confusion within himself, finally leading to "confrontation" with the "past" in the old house.

The second area of discussion centers on the character of Alice

Staverton. Her role has been given more attention in recent criticism and there is some question about what she represents. In some ways she acts as a mother-image to Brydon and is sensitive to his thoughts. In other ways she is more like a lover, a fact that James mentions in the beginning of the story. In this capacity, she acts as a "confidante" to Brydon and is there when he needs her. James has interwoven the two aspects of her personality into a character who is intelligent and yet remains a feminine symbol.

The third division concerns the house, the beast and the search as symbols of discovery for Brydon. Again there is a conflict of scholarly opinion centering on what James meant by placing such emphasis on these things. The buildup of suspense in this section of the tale is designed to bring the reader into Brydon's mind, and this is done very successfully. It is also a revelation of Jamesian technique in writing.

Brydon's confrontation with the ghost concludes the discussion of the story. The ghost itself has been interpreted in as many ways as there are possible. It is in this area of discussion that some critics have read too much into James's life and thoughts. It is a culmination of a complex tale of terror and self-discovery, and James has achieved these ends superbly.

When reading anything by James, we must always keep his technique in mind. He is rich in imagery and his language reveals constant care with word meaning. Perhaps this is why each critic believes that his interpretation is the real answer to what James was implying. It is the story itself that proves James's mastery as a writer, and it is the story

that remains worthy of study.

Of the short stories Henry James wrote, "The Jolly Corner" is one of the most puzzling and intriguing, mainly because of James's development of the protagonist, Spencer Brydon. Since he has been interpreted in many ways, it is necessary to study these interpretations to come to a conclusion as to who or what Spencer Brydon really is. One of the first points James makes in the story is that Spencer Brydon notices the difference between the America he remembers and the America he has returned to. James also contrasts the opposing cultures of Europe and America, thus establishing a base for the creation of his tale. This contrast of civilizations has become the basis for several critical arguments since 1945. In exploring the story, various critics have formed interesting, and sometimes strange opinions of James's intent when writing it. The main argument is whether this story can qualify as a parallel to James's life or portions of it.

Upon his return to America after thirty-three years of self-isolation, Spencer Brydon is confronted by a country that he no longer recognizes. The innovations and symbols of progress disturb him and lead to a conflict between past and present. James embodies the past and present in the forms of two old houses that Brydon inherits. From his description of these two dwellings and their effect on Brydon, the conflict is evolved.

One house is considered "inferior", perhaps because of its position on the street, a symbol of the modern progressive world. James describes it as he describes Spencer's reactions to the "new" America; it is in

the middle of the street "two bristling blocks westward" and is "in the course of reconstruction as a tall mass of flats."¹ It is "not quite so 'good'" (p. 546) as the other house, but it has one attribute which is puzzling and intriguing to Brydon. He has discovered, with astonishment, that he has a natural ability for business, and he cannot quite determine "what to make of this lively stir, in a compartment of his mind never yet penetrated" (p. 546). This sudden discovery of a new capacity in himself leads Brydon to speculate what his "Form" might have been and, thus, James sets up the story. Even though the construction on the house is considered "vulgar" and "sordid", Spencer is constantly on the scene "overseeing" the work. He molds the aptitudes for business and construction in his mind until they become "virtues" which "amuse" and "charm" him. He even refers to them as having "slept the sleep of the just" (p. 546). It should be noted that the idea of "compartments" already refers to his mind, an unexplored section at that. This reference is later employed when Brydon begins his nocturnal explorations.

In contrast to all the construction and activity at the western house is the house on the "jolly corner" or the eastern house. This "great gaunt shell" holds many childhood memories for Brydon. Significantly, the house is located on the eastward corner, "the 'jolly' one precisely" (p. 549) of an intersection. One of the streets forming the intersection is now "dishonoured and disfigured in its westward reaches" (p. 549), but it is saved by the other, the Avenue, which still lays claim to "decency." There is in these streets, as there is in Spencer's mind, a division of feeling. The house itself is vacant with nothing

but "great blank rooms" and Brydon has been stubbornly resisting the renovation of it. He professes that there are "values other than the beastly rent-values" (p. 551), such as the "past in fine that these things [rooms, silver-plated doorknobs, mahogany doors] represented" and "the impalpable ashes of his long-extinct youth, afloat in the very air like microscopic motes" (p. 552). On emerging from the house to the street, Spencer is reminded of "the assault of the outer light of the Desert on the traveller emerging from an Egyptian tomb" (p. 553), again relating the house to the past, the dead past.

Through all the scenes and descriptions of the two houses, Spencer's egotistical attitude is developed more fully. He is "secretly agitated" by his desire to make money and to get involved in business, which would immediately plunge him into the modern world he so despises; so he clings to the past in the form of the house on "the jolly corner." As he gets involved in this "new" world, he becomes more introspective and ponders the effect of the new experience on his life.

Of the many critical views of this story, one of the most prominent and frequently discussed analyses is that of Saul Rosenwig (1944). Although he does deal more with other aspects of the story, he makes an interesting, if rather unusual comment on the European-American experience in the tale. Throughout his Freudian analysis Mr. Rosenwig attempts to link the life of Henry James with his writing. His whole argument is based on a tenuous connection between one of James's earliest stories ("The Story of a Year"), James's life in America, and "The Jolly Corner," written after the last visit to America in 1904-05. For Mr. Rosenwig,

the visit to America was the result of an impulse by James to "repair, if possible, the injury and to complete the unfinished experience of his youth. He was, as it were, haunted by the ghost of his own past and of this he wished to disabuse his mind before actual death overtook him."² He believes that an early injury to James's back was a significant factor in his leaving the United States, since it kept him from fighting in the Civil War. He states that Brydon's return to America is to "confront his former self,"³ just as he presumes James did on his 1904 visit. "There is thus represented here not merely a harkening back with vain regrets, but an obvious effort to overcome old barriers and pass beyond them."⁴ This analogy of life to story is possible, but it is doubtful that James's life paralleled this story. Certainly the American visit must have influenced him; but to assume that he came back to exorcise a ghost, and that this idea had obsessed him so throughout his life that he expressed the same idea in his first and in one of his last stories, seems faulty. It is hard to believe, as Mr. Rosenwig does, that "neurotic repression failed to yield, and a severe nervous depression that expressed his [James's] sense of defeat ensued."⁵ Mr. Rosenwig's theories will be discussed at more length later, but his idea on the life-story parallel has become the basis for some interesting speculations on just what James's intent was when this story was written and on how much of the story was autobiographical and how much was pure imagination of an artist.

In his biography of James, Leon Edel (1953) links the life of James to "The Jolly Corner," but he does not view it in the same light

as Rosenwig. His view is that James always had a "fear" of the past, and that it is this he reveals in his story. To Edel "James's cherishing of the old was also a merging of the philtres of love and fear. The past could inspire and it could also frighten. It seemed so completely dead and safe and secure - but was it?"⁶ Edel believes that James wove this combination of reverence by using this combination of reverence and fear of the past into the context of his tale. Here, then, would be James the writer incorporating his feelings into the story, but not revealing a neurotic sense of guilt and frustration toward his childhood.

Robert Rogers (1956) links the story to James's life, or, as Mr. Rogers has stated: "Naturally our discussion takes its orientation from the sexual life of Henry James as it is known."⁷ Rogers bases this theory on the accident that James had while still a young man and that Rosenwig connected with the Civil War as well as "The Jolly Corner." Mr. Rogers also relies on James's description of a nightmare he had in his youth in which he "turned the tables" on a ghost. This, to Rogers, becomes the most important link between James's life and the story. The two houses become representative of Brydon's [James's] personality: "the regressive, womb-seeking man as he exists in life and the aggressive, beast-like alter ego."⁸ Mr. Rogers reads the description of Brydon's supervision of the remodeling on the western house as purely sexual in image. It is hard to believe that climbing a ladder or walking a plank represents coitus, even in the subconscious, but this is what Mr. Rogers wishes us to believe. Alice is also connected with sexual

imagery through her interest in the buildings: this, to Rogers, reveals "the child's assumption of the mother's interest in his penis."⁹ The phallic symbol becomes the "key" in interpreting the story, and Rogers links it to James's use of doors, keys, candles, and walking sticks. In short, Mr. Rogers leaves no word unturned in his search for sexual imagery. The story becomes a maze of sexual images, all of which supposedly link themselves to Henry James's sexual repressions during his life. Mr. Rogers may be right in assuming that there are sexual images in the story, but his application becomes overzealous and ridiculous by the end of his analysis.

A contradiction to Rosenwig's theory of the parallel to James's life has been written by Floyd Stovall (1957). He feels that "the question of whether this story has autobiographical significance seems irrelevant" and that the "true Spencer Brydon . . . is not necessarily either anti- or pro-American."¹⁰ Stovall recounts sides of James's visit to America that Rosenwig did not discuss. His argument against the theory of America's being depressing to James on the 1904 visit is a note by James that "the precious stretch of space between Washington Square and Fourteenth Street," which was the neighborhood of his birth and childhood, was almost unchanged and therefore altogether delightful."¹¹ To Stovall, the New York James visited and linked romantically and sentimentally with his past becomes the object of his idealization, as Europe was in his youth. Stovall aptly cuts Mr. Rosenwig's theory down with his closing that the story "bears a sufficient weight of meaning without our laying upon it the incubus of Freudian symbolism."¹²

James's skill as a writer and his selection of wording does not indicate that the sub-conscious or the neurotic workings of his mind would crop up in his stories to such an extent that his whole life could be linked to one story or would reveal his success or failure as a man. Perhaps collectively the writings could point up such an idea, but hardly in just one story. The tale itself is worthy of more criticism than just linking biographical events to it.

Characterization in contrast to the previous studies which centered on the biographical approach is stressed by Quentin Anderson (1957), who believes Brydon has refused to "incur the guilt of experience - that plunge into the possibilities of our nature which inspires both exaltation and dread."¹³ Anderson feels that this is what Brydon discovers upon his return to America. Since he has led a "greedy" life, his talents in business utilize that "greed" to his advantage. "The man who has had the habit of destroying important letters unopened, the man who cannot conceive that Alice Staverton should expect anyone to 'live' in New York, has been belatedly awakened as to his own possibilities."¹⁴ From this point Brydon speculates on his "Form" if he had stayed. Anderson states that James made it quite clear there is no difference between a greedy "American expatriate" and a greedy "American millionaire." Brydon admits that he is "selfish" and he knows he is thought of by many as "barely decent", but he has made no attempt to change. His delight and puzzlement over his new "capacity" incites him to more involvement in construction and more speculation on his "Form." This would match Anderson's belief that James did not attempt to change the character of Brydon after his return to America. It is not until

his encounter with the ghost that he begins to change, and then his greed is "channeled" into his new life with Alice.

A return to the autobiographical approach has been written by Christof Wegelin (1958). He too feels that the visit to America in 1904 deeply influenced James's later writings. Although he believes that the later works were portrayals of civilization as "seen from without," he believes that America was "the center of his subject"¹⁵ and that "The Jolly Corner" can be closely documented with James's letters. Unlike Rosenwig, Wegelin does not bring up any previous experience James had, but rather dwells on the money aspect of America as making an impression on James. He feels that James is paralleling his own attitudes toward the American businessman through Spencer Brydon. Although he thinks James was refusing "to oppose one cultural value to another"¹⁶ in the story, he points out the fact that it is the European who has the charm and "civilization" as opposed to the American with his millions. Wegelin develops this as his argument for the autobiographical approach. Just as James was impressed with America but returned to England, so Alice according to Wegelin, chooses the charming European over the rich American. However, James makes a point of having Alice remark that she would have liked Brydon in any way, which deflates Wegelin's theory. His closing comment is that James's view of American wealth is one of "dreary ugliness which, in the letters, he [James] associates with the 'vast mechanical, industrial, social, financial' power everywhere else in evidence."¹⁷ It is this feeling that comes through quite strongly in "The Jolly Corner." James may have

despised the wealth of industrial America, but it does not necessarily follow that this is the whole basis for the story. It is more than just the American businessman he is dealing with in the story; he is resolving the inner conflict of one man - Spencer Brydon - who is not to be confused with Henry James.

Concurring with Wegelin's ideas of America as the "center" of the story, Marius Bewley (1959) develops a stranger theme. He believes that the story is definitely "anti-American" and that it reflects James's feelings toward America after his visit here in 1904. His claim is that "The Jolly Corner" fits in the category of "economic" stories and that it reveals an insight of James's attitude after his return to England. Bewley states that when "The Jolly Corner" is compared to James's "pro-American" novels (The Golden Bowl and The Wings of the Dove), there is "an inexplicable reversal of values."¹⁸ The reason for this reversal is "a new awareness of the sinister side of the economic age"¹⁹ that James discovered on his visit to America. Again, the critic has developed only one side of James's views of America. Undoubtedly, the trip influenced him and gave him many ideas to work with in writing, but it is very difficult to prove that James used just his personal feelings in writing this story. The opposition of two cultures makes an interesting basis for the story, but it does not succeed in making the whole story "anti-American", nor does it reveal a "sheer intensity of loathing" for America. It serves better as a basis for the conflict in the character of Spencer Brydon which he must resolve himself; it is this conflict that makes the story so gripping. James's placing of

Europe against America in the story is another one of his masterly touches that help build and complete the image of a character in fiction.

Charles Sanford (1961) presents a slightly different view of the European-American trend of criticism. His concern is not so much with the anti-American feeling as it is with James's feeling that America as an Eden has disappeared. "The Jolly Corner" relates "the contrast of innocence and corruption . . . to the contrast between an ideal past and a sordid present."²⁰ It is true that Spencer is dismayed by the changes in society and the Industrialization of America, but is also true that he chose to leave the "earlier simpler, more natural society"²¹ that Sanford feels he missed. His life in Europe has presumably been one of following the arts, which would make him a stranger to both worlds - the childhood past and the industrial present. What Spencer must do, and what James has him do, is ultimately reconcile himself to both worlds and to the past as well as the present. Mr. Sanford seems to concur with the other critics when he suggests that the story "should be read in conjunction with James's poetic record of his 1904 visit to America, The American Scene, which also concerns the ravages of time."²² He parallels the black stranger, Alice Staverton and the "great material power of the new America, unharnessed to worthy ends"²³ to James's disgust with progress as a form of corruption in The American Scene. Sanford chooses the metaphor of the "small tight bud," which Brydon refers to as the alter ego of his youth, and ties it to the theme of corruption in America by industrialization. However, Sanford's use of the "monstrous growth" as a parallel to American corruption does not

follow James's use of the metaphor. The feeling of the alter ego being "blighted and spoiled" refers to what Europe has done to Spencer's life, not America (" . . . I just took the course, I just transferred him to a climate, that blighted him for once and forever" (p. 555)). Mr. Sanford is correct in picking out elements of the Edenic theme in the story; however, James ends the story with Spencer releasing the house of the past ("innocence" and "ideal past") to the renovators ("corruption" and "sordid present"), and yet he does not present Spencer as giving in to an overwhelmingly disastrous life in industry or falling from grace. Again, the anti-American point of view does not succeed as being the main aspect of the story. It does not altogether parallel James's visit either, since the visit was not entirely adverse as described by James in The American Scene.

To Walter Wright (1962) "The Jolly Corner" does not fit James's life, and he believes that the story itself is more important than a probable link with James' life. He admits that there are definite parallels to James's attitude towards America after the 1904 visit, but that "the story could have been told differently, however, if James had wanted only to discuss the pros and cons of his own way of life."²⁴ He reminds the reader of an earlier statement by James "that to create certain of his heroes and their histories he had to look within and virtually to turn himself inside out."²⁵ Wright feels that James used an idea from "the recesses of his mind" and expanded it, "with the aid of imagery and symbolism,"²⁶ into one of his short stories. Taken in this way, the happenings in the story must be accepted by the reader as

"literal facts" in order to understand what James was doing. Mr. Wright attacks the story from this angle; he proceeds by looking at Spencer Brydon in his two roles. There is a conflict of Brydon's American values of the past and his European values of the present. Both of these are strained by the "new" America which confronts him upon his return. "The ugly things from his youthful days now have a charm for him, and, in contrast, the new buildings are big, queer, and monstrous. He is actually lost in a strange world, though he is not yet conscious of that fact. If he is not to remain lost, he will have to search for his own identity. If he is homeless, we may conclude that the cause is in part that the world has not stood still while he himself has changed from youth to middle age."²⁷ Mr. Wright points out that Brydon, in discovering his new talent, construction, becomes involved in both creation and destruction. He has been concerned about the destruction of old places he knew and their replacement by new "creations." In his new capacity as a businessman, he finds himself creating new buildings after he has destroyed the original building. He is now captivated by two movements completely foreign to him - destroying and creating. Wright also points out that the destruction could be related to a destruction of the past, and the creating could be a building of a new life. To carry Wright's idea even further, Brydon, in his moment of terror during the descent from the frightening upper floors, gives in to the act of destruction as a "sacrifice," perhaps of the past. In this moment of relenting, he feels delight in the fact that "they might come in now, the builders, the destroyers - they might come as soon as

they would" (p. 573). Presumably, after this thought, Brydon is free to build a new life with Alice Staverton.

Again reverting to the autobiographical approach, Maxwell Geismar (1963) focuses on Henry James as a prototype for Spencer Brydon. His theory is based on Brydon's reference to leaving home "in the teeth of my father's curse" (p. 555), which could be a reference by James to his "conflict, choice and exile." To Mr. Geismar, Spencer Brydon and Henry James are the same person, and what one says in the story may be applied to the other's life, which could hardly be an adequate view. He refutes the Freudian analysis of Saul Rosenwig, as well as one by Clifton Fadiman, that the "death of passion" in James was due to an obscure wound received prior to the Civil War, which prevented his entry into the fighting. Geismar says that "there was no 'death of passion' in James's life or career, simply because he had never reached the point of passion."²⁸ Mr. Geismar is convinced that Henry James was "lifeless" and that his writings revealed a childish attitude toward sex which was "voyeuristic." As to the "complexity" of James's mind, Mr. Geismar concludes that it is "almost conventional or trite - certainly clever or ingenious rather than profound. In one sense we can state categorically that Henry James never had an idea."²⁹ He arrives at this conclusion after deciding that there was an "absence of content" in James's writings which James concealed by using a complex style. Why Mr. Geismar feels there must be a wealth of content is a puzzle. What is important is what James did with his "absence of content," and Mr. Geismar seems to be the only one who feels the end result was not worth much. He does not believe

in a "second death" through withdrawal to Europe, because America was "death" to James. This is revealed, according to Geismar, in James's early works as well as in "The Jolly Corner". The visit to America in 1904 was "simply to confirm, to expand, to applaud and to celebrate the whole purpose of his own European pilgrimage - as The American Scene shows without question as the end of 'The Jolly Corner' also proclaims."³⁰ Mr. Geismar is very disdainful of any criticism but his own. He disregards the Freudian theories, which might be a wise thing to do, but then continues on to demolish the "curious kind of literary or critical imagination in the 1940's and '50's," ending with the suggestion that James might just be "a master magician of the verbal order"³¹ and a "minor writer" as opposed to the views of many critics. He seems to be suggesting that Henry James was a master of the "put on" and that only Maxwell Geismar is clever enough to see through it.

Another interesting theory concerning the past and present is by Fred C. Thomson (1963). His idea is that James was employing an ocean metaphor throughout the story and that this metaphor ultimately linked Brydon's European and American experiences to make him complete. During Brydon's frantic descent from the upper floors of the house, the atmosphere takes on the aspects of "some watery under-world" with "zones" of varying degrees of illumination. As he nears the final landing, the floor becomes "the bottom of the sea" where he "sinks" a glance, only to see the "ghost." Using this imagery, Mr. Thomson has developed a strange cycle connecting the two countries and Spencer Brydon. His concept that the self which would have developed in America is different

from the self which did develop in Europe is no different from that of other critics, but linking the two countries and "selves" by tying the voyage above water and the ocean floor below water is forced. He states that "it is this submerged link that gives Brydon his chance of finally making contact with the past and his unfulfilled alter ego. In order to do so, however, he must first reach to the depths of the sea he has already recrossed on the surface."³² To reach these depths, Brydon must pass through the doorway to the house he deserted thirty-three years before. In this vestibule Thomson sees "both the bottom of the sea and the surface. From it Brydon fled over the Atlantic, and returning to it he tries to sound the past and dredge up what he abandoned in it."³³ Brydon's rescue from his unnatural retreat would come from touching "the bottom of the sea" where he is revolted by the "truth he beholds there." Thomson concludes that his rescue comes from this revulsion and from the care of Alice Staverton. This analysis remains rather vague when taken into consideration with the rest of the story. The water imagery is definitely an important part of this scene, and it is used effectively by James to create an eerie atmosphere, but it does not seem to be "the main theme and psychological substance" as Mr. Thomson points out. The metaphor becomes inconclusive, since it does not follow through the tale or even appear enough to make it a valid one for a complete interpretation of the story.

Although Krishna B. Vaid (1964) does not dwell at length on the past-present theme, he does mention it in connection with previous criticisms. He takes into account the facts that James used some of

the ideas from A Sense of the Past, that there was a connection between the tale and James's dream about the Galerie d'Apollon in his childhood, and that the visit to America in 1904 must have had some influence on the tale, no matter how small it was. What he disagrees with is Saul Rosenwig's "farfetched" and "least relevant" theory connecting the tale to "The Story of a Year" and to James's experiences as a young man. Vaid adds to these his suggestion that James used the theme of the American returning home after several years abroad in the later tales, "Crapy Cornelia" (1909) and "A Round of Visits" (1910). However, he does not push his suggestion any further and concludes his commentary on this aspect of the tale with the admonition that "the strictly biographical-psychoanalytical [criticisms] especially should not be allowed to distract us from the task of examining 'The Jolly Corner' itself,"³⁴ which is an admirable suggestion.

The most recent criticism discussing the past-present or European-American theme comes from Earl Rovit (1965). He has noted that there is an "allegorical construct which is the house itself"³⁵ and that all the action takes place there. The rest of New York City is "exterior" to the house and all of this activity exists on a "different level of reality." Rovit feels that the imagery used to describe the city is important in making up Brydon's concept of the alter ego. The dissociation with these people who are "money-mad" and Brydon's withdrawal from society "is a sign not so much of refined sensibilities as of an abortive disengagement from the libidinous sources of energy which alone can give him the power to create, to love and to escape the imprisonment of his

frozen egotism."³⁶ This, to Rovit, means that Brydon is refusing the "masculine element" represented by the "money-mad" people and the alter ego and, to become a "whole" person, Brydon must accept this aspect of life. To achieve this, Rovit believes, Alice Staverton acts as an integrative device to unite the two forces in Spencer. Mr. Rovit's theory is sensible, but in his statement that Brydon has completely withdrawn himself from sources that would endow him with "the power to create" he is omitting the fact that for the duration of the nocturnal visits to the house, Brydon is constantly involved in the remodeling of the house on the westward side of the street. This strange compulsion of his to involve himself in business is also an important part of developing the alter ego. Without the urge to "oversee" the construction, the rest of the tale would be flat. Perhaps this activity, in addition to his dissociation from "money-mad" people, enables Brydon to visualize and eventually "meet" his alter ego. Without the impetus of one activity, the other would not develop. As Brydon is drawn into business more and more, he tries to pull away from it in another fashion - that of avoiding the business people. Thus he would feel he was evening the balance between the old and the new. From this view, then, Mr. Rovit's theory would fit the story and Spencer could return to and accept the "masculine element" in his life after his "experience."

James utilizes this conflict of past and present throughout the first part of the tale to build the image of a man in conflict with himself. Skillfully he reveals Brydon's reaction to the changes he sees in New York. Brydon is placed "under the charm" of all the old things

from the past and the new objects become "sources of dismay" in their monstrosity. He finally comes to no "socially producible" attitude toward New York, as James notes in his "dim secondary social success" (p. 559) and the fact that, to Brydon, these people make up "a bristling line of hard unconscious heads" (p. 559). It is from his recognition of this fact that he moves into a totally self-centered attitude. From this point on his social activities are "surface sounds", and his responses are "extravagant shadows." James has set the stage for the rest of his drama, which will build in suspense until its strange climax. He closes the circle of the past and present with Spencer turning the house on "the jolly corner" over to the remodelers, thus completing his "destruction" of the past.

In reviewing the criticisms, the parallels to James's life become less important as the content of the tale is studied. It is true, as Edel, Stevall, Wegelin, Sanford, Wright and Vaid state, that James was undoubtedly influenced in many ways by his visit to America. But it is hard to prove that the visit was made by James "to confront his former self" or to pat himself on the back for living in Europe. The story does not reveal a "sheer intensity of loathing" for America either. It is instead a combination of experience and imagination molded by the author into a complex tale blending many images to create a superb portrait of a man in conflict with himself.

CHAPTER TWO

ALICE STAVERTON: MOTHER, LOVER, OR SCHEMER?

The role of Alice Staverton in "The Jolly Corner" is a strange one, and it has been interpreted in various ways. In the earlier criticism not much was said about Alice, perhaps because her part in the story is so puzzling. As more interpretations were made of the story, her importance as an integral part of the tale became more evident. She is needed as a "link" for Brydon and as the final factor in his "self-realization."

There are some concrete facts about Alice which can serve as a starting point for interpreting her role in the story. In the first paragraph James reveals Spencer's attachment to Alice Staverton. There is no doubt that Spencer is spending as much time as possible with Alice, "with whom for a couple of months now he had availed himself of every possible occasion to talk" (p. 544). Why he is spending so much time with Alice is revealed in Spencer's and Alice's attitudes toward the "modern" world. To Spencer, Alice is a contrast to "the vast wilderness of the wholesale" and "the mere gross generalization of wealth and force and success" (p. 547). Her way of life is like "a small still scene" which offers relief to Spencer from the new world that confronts him. Alice, in turn, reflects Spencer's views, and, if he is intrigued by the old and horrified by the new, so Alice stands off "the modern crush" and all "the public concussions and ordeals" (p. 548). James also notes that

the two are old friends, probably old sweethearts, and that they share "the spirit she after all confessed to, proudly and a little shyly, as to that of the better time, that of their common, their quite far-away and antediluvian social period and order" (p. 547).

Alice emerges as a woman strong enough to "affront, inscrutably, under stress, all the public concussions and ordeals" (pp. 547-548) and yet she has a "slim, mystifying grace" which makes her seem eternally young. To Spencer, she is like "some pale pressed flower," she is "exquisite," and she is "a sufficient reward of his effort" (p. 548). That she has a deep feeling for him is revealed in her deference to his wishes and her references to "their" common knowledge. She has been faithfully waiting for Spencer for thirty-three years, and although he has been unfaithful and free to wander, she has remained "still unobscured, still exposed and cherished, under that pious visitation of the spirit from which she had never been diverted" (p. 548).

The mention of her "spirit" ties in with James's reference to her powers of "divination," which help her to see the intensity of Spencer's malaise. Dwelling further on this aspect of Alice, it becomes clear that with her close knowledge of Spencer's past and her constant companionship, she would be the logical person to see what was happening to him. She is the one who voices the thoughts that have been forming in Spencer's mind. Her statements that "he had clearly for too many years neglected a real gift" and that "if he had but stayed home he would have discovered his genius" (p. 548) bring Spencer's thoughts of the past out in the open. She very keenly remarks on the "sentimental" value of the

house on "the jolly corner" and even mentions the "ghost" of a reason serving to hold Brydon to the house. James has been very careful in building this image of Alice, for he describes her as a woman who "listened to everything," "answered intimately," and "utterly didn't chatter" (p. 552). She often answers Spencer in an ironical tone and her actions "imply" things to him. Through all these descriptions and statements, James makes it credible for her to understand what Spencer is going through in his mind.

Her further probes into Spencer's character open the subject of what he might have been. Spencer confesses to the absurdity of his speculation and to the "habit of too selfishly thinking" (p. 554), but he cannot leave off the subject of what his form might have been. Alice, being familiar with his past, agrees with his interpretation of an alter ego that was like "a full-blown flower . . . in the small tight bud" (p. 555) and that was "blighted" by being transferred to another climate. She describes the image as being "quite splendid, quite huge and monstrous" (p. 555), but is only the last word that Spencer remembers and she observes how obsessed he really is with the idea. Her attempt to talk logically with Brydon about the past fail, and even her declaration of love for him does not deter him from pursuing his alter ego.

Her revelation of the two dreams furthers the reader's knowledge of just how well she knows Spencer. Up to this point Spencer's conversation has centered around himself - as he is, as he was, and as he might have been. Alice offers to tell Brydon point-blank whether he is as good as he might have been, but she reads in his face that he does not really

want to know quite yet. Instead, she replies, "Oh you don't care either - but very differently: you don't care for anything but yourself" (p. 557). To his remark that he will see his other self, she retorts that she has seen him - twice. With this remark and the qualification that she saw him in a dream, she drops out of sight and it is not until Spencer regains consciousness on the stairs that she appears again. How Alice saw the "ghost" in her dream, and later arrived at the house earlier than her appointment, has been a source of controversy with some critics. Does she see the ghost in her dreams or is it a figment of her imagination? As James revealed before, she knew what was going on in Spencer's mind and had discussed his "other self" with him. She further shows that she has known what Brydon was doing at the house when she says, "I believed at least that you'd been here. I've known, all along . . . that you've been coming . . . Well, I've believed it. I said nothing to you after that talk we had a month ago - but I felt sure. I knew you would" (p. 581). Since she has been with Brydon regularly, she would be the first to notice his destruction and inwardness developing from day to day. Also, she loves him and tells him she'd love him in any form. That she describes the ghost accurately is not as mysterious as it may seem; she could be describing the real Spencer Brydon, as he is under the "disguise" of worldliness. If the last passage in the story is examined, it may be interpreted as describing how Spencer actually looked:

"He has been unhappy; he has been ravaged," she said.
 "And haven't I been unhappy? Am not I - you've only to look at me! - ravaged?"

'Ah I don't say I like him better,' she granted after a thought. 'But he's grim, he's worn - and things have happened to him. He doesn't make shift, for sight, with your charming monocle.'

'No' - it struck Brydon: 'I couldn't have sported mine "downtown." They'd have geyed me there.'

'His great convex prince-nez - I saw it. I recognized the kind - it is for his poor ruined sight. And his poor right hand - !'

'Ah!' Brydon winced - whether for his proved identity or for his lost fingers. Then, 'He has a million a year,' he lucidly added. 'But he hasn't told you.'

'And he isn't - no, he isn't - you!' she murmured as he drew her to his breast." (pp. 583-584; additional italics are mine.)

Notice that the antecedent in James's last description of Brydon is Brydon - not the ghost. In this way, Alice's dream and Spencer's "ghost" are identical, and Alice emerges as a woman who, through her strong love for Brydon, perceives the thoughts that go through Brydon's mind and the actions that result from them.

Saul Rosenwig (1944) has little to say about Alice Staverton, since his whole interpretation revolves around the James-Brydon figure, but he does comment on her dream of the ghost. From her statement that the ghost is "different" from Brydon, Rosenwig deduces that she "could have been in love with the rejected personality (the ghost) since she understood it. She is, however, equally ready to accept Brydon as he is today and reconcile him, perhaps, to those unacknowledged aspects of himself which have kept him from her all these years - which have driven him abroad to escape himself."³⁷ His concept of Alice as the faithful lover coincides with James's presentation of her, but Rosenwig then tries to link her with Elizabeth Crowe, the heroine in "The Story of a Year" and it is at this point that the analysis is far-fetched. Rosenwig links the dream situation in the two stories, an attempt that is accurate only

because the two women had dreams. That James used this device twice in his writing does not mean that he was writing a counterpart to "The Story of a Year" in "The Jolly Corner."

A much stronger approach has been taken by Edwin Honig (1949), who places Alice in the role of the "mother-substitute," which is a part of the rebirth cycle of the Dionysus myth. Briefly, Honig's idea is that this story fits the pattern of the rites of Dionysus, which consist of an animal's (Dionysus' disguise) being sacrificed to an image of the god by his worshippers. In "The Jolly Corner" the pattern is applied to the problem of the central character (Brydon) achieving "total self-hood" which is solved by Alice Staverton's suggestion of another "self" in her dream. Through this "other self" she "becomes identified with it as an heroic substitute-agent. The climax of the action, through which the sought self is encountered, invariably produces a 'merciful fraud.' That is to say, either some disguise of the total self or the substitute-agent is sacrificed, released or destroyed, as a less worthy victim in the act of reaching the complete consciousness of self."³⁸

Honig points out that the scene at the foot of the stairs where Alice cradles Spencer's head in her lap is typical of the depiction of the Dionysian rites. "No small 'part of the ritual the event of Brydon's 'rebirth,' depends on the maternal-romantic role of Miss Staverton. For it is she, as the fruitful mother-substitute, who has induced the growth of Brydon's search through the dark womb of the past, the passages from which he emerges reborn. And it is she, as the prize of love, his lady, to whom he returns with the dragon head of his worldly self dangling from his consciousness."³⁹ Thus Alice fulfills both a romantic and

maternal role according to Honig. She is also important in consummating the "merciful fraud," which is the conclusion of the Dionysian rites. To Honig her admission that the "black stranger" is not Brydon acts as a "substitute sacrifice" for Brydon himself and completes the cycle of rebirth. Mr. Honig's theory is an interesting one, and it does fit the story. The only point of contention would be in his statement that she "induced" Brydon to search for himself. James writes that at the time Alice mentioned what Spencer might have been, Spencer already had experienced "the queerest and deepest of his own lately most disguised and most muffled vibrations" (p. 549). Other than this, Alice does create a strange feeling in Spencer about his alter ego. Perhaps it is her statement that she has seen the ghost which causes Spencer to continue his nightly wanderings. She had stated earlier that Brydon "had clearly for too many years neglected a real gift" (p. 548) and that "he would have discovered his genius" (p. 548) if he had stayed in America, but these statements do not seem to affect Brydon as much as the fact that she has seen the ghost and he has not yet. At any rate, Mr. Honig presents a thorough case for his theory, and it makes the story that much more interesting to see this possible parallel.

Another critic who accepts the mother image is John Shroeder (1951), but he takes a completely different slant from Honig. Shroeder's thesis is that there is a symbolic recurrence in four of James's later tales and that they all revolve around the mother image. In the four tales ("The Great Good Place," "The Beast in the Jungle," "Crapy Cornelia," and "The Jolly Corner") there are several specific resemblances that recur, such

as a strange relationship between a "mature, sensitive gentlewoman," and an older man. The woman has been involved in the past of the man, who has returned after a disappearance of several years. From this point, Mr. Shroeder notes various maternal motifs in each story. Especially significant are the images of "death and childhood." Shroeder contends that these are not accidental images from James's sub-conscious mind, but rather that they were used purposely and that James was aware of this type of symbolism. In Alice there is an "illumination for which Brydon yearns,"⁴⁰ and through her will come Brydon's "revelation." "The mothers, fortuitously returned out of the shadowy past, offer the advantages of a 'general refuge' to each of our sensitive gentlemen."⁴¹ Mr. Shroeder points out that Alice cradles Spencer's head like a baby's rather than a man's. This observation is true, but when Mr. Shroeder suggests that Mrs. Maldoon might take the part of a "midwife," the application becomes rather forced. His suggestion is that Brydon's view from below is similar to that of a child being born. Excluding this suggestion, the rest of Mr. Shroeder's remarks could apply to Alice's character; however, there is more than just the mother image in Alice and the tale does not end on a mother-son relationship, but rather on a definite man-woman relationship with a suggestion of passion. Alice has admitted her love, and Brydon finally accepts it after his experience. There are definite overtones of her taking a partially maternal attitude toward Brydon, as James revealed in her suggestions to Brydon and her perception of his thoughts, but she emerges more strongly as a lover, a very faithful lover.

The love interest of Alice is what Maurice Beebe (1954) feels finally concludes the story. It is her love that enables her to accept "both" sides of Brydon, permitting "him to overcome his horror and recognize the other self."⁴² Alice, again showing how perceptive she is, assures Brydon that she does not like the ghost better, even though she could have liked him. This statement reassures Brydon of her love, but it also reveals to him that he is a composite of the two men and it is this he finally accepts.

If one believed Robert Rogers, (1956) "The Jolly Corner" would be one of the "sexiest" stories James ever wrote. Alice emerges as a "mother figure" in Roger's analysis, and she remains in this category, with some "stretching" in interpretation, throughout the story. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, she is linked to both houses by her interest in Brydon, which reflects the mother's protective concern for her child according to Rogers. He also notes that Alice seems to prefer the "new" Brydon to the old, a fact that Rogers sees as having sexual connotations. If Alice is linked with Brydon sexually in this aspect, how does she maintain her protective "mother-image" throughout the tale? Rogers tries to solve this problem inside the house on "the jolly corner." He ties the mother image and the sexual image together by suggesting that the mother "is phantasied as desiring the sexual attention of her son."⁴³ This analysis may be plausible, but Rogers carries it to extremes by tying it to Brydon's brief mention of unopened letters. Mr. Rogers views the letter and envelope as genital symbols ("hollow, has flaps, encloses") and that what Brydon (James) is stating, noticeably to Alice, is that he

has "never had sexual relations with a woman" and that he has "renounced relations with other women for love of her" (his mother).⁴⁴ If Mr. Rogers's interpretation appeared weak before, at this point it collapses as he stretches the image too thin. However, he carries the image through to the ending, and the last scene is interpreted as a regression by Brydon to "childhood dependence" on Alice (the mother), who cradles him in her lap, a fact that does not necessarily indicate only maternal instinct. In trying to make Alice fit in as a part of the sexual fantasy in Brydon's (James's) life, Mr. Rogers reveals the slim basis for his argument and exposes it to attack. To read his argument as the true interpretation of the story would be to see James as a man with a definite sexual problem that was constantly lurking beneath the surface and that exploded, after years of repression, in this story. This hardly seems an accurate view in consideration of James's earlier and later work.

Floyd Stovall (1957) agrees with the "love aspect" of the story as enabling Spencer to accept himself. As he states, "Alice Staverton understands him better than he understands himself."⁴⁵ Stovall's interpretation of her in this light makes it possible for her love to produce "a common psychic experience" in which they both "see" the apparition. Stovall feels that "it is the power of Alice's love, which is wholly unselfish, that has determined the character of Brydon's strange adventure. It is she who saves him from the ghostly past and later releases his buried self."⁴⁶ When Alice states that Brydon has "come to himself" she means that he has finally, through a type of conversion, recognized himself and her love, which he now needs. Stovall's interpretation is

quite clear and well documented from the story. His picture of Alice puts her in the proper perspective. She is the faithful lover who has seen the changes in Spencer and has waited all these years for Spencer to recognize himself and to discover his need of her love. In this way, it is not strange or unnatural for her to perceive what is going on in Spencer's mind. She knows what he was like in the past, what he did for thirty-three years in Europe, and what puzzles him now. Since he has been a constant visitor to her house and his one desire has been to talk of himself, there is nothing unusual about her deep perception of his personality. Her steadfast love would always serve as a bond between them, making her dream less of an unnatural experience. All of these facts make her an integral part of the story and an important link to discovery for Brydon.

Quentin Anderson (1957) also dwells on the love of Alice Staverton as an important aspect of the story. He too feels that Spencer's "discovery" enables him to accept Alice Staverton's love. However, Anderson believes that when Alice "encounters this creature (the apparition) in her dream of the same hour, she in effect replaces him."⁴⁷ In other words, Spencer takes on Alice's concept of life and forsakes the one he held on to for thirty-three years. It does not seem that James has Spencer completely reject his old way of life, but rather that he reconciles the two ways of life to become a complete man. In this instance, then, Anderson's statement goes too far. Alice admits she could have liked the "other" Spencer, and Spencer himself comes to "complete knowledge," which would be a combination of his old ideas and his new ideas.

Anderson believes that the "knowledge" refers only to Alice's new love, but it would make more sense if it meant that Spencer finally understood himself. Anderson also contends that "love has borne Brydon back a third of a century and given him an actual second chance."⁴⁸ Rather than going back, as Anderson suggests, Brydon moves ahead. He accepts all that he has been and now turns to what will make up the most important part of his future - Alice Staverton. Her love, instead of pulling him "back," brings him up to the present and allows him to look to the future without fear or regret. Anderson's analysis is partially correct in his statement that "her acceptance of his human limitation is in no way censorious. Nor is it coercive,"⁴⁹ but he is wrong in seeing Alice as the "knowledge" that Brydon has come to. She is a part of his fulfillment, not the complete fulfillment.

An interesting addition to the conception of Alice as a loving person who helps "complete" Spencer comes from Morton Zabel (1958). He too recognizes Alice as loving Brydon in any form, but his conclusion as to what effect this has on Brydon is a bit different from other critics. He believes that Brydon's "reconciliation comes less from what he has learned of himself than from what he discovers Alice never needed to learn."⁵⁰ This is a good point to make, for Brydon has been so wrapped up in himself that he has not given Alice much thought other than to acknowledge her constancy. Suddenly he realizes that Alice is very perceptive and that her intelligence matches his. His acceptance of this fact enables him to reconcile himself to more than just one aspect of his personality, too. Now there is someone to "share" his knowledge

with, presumably for the rest of his life.

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Charles Sanford (1961) stresses the use of the Edenic theme by James. In the character of Alice he sees an "intuitive life force" and she emerges as an "Eve figure" to him. This motif is continued according to Sanford, by James's description of her as a "'pale pressed flower' who keeps a garden oasis in 'the vast wilderness of the wholesale,' among the 'dreadful multiplied numberings which . . . reduced the whole place to some vast ledger-page, overgrown, fantastic, of ruled and crisscrossed lines and figures.'"⁵¹ In her role as the 'life force' she must bring Spencer back to society, and she does by successfully overcoming the obstacles of the house on "the jolly corner" and of Brydon's own mind. Sanford also interprets their love as a "sexual love," which would again place Alice in the role of a lover rather than a mother image. Sanford's conception of Spencer's "death and rebirth" is that Alice did bring him back to life, but through her love, not through her maternal care.

Walter Wright (1962) is also interested in Alice's perception, which he feels is more "prophetic" than Spencer's. Mr. Wright states that Alice is aware not only of Brydon and his alter ego, but also "of yet another possible Brydon, for when asked whether Brydon is 'as good as (he) might ever have been,' she replies, 'Oh no! Far from it.'"⁵² Mr. Wright evidently thinks that Alice can see what Brydon is composed of, i.e. the worldly traveler and the alter ego who would have been successful in America. Wright does note, however, that Alice is "dimly aware" of possibly a different Spencer Brydon, which Mr. Wright does not describe.

The importance of Alice's role, then, lies in her helping the new Brydon reconcile himself to his new "self-knowledge." She also reveals Brydon's new independence on her through her conversation with him and assumes a stronger position in the story. Mr. Wright accurately observes that she has come a long way from Brydon's first description of her as a "delicate" flower. Now that her strong character is revealed, it is necessary for her to fit this role, because she will be the person who helps Brydon overcome his shock of discovery. Through her admission that she could have loved either man, she is helping Brydon see part of himself in each man, and yet another man - a "new" Brydon - emerging from the whole experience. Mr. Wright has caught the essence of Alice's character in a description of several James "women", including Alice. "For each of these persons one could say, as James said of actual life, 'the affair of the painter is not the immediate, it is the reflected field of life . . .'" (Preface to The Princess Casamassima). With each of them we do, at times, have a sense of the immediate, but much more we have images to recall; for the influence of their words lingers and becomes more meaningful as the stories ostensibly turn to other things. Hence the paradox that the limiting - the dimming - has resulted in intensifying the portrait, in lighting up the essential features."⁵³

Alice becomes the "prize" for Spencer Brydon in William Freedman's (1962) interpretation of the story. Mr. Freedman's theory is that James wove his messages "into the texture of the work" and that the use of certain words is what finally developed the message. In this case the key words are "all," "above all," "every," "everything," "any," "anything,"

"whole," "never," "none," and "nothing." Mr. Freedman contends that these words make up a certain pattern in the story and that "James's fiction, existential at least to this extent, rests on the premise that existence precedes essence. For James, terms often had no pre-existent essence or meaning, and the work of art was necessary to establish it."⁵⁴

From this idea, Freedman points out how James used the terms throughout the story until Spencer finally reaches "self-knowledge," which is what the terms meant to him. The "self-knowledge" turns out to be having Alice Staverton as his own. "Thus the specific definition for Spencer Brydon of 'all,' of the 'everything' and 'everyone' of the first sentence is having Alice and being himself - as he is."⁵⁵ Mr. Freedman's theory is interesting and it does seem to follow through the story. It makes Spencer's quest and discovery even more vivid if viewed in this light, and it places the proper importance on the final role of Alice. She is a necessary element in completing Spencer Brydon's character, and, as Mr. Freedman notes, she is finally called "his everything." He also notes briefly that there are some metaphorical references in the story, one of them being The New Testament. His analogy to this is the recovery scene: "Spencer Brydon lying effete, his head cushioned in the lap of Alice Staverton, Mrs. Muldoon 'kneeling on the ground before him' - irresistibly evokes the picture of Christ's descent from the cross."⁵⁶

It is true that these references are there, but the metaphor has not been carried through the story and Spencer is definitely not portrayed as a Christ-figure in any place but this possible one. It is a good idea, but James has not used such a metaphor in this story and the

reference is too brief to be more than a suggestion of an image.

A brief mention of Alice Staverton by Dorothea Krook (1962) places her again in the role of the faithful lover. Miss Krook also feels that Spencer Brydon is "completed by the love proffered to him at the end by the woman whose faith in him through the years has been as steadfast as it was intelligent."⁵⁷ This comment seems to follow the general consensus of opinion on Alice's character. She is portrayed by James in those three adjectives - "faithful," "steadfast", and "intelligent."

Maxwell Geismar (1963) also calls Alice "gentle, good, [and] tactful" in his brief citation of her role in the tale. Again, revealing her love for Spencer in any form, she "accepts the maimed specter also because it is his, Spencer Brydon's."⁵⁸ Even though Mr. Geismar's interpretation of the tale is strained in parts, he is correct in his statement about Alice. Her acceptance of the ghost because it is Spencer's is actually one of the most logical things to declare from her conversation about it. She would have liked Spencer in any form, so why would this form be objectionable to her?

Using the "confidante" as the center of her analysis, Sister M. Corona Sharp (1963) dwells on Alice's penetrative powers. She, too, comments on Alice's "love," "sympathy" and "deepest devotion." Sister Sharp has cited several characteristics of the "confidante" and she notes that Alice has most of them. "She functions technically as a means of exposition and dramatization: as a character she is sympathetic to, and understanding of the conflicts of her confider; her role is cast as the second consciousness, whose place it is to supplement the insights

gained by the 'center.' In order to fill this role, her own intelligence is keen and her imagination is vivid."⁵⁹ One of the main qualities of the confidante is her sympathy for the confider, and Alice sympathizes with Spencer to the point where she enters into his ideas. Sister Sharp notes that Alice possesses "an imagination of which her mild irony is born, and which is bold enough to have created an ideal for Spencer Brydon."⁶⁰ The ideal is the "might-have-been self" which Spencer gets involved with in the old house. Through his confidences to her, she is able to penetrate his "second consciousness" and share his ideas. Sister Sharp also agrees with the theory of Alice's power of divination, which she thinks comes from this "sympathy of their minds." However, her conclusion about Alice does not fit what James has written. Sister Sharp believes that when Alice described her reaction to the ghost, she pitied him out of love for Brydon. "Why not, for if Brydon had remained in New York and turned out like that, he still might have given her the chance to marry him, which in this way she has lost."⁶¹ If anything, the story points out the possibility of the couple's getting together after the experience, not separating. Spencer's words, "Keep me," do not sound like parting words. Sister Sharp has misread James's description of Alice by dwelling on words that mean one thing in context and another by themselves, i.e. "selfishness." Alice is a strong character, and her strength is revealed in her intelligence, perceptiveness, and sympathy. It is not necessarily her "love" that "penetrates surfaces," but rather her keen mind and her powers of observation. Sister Sharp also comments that in the character of Alice it appears that James is "making a final

effort to exalt the woman as a vessel purified of all dross, an almost ethereal being endowed with divine goodness and forgiveness. The older James is sublimating his own friendships, and perhaps castigating himself for his own withdrawn and introspective manner. The author's normal sense has taken wings and borne him into a realm of romantic fancy, where, in default of any other reward, unselfishness is its own compensation."⁶² Her statement concerning sublimation of friendships places the story on a personal level, and James does not seem to be doing that with the character of Alice. Nor does he appear to be castigating his own actions in life through Alice and Brydon. Sister Sharp has become too involved with the "moral sense" of the story. It is not his own life or the "divine" aspect of women that James is revealing in this story, but rather a man's discovery of himself with the help of a highly perceptive woman. Sister Sharp's "confidante" is too unreal and too good to be true; Alice is much more human than that.

Krishna Vaid (1964) believes that Alice functions as a faithful lover and that her love is one of the strong points of the story. He notes several times that Alice loves Brydon and would have loved him no matter what he might have been. Vaid believes that she is an integral part of the romantic aspect in Brydon and the tale. "The scene of their tender conversation in which they compare notes and exchange endearments is one of the most moving, and one of the rarest, love scenes in the wide expanse of James's works."⁶³ Her pity for the ghost is for "someone who has indirectly brought them together,"⁶⁴ and Vaid believes that she sees all the possibilities and results of Brydon's character at this

moment. He also believes in the sexual love theme at the conclusion of the story. "Brydon is reborn, and the sweetest fruit of this rebirth is the consummation of his love for Alice Staverton."⁶⁵ Mr. Vaid succeeds in seeing the story from a "common sense" point of view. He rejects many of the psycho-analytical interpretations because of their "distortion" of the story, and his end result is a carefully documented and eminently sensible interpretation of Alice's role in the story.

Alice Staverton's dreams are considered as a problem in Earl Rovit's (1965) interpretation. Rovit does not feel that this part of the story has been discussed satisfactorily. Mr. Rovit does not think that Alice's final dream can be tossed off as "extrasensory communication" because there has not been adequate preparation for it in the story to convince the reader. He does not believe that dreams alone could reveal such details as the fingers and eyes to Alice, so that she must fit into the story in another capacity. Mr. Rovit introduces the idea of a "third part of a single total consciousness" for Alice; "on this level of symbolic identity, she may represent the conscience, the integrating spirit, the principle of divine love which makes selfhood possible in the fullest sense."⁶⁶ Alice is something more "real" than what Brydon is trying to chase and discover, and she is "closer to the surface of conscious reality than the dim apparition which is dredged out of the hidden corners of Brydon's personality-structure."⁶⁷ Alice is also linked to Brydon by her "spirit of the past" and yet she is capable of coping with the "money-mad" world when the need arises. To Rovit, she acts as an "integrative spirit of past and present," enabling Spencer to break out of his "guilt"

at leaving home and to enter into the world. According to Rovit, it is Alice in this role who leads Brydon to a final confrontation and acceptance of the alter ego, which allows him to escape from the guilt of rebelling against his father in his youth and from leading an inadequate life. As for Alice's "dream," Rovit believes that it is the final integrative process in the story. "On one level of allegory, the 'mother' intercedes with the wounded 'father' that the son may live. On a different allegorical key, the 'spirit' ('conscience,' 'divine love') is able to accept and absorb the raw thrust of nature ('lust,' 'greed,' 'justice'), and the total Spencer Brydon is reformed into a unitary whole."⁶⁸ Thus, Mr. Rovit views the whole tale as an allegory with "private" allegorical references. Mr. Rovit's theory is attractive, and he carefully ties up any loose ends that appear in the story, but his allegorical interpretations are too "private" and complex, making the story into something more than James wrote into it. To place Alice in the role of the mother interceding for a son in the archetypal battle between father and son is to read too much into the story. Her role as an integrative spirit absorbing the material thrust better suits her character, since James had already described her in this role early in the story. It appears that Mr. Rovit has taken too many other ideas and tried to mold them to the character of Alice in a new and different way. James, however, did not make Alice that complex, nor did he write such a "hidden" allegory in the tale. His writing is rich enough in meaning without adding the burden of "private" allegories to it.

John Clair (1965) has written the most recent criticism of Alice

Staverton, proposing a most fantastic interpretation of her role in "The Jolly Corner."

At the outset it is suggested that her objective is Brydon himself and the security and companionship which his 'capture' represents. This is not to insist, however, that her motives are entirely selfish, for not only does she realize, as Ralph Pendrel's confidante realizes, that her quarry needs help, but she appoints herself the agent of his 'rescue' and, by staging a nearly tragic Harlequinade, succeeds in placing herself in the center of Brydon's affections and possessions. The preponderant part which Alice Staverton plays in the tale indicates her importance dramatically as Brydon's antagonist . . . The 'crescendo' of the malaise is marked by the appearance of the 'ghost', but I feel that the climax of the ironic comedy is in the final scene, in which Alice, taking an enormous risk, clinches her success with a horrendous lie."69

Mr. Clair's suggestion that Alice is out to "capture" Brydon sets the tone of his essay, which he tries valiantly to follow through. He believes that her ability to "battle when the challenge was to the Spirit" is utilized in trapping Spencer, her "quarry." But James does not describe Alice in terms of a hunter; it is Brydon who is the hunter, a very secretive hunter. Clair's words to describe Alice are actually James's words describing Brydon. Mr. Clair also contradicts himself by stating that Alice does not have selfish motives, and then revealing how she forced Brydon to fall into her arms, a statement which vividly suggests selfishness. Whether she was motivated for love or money, if Clair states that she plots to get Brydon and place "herself in the center of Brydon's affections and possessions," both motives are self-centered. Mr. Clair also places Alice in the role of "antagonist." He forgets completely that the tale concentrates on the outside world as Spencer's antagonist, and finally, the ghost as an antagonist. It is at this point

that Mr. Clair reads too much into the story. Admittedly, Alice is perceptive enough to see what is happening to Brydon, but Clair tries to point out that her perception is used against Brydon, not for him. Mr. Clair feels that Alice's remark concerning her vision of the ghost is a "comic dialogue;" however, his "proof" rests on the assumption that Alice is lying about what she saw and that she evades Brydon's questions concerning the ghost because "her need is for a ghost to fit certain specifications."⁷⁰ What Mr. Clair doesn't see is that his statement is as tenuous as the ghost, and it is in Alice's final description of the ghost that proof of her vision is provided. Alice's "indiscretion," in Clair's mind, is that she arrived at the house at noon, but was not to meet Brydon until one o'clock, thus creating a strange impression on the reader. It is true that this is a difficult point to justify, but since Alice admits that she had a dream in "the cold dim dawn" in which the "ghost" had appeared to her, and that she was aware of Brydon's nocturnal visits to the house, it is not so strange that she would want to inform Brydon of the dream, and, discovering that he had not returned to his hotel, would search for him in the most likely place. Mr. Clair, in attempting to be different, fails in his depiction of Alice as a schemer and liar. He raises questions about the results of Alice's "deception," a point which suggests that perhaps Mr. Clair could not complete his characterization of Alice Staverton enough to convince the reader or himself. Whatever the case, the statement that the "critic's relegation of Alice's role to that of a felicitous bystander has obscured the basic dramatic conflict,"⁷¹ reveals Mr. Clair's lack of perception,

for the "basic conflict" is not Alice Staverton vs. Spencer Brydon, but Spencer Brydon vs. the past and himself.

Alice Staverton, then, emerges as a woman of more depth than was first credited her. She is finally revealed as a highly perceptive woman who is extremely sensitive to Spencer Brydon's feelings. It is this perception that enables her to probe Spencer's mind and to conclude where his thoughts will eventually take him. Since Alice is with Spencer every day, there is no reason why she would not be aware of the change in attitude in the man. Perhaps to others Spencer could put up a front, but to Alice, who has known him intimately, the constant preoccupation with the "might-have-been" would naturally be a source of worry to her. She is also "submerged" in Spencer's life in a sense, and it would not be unnatural for her thoughts and even her dreams, to center on the things Spencer was concerned with; thus the dream might not be such an unbelievable event at that.

Critical opinion also points to Alice as a woman of depth. Those who believe Alice's role is that of a "lover" (Rosenwig, Stovall, Beebe, Anderson, Zabel, Sanford, Krook, Geismar, and Vaid) may vary in their interpretations of her love, but they admit that the love element is definitely an integral part of the story. Placing Alice in the role of a mother image as Schroeder does, is too limiting, and it forces the story to conform to that interpretation, which it cannot do. Clair's idea of Alice as a plotter and deceiver is even worse, for he excludes many important facts about Brydon in his concentration upon Alice. Perhaps those critics who combine views can be considered the most sensible.

They realize that James is not a man of one idea only and that his characterizations are notably complex. This type of interpretation must also be applied to Alice Staverton. She cannot be catalogued and classified as good or bad, lover or mother; she must be viewed in all facets of her personality and from the point of character development in the story. Finally, James's method of writing must always be considered, and the critic must remember that James's characters were usually highly developed. It is this characterization that is embodied in Alice Staverton - lover, mother, and source of intelligence.

CHAPTER THREE

PROBING THE PAST

The structure of "The Jolly Corner" is such that the reader accumulates bits of knowledge as the story develops and eventually fits them together to solve James's "puzzle." The idea of a "search" for the past is introduced quite early in the tale, but in scattered phrases, and not with the implication that this is to lead to the main conflict, i.e. Spencer Brydon's confrontation with the "ghost" of himself. Through these first innuendos James builds the desire to search for the past, and, skillfully using the house on "the jolly corner" and a "hunter-beast" image, manages to convey a tone of suspense which builds to a frightening climax. These aspects of the story are worthy of consideration by themselves.

Since the movement of time in "The Jolly Corner" is so indefinite, it is up to the reader to interpret the movements of Spencer Brydon from his arrival in America to the fateful search in his house. It is apparent in James's initial description of Brydon that the visit to America had a dual purpose; superficially he came to take care of his "property", but the "finer truth" was that he had an urge to see and feel the past in the house on "the jolly corner." James reveals more about Brydon's "search" when Alice tells Spencer that he missed his calling by going to Europe as a young man. That this idea had already occurred to Brydon is brought out in his reaction to her comment: "He was to remember these words, while the weeks lapsed, for the small silver ring they had sounded

over the queerest and deepest of his own lately most disguised and most muffled vibrations" (pp. 548-549). James then relates that Brydon first started to probe into the past "the first fortnight" after his arrival. He has developed the search in his mind to the point where he meets "some strange figure, some unexpected occupant, at a turn of one of the dim passages of an empty house" (p. 549). He has even intensified that thought, imagining a scene where he meets the "presence" after "opening a door behind which he would have made sure of finding nothing, a door into a room shuttered and void" (p. 549).

It becomes more clear when Brydon takes Alice to the house that he "had his reasons [in keeping the house vacant] and was growingly aware of them" (p. 549). The reasons, of course, are that he needs the house vacant to conduct his search in private. James also reveals that Brydon has been coming to the house "quite absurdly often" and that he has revealed these visits to no one, not even Alice Staverton. It is further developed that Brydon has "stowed" a pack of candles in a sideboard for his visits in "the 'evil' hours." Brydon even speaks to Alice of "the impalpable ashes of his long-extinct youth, afloat in the very air like microscopic motes" (p. 552), a comment which states an additional motive for his search. James completes the set-up by describing the house as "an Egyptian tomb" upon the couple's emergence from it. Thus, the house becomes the center of Brydon's search for a past and perhaps his own "ghost."

James develops the intensity of Brydon's thoughts through his conversation with Alice "a few days after" the visit to the house. The idea

now becomes a "strange alter ego," which is precisely what Brydon has been searching for in the house at night. Using the terms "monstrous," "hideous," and "offensive" to describe the imaginary alter ego, James is able to make an easy transition to the beast image actually in the house. As Brydon "hunts," "roams," and "stalks" through the house, he becomes caught up in his dream of "the hunt" and even goes to the extreme of hiding behind a door, "holding his breath and living in the joy of the instant, the supreme suspense created by big game alone" (p. 561). He associates his search with "Bengal tiger-shoots" and hunting "the great bear of the Rockies." Gradually, it is he that becomes a beast, "an incalculable terror," a "monstrous stealthy cat" (note the use of "monstrous") and he "wondered if he would have glared at these moments with large shining yellow eyes, and what it mightn't verily be, for the poor hard-pressed alter ego, to be confronted with such a type" (p. 562). The house is again included in this imagery and the rear rooms are the "very jungle of his prey."

James again turns the tables by having the "ghost stalk Brydon after many of his nightly visits. The change in atmosphere is so noticeable to Brydon that he can pinpoint it "from a particular hour." He drops his "campaign" for three nights, but on its resumption, he is still being tracked, and it is his turn now to be "kept in sight" by the ghost. In the face of this frightening observation, Brydon tries to reassure himself with "logic" concerning the hunt. He tells himself he has "hunted him till he has 'turned': that, up there, is what has happened - he's the fanged or antlered animal brought at last to bay" (p. 564). Forcing

himself to keep up the pretense of "the hunt," Brydon tells himself that he will not leave before his usual hour, about two o'clock in the morning. His fear becomes so great in this time that he loses consciousness several times. Upon finding a door that he had left open now closed, he comes to the realization that he is no longer in control. He still considers the "ghost" as a beast, "shut up there, at bay, defiant" (p. 569), but he is no longer capable of acting and "not to have acted - that was the misery and the pang" (p. 569).

From this point in the story, Brydon retreats and James builds the fear in Brydon through a description of several incidents in the house. After the encounter with the closed door, it becomes evident that Brydon must "save face" by moving around on the upper floors before finally retreating. He returns to the front of the house where there is light and, hopefully, some form of life, "a scavenger or a thief, some night-bird however base" (p. 570), or even a policeman, but all is a "great grim hush" and the houses present "a sort of sinister mask" to him. He knows the depth of his fear when he decides that he would climb down from the fourth floor window if there were any possible means of escape.

There is still a strong urge to see if the door is still closed, but upon retracing his steps, Brydon cannot look at the door, for he knows - "yes, as he had never known anything - that, should he see the door open, it would all too abjectly be the end of him" (p. 572). His fear has such control of him at this point that he would commit suicide by jumping from the front window if he saw the door open.

The house again becomes the main image in Spencer's retreat and the

rooms and passages which were once so friendly now become "gaping rooms" and "sounding passages." His vision, which once probed the dark house, is gone and he "blindly" makes for the stairs. Just the fact that the sound of his footsteps is a sound of retreat reassures Brydon and he is able to "gasp" with relief when he reaches the first landing. Again James links the house to Brydon's state of mind, describing the rooms as "mouths of caverns" and the skylight over the stairway as "the crown of the deep well." As Brydon drops, the atmosphere becomes a "watery underworld" and there are "zones" leading to "the bottom of the sea." It is in this final stage of terror and retreat that Brydon will confront the "ghost."

To F. O. Matthiessen (1944) the house on "the jolly corner" is a result of James's "incredibly developed pictorial skills." He believes that James was able to create such a picture of fear because "imaging a house that was unquestionably destined to be torn down soon to make way for apartments, he was drawing on a peculiarly intimate sense of his own past, on his memories of the leisurely old New York that he felt had been obliterated by the rising city."⁷² The fact that James takes such pains to create such a house as a symbol of Brydon's past coincides with Matthiessen's comments, and undoubtedly adds to the strong feeling that Brydon has for the old house.

Edwin Honig (1949) believes that the search for "some relic of his past whose insistent force gradually claims his whole consciousness"⁷³ is part of "James's ritual romance." The character must withdraw "from the society of the world, which is invariably hostile to the ideal"⁷⁴

and realize the past. This is precisely what Spencer Brydon attempts to do through his visits to the house at night. Mr. Honig contrasts the house being remodeled to the house on "the jolly corner" to show how "unconsciously he [Brydon] is fleeing the outward and incompletely released disguise of his other self."⁷⁵ He cannot completely accept himself as a successful businessman and must revert to the past in the old, untouched house. Mr. Honig believes that Alice Staverton sees Spencer's revulsion with his "new" talents, and "floods his conscience" with the truth that he has refused to acknowledge; "it is not only the vulgar world outside which is so impervious to 'a man's liability to decent feelings;' it is much rather the vulgar world in himself to which he must look, either for his own destruction or his own salvation."⁷⁶ In his search through the house on the final night, he suddenly realizes his "split totality" and, according to Mr. Honig, one of the two parts must be sacrificed by its emergence. However, to act would mean a "walk into madness" for Brydon and he suppresses his "courage" and retreats. To Mr. Honig the retreat is not foolish because Brydon retreats to his childhood, where he will resolve the question in another way.

Robert Rogers (1956), in brushing aside the fact that the house is the one of Brydon's childhood, has ignored an important point of interpretation. He contends that the alter ego has led a "separate existence: during Brydon's European years, and that "there is no emphasis of any strong or special reason at the story level for the alter ego to be sought at this particular place."⁷⁷ On the contrary, this is the logical place to search, for Brydon thinks of the house as a part of his past,

and the "ghost" began to develop when he left the house in his youth. As a young man he would have stayed in this house and developed, so why not expect the "ghost" to be there? Mr. Rogers has other plans for the house, though, and he views it as a mother image, "a return to the womb in phantasy." In this context he interprets the search as indicative of Brydon's "regressive, womb-seeking" nature as opposed to the aggressive, beast-like" nature of the alter ego, who is symbolized in the renovated house. From this viewpoint, Mr. Rogers moves on to the doors as a continuation of the feminine symbol; "Brydon associates opening doors with meeting his alter ego, his alter ego being not the Freudian Ego but the Id, the phallic, instinctual side of his personality."⁷⁸ To reiterate all of the phallic and feminine symbols Rogers discovers would be too lengthy, but he struggles admirably to carry out the image of the womb, even connecting Mrs. Muldoon to it. In this "womb" the alter ego lurks, and he, too, is given a sexual interpretation. To Rogers he is symbolic of several things: "the male penis, crouching - ready to spring - in a dark jungle of pubic hair;"⁷⁹ Henry James, Sr.'s "hallucination" of a "beast-like creature;" Henry James, Sr. as a father image; and William James as an overshadowing artistic force to Henry, Jr. The whole story is an autobiographical and sub-conscious rendering of James's fears and inhibitions if read according to Mr. Rogers's views. Rogers has blown the image of proportion at this point, and the interpretation collapses.

Quentin Anderson (1957) takes a different view of Spencer Brydon's search. The previously discussed subject of Brydon's "Form" is what leads him into the house. Mr. Anderson states that Brydon "asks this

question in what may be called the classic Jamesian moral situation: the situation of the man who encounters his other self in the house of life under the aegis of fostering love and thereby discovers his form or style."⁸⁰ It is through the "house of life" that James presents his "most inclusive emblem for the archetypal human situation: man first attempts to take possession of the house of life, but finally learns that it is his task to celebrate it. What he celebrates is not particular forms, but the current of life which creates form, the 'reverberant' flux of creation itself."⁸¹ This idea can be applied to Brydon's relentless "tracking" of the ghost and constant question of what his "Form" might have been. The only point that would not fit Mr. Anderson's interpretation is that James has Brydon wish for the house to be destroyed before he comes to complete realization. If the "house of life" is still part of the story, then there must be a transition somewhere between the actual house and a house built in Brydon's mind. Perhaps a better way to apply Mr. Anderson's image is that the actual house does come down after Brydon's experience, but that Brydon's mental image of the house has changed, making it no longer necessary for him to relive any part of the past there.

Morton Zabel (1958) sees the house as a "trap" for Brydon. It represents all that he rejected in America, and it is that "Life" which must be "appeased." What he has put behind him is "his old unmastered self, the past he has believed fully rejected, the 'American fate' with which he has never come to terms. They have haunted him for years and now he determines to stalk them down."⁸² When the "thing" Brydon hunts finally

turns on him, Mr. Zabel states that the "snare" is met firmly by Brydon and he "stiffens his will" to avoid retreat; however, his will is broken down, and the final outcome is Brydon's retreat from the ghost. James has not written of the house as a "trap" or a "displeasure" to Brydon, but rather as one of the last pleasures he can hold onto in the modern world. Mr. Zabel's image does not hold up to a close examination of Spencer's attitudes toward the house, and thus, becomes tenuous.

A brief comment by Marius Bewley (1959) takes the opposite, and more logical viewpoint toward the house. He interprets James as describing the house as being "elegant" and Brydon as "cherishing his affection for the house on the jolly corner,"⁸³ a view which fits the story more accurately than Mr. Zabel's "trap" and "snare."

"The architecture of the Jolly Corner with its interesting multiplication of doors"⁸⁴ is what interests Charles Sanford (1961) in the house as an image. These doors, which James makes note of several times, are contrasted to "'hard faced' modern houses" by Mr. Sanford as "symbols of the past." Through the use of the doors as symbols, he sees Spencer Brydon finally passing through "the door of sexual love," which leads him to Alice. It is interesting to speculate on this theory, but again the image is only briefly presented, and it fits more as a symbol of the past, as Mr. Sanford first suggested, than as a "door" to love in the end. Also, the door is not held open, but blocked by the "ghost" in the dramatic scene at the bottom of the stairs.

Another incidental discussion of the house image is presented by William Freedman (1962), who connects it to Plato's "Allegory of the Cave." He states that the house is "an analogue of the cave, just as

the over-whelming perception of the monstrous self that might have been is, with the necessary qualifications, an analogue of the vision of the Good."⁸⁵ Mr. Freedman does not attempt a full study of this relationship, but his suggestive notes are interesting. It is true that James describes the rooms as "caverns" and that the whole effect is one of an "apparitional" world. Mr. Freedman carries the theme further by relating that the perception "takes place in one of the 'upper rooms;' it is a 'vision,' 'mystic,' of an 'ineffable identity,' and it brings him 'to knowledge,' knowledge Platonically defined as 'beauty.'"⁸⁶ Mr. Freedman is careful to point out that he is not suggesting an allegory of Plato, but that the two present "similarities," as well as "distinctions." "The vision is, after all, of an aspect of Brydon's self, not of eternal Form or Truth; it is, though it brings him to knowledge, monstrous rather than magnificent (though Plato warns that there will be a shock of recognition); and the perception is not, like the perception of the Good, an end in itself, but a means - though a very necessary means to a greater end (the discovery of Alice Staverton)."⁸⁷

Returning to a more conventional interpretation, Walter Wright (1962) discusses Brydon's "search for his own identity" through the house on "the jolly corner." He points out that James's imagery in discussing Brydon's development of his awareness, "prepares vaguely for what is to come," and that through the conversations between Alice and Spencer, "the image of a haunted house is born."⁸⁸ Mr. Wright believes that Brydon's movement toward "final revelation comes when "having begun as one man, Brydon suddenly becomes a second; that is, he sees himself as

if through the eyes of the man he is tracking, for whom he must be 'in the apparitional world, an incalculable terror.'"⁸⁹ This "dramatic detachment" leads Brydon to self-knowledge through introspection. The sense that he is "slipping" comes from the realization that the world and the self he has known are not "complete reality," and Mr. Wright states that it is the "slipping" which brings him to that which he seeks. Mr. Wright looks at the "retreat" from the ghost in a different light than Honig did. He suggests that it is at this point where Brydon loses control of his rational self and becomes irrational. Brydon tries to "break the spell" by opening a window upstairs, but to no avail. "Only descent is possible and James's representation of the flight is both literally and symbolically plausible."⁹⁰ There is no control of reason as he descends, and the description is one of "images and sensations" which take on a reality of their own. The reader receives much the same impression that Brydon does; images are thrust at him and then shift out of sight. Mr. Wright believes that James's purpose in using this device might be that "since Brydon's quest is for himself, the ultimate symbolic suggestion is, of course, that he too, may be as phantasmal as what he looks upon."⁹¹ Perhaps Mr. Wright is correct in this statement, for Brydon is in a state of confusion; he does not know who he is, who he was, or who he would have been. It takes the climactic scene at the foot of the stairs to resolve this for him.

Maxwell Geismar (1963) has also noticed James's use of the word "monstrous" in the story; however, he attempts to link the actions of Spencer Brydon with the actions of Henry James, which cannot be done in

Mr. Geismar's way. His belief is that Henry James voiced his wishes through Spencer Brydon and, using the story as his vehicle of expression, he can encompass both worlds, Europe and America, through his "greedy ego." Because of James's use of the word "monstrous," Mr. Geismar makes a pointing of noting "how this insatiable fantasist is increasingly identified with the beast-like animal who figures in his own imagery of respectable, confined leisure-class life."⁹² He then pursues this theory further by stating that it was "the Jamesian unconscious" which was behind the door in the upper room and that Brydon's (James's) discretion at not facing what was there was typical of James's renunciation of "all the great problems and issues of life: I mean of living."⁹³ Mr. Geismar's fault is in reading Henry James's life and problems into Spencer Brydon. Henry James was not Spencer Brydon. Mr. Geismar has fallen into the trap that others have; he reads James's fiction as autobiographical fact. James admitted to using things he had experienced in his writing, but he was not revealing his Freudian sub-conscious through his stories, and it is just that point Mr. Geismar is so enamoured with that he cannot see the fallacies in such an interpretation.

Fred Thomson's (1963) discussion of water imagery as a link to Brydon's past has already been discussed, but it is interesting to note that he, too, believes the house is a "dominant metaphorical vehicle," which is "standing at a cross-roads and symbolizing, among other things, the mind of Brydon in his solitary exploration of the past to discover the man he would have been had he stayed home instead of electing a wandering life abroad."⁹⁴ He also compares the rooms of the house and

the search through them to a "patient" probing into his mind. The image of the "patient" is carried out by the "ritualistic tap of the stick upon the black-and-white marble squares of the hall."⁹⁵ To put himself in the right frame of mind, Brydon uses the same device nightly, which can then probe and envision what it will.

Krishna B. Vaid's (1964) technical approach to the story is a more conventional one. He points out how carefully James has set down the elements of the story, not always in chronological order. James has planted the "actual nightmare" in Brydon's mind long before he ever sees it. Mr. Vaid believes that "the 'actual' ghost is but a symbolical embodiment of the phantom self he must exorcise,"⁹⁶ a self that Mr. Vaid feels is developed through the remaining narrative. The "crucial stage" in Brydon's search comes when he realizes that there has been a "partial reversal of the roles" from being the hunter to the hunted. In Mr. Vaid's analysis, this point is revealed by James through a change in the narrative "from a summary to a fully sustained scene."⁹⁷ He also points out that James is "clearly noticeable" as a presence in this scene, but that the writing is done so skillfully that it does not mar the effect at all. The confrontation with the closed door is not a descretion to Mr. Vaid, but rather "rationalization of his [Brydon's] fear," a point which he feels James carried out by having Brydon return to the door, only to stop before reaching it because of his fear. These actions reveal the "inconsistency of his [Brydon's] reasoning and his intense fear of the lurking presence."⁹⁸ James, then, is setting the stage for the final encounter, and he presents Brydon in the "right" frame of mind

for this happening by revealing his intense fear, which has led him to a frantic retreat.

All of the critics stress the importance of the house in the development of the story, but their views on its meaning differ. The most logical interpretations come from Matthiessen, Honig, Anderson, Wright, and Vaid, who interpret the house as a vehicle for Brydon's search through the past. The allegorical interpretation by Freedman linking the cave imagery with Plato's allegory is interesting, but inconclusive. Rogers's concept of the house as a womb is too weak to survive a close reading, as is his autobiographical approach. Mr. Geismar stubbornly sticks to his Freudian interpretation of James's life, which becomes forced in his interpretation. Sanford, Zabel, Bewley, and Thomson provide interesting comments on the significance of the house, but only point out one aspect of the image. It again becomes evident that James has developed the imagery to serve several purposes: the house is a link with the past, it is something that is cherished by Brydon for its "values," and it is a vehicle for the search and the eventual revelation of the "ghost" to Brydon. It is James's skill in writing that enables all of these meanings to come through, and there is no doubt that the house served this purpose admirably.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONFRONTATION

The final section of "The Jolly Corner" concerning the confrontation with the "ghost" is truly an artistic culmination of description. The whole scene takes place in Spencer Brydon's mind, and James is careful not to intrude noticeably in this section. He is obviously the narrator, but the total effect is that of being inside Brydon's mind.

James has set the scene for this shift into the mind by building up Brydon's accumulating fears. As Brydon becomes aware of the reversal, he loses control of the situation in his conscious mind, and when he approaches the closed door with the "ghost" behind it, James reveals that Spencer has had "the lapse of certain instants of concentrated conscious combat" and that he has felt like a "man slipping and slipping on some awful incline" (p. 565). At the ultimate projection of his subconscious, he cannot act because of his terror, which is so great "his eyes almost leave their sockets" (p. 568). Again he loses his conscious mind as he is planted in front of the door; upon his recovery of it, he credits his inaction to "discretion" and retreats to the other side of the house. He is in such terror at this point that he cannot be comforted by the vision of the city. The only relief afforded him is in retreat, and as he descends the stairs, his mind is gradually put at ease. His feeling of ease is a combination of being near escape, and being back in the familiar atmosphere of the past, "the marble squares of his childhood."

It is at this point that the revelation of the image of "Form" culminates. That it is a hallucination or projection of his mind is made clear when James reveals it first as a figure "screened" with "a great grey glimmering margin," and then Spencer feels "it to be taking the very form toward which, for so many days, the passion of his curiosity had yearned" (p. 575). As he proceeds down the stairs (further depths of his mind?), he sees the figure "now in the higher light, hard and acute" (p. 575). He takes the whole figure in, from duplicate dress to "the grizzled bent head," the "lost two fingers" on the hands and the "hideous" face. At the sight of this "apparition" Spencer loses consciousness, and the vision is gone.

Who or what is this Form? To Alice Staverton it is an image of the real Spencer Brydon. Spencer himself recognizes the ghost after Alice points out their identical images. If this is so clear, why is there so much critical conflict in interpretations of the "ghost"? Perhaps it all stems from an original mis-reading of the story, or reading too much into James's intent. An examination of these interpretations reveals the problem.

F. O. Matthiessen (1944) has identified the ghost as "no stranger" to Spencer Brydon. However, it is not because the ghost is Brydon, but that he is "the man Brydon himself would have become through the tensions of American life,"⁹⁹ a statement which would be plausible but for the fact that the ghost and Brydon look alike. If Brydon had been different, it is not revealed in the "ghost," for he is actually only seeing himself realistically for the first time.

In contrast to Matthiessen, Saul Rosenwig (1944) holds the view that

the ghost is "obviously his rejected self. Moreover, an injury - the two lost fingers - here stands in some relation to the fact that the life was not lived or that, in other words, a kind of psychological death had occurred. Finally, the injury and the related incompleteness have entailed an unfulfilled love."¹⁰⁰ Not only does the ghost relate to all these things in Brydon's life, but to Mr. Rosenwig it is also symbolic of "the return of the repressed" in James's mind. He believes that Henry James suppressed the "unlived" American life for all the years he lived in Europe, and that in the final third of his life, all these "buried drives" were brought to the surface through the supernatural tales. Unfortunately, Mr. Rosenwig has become so engrossed in his autobiographical Freudian interpretation that he misreads the story and ignores the literary value. The story was not concluded with the ghost as being symbolic of that which Brydon had rejected, or as being representative of unfulfilled love, for Brydon recognizes himself and James leaves an assumption that Alice and Brydon will remain intimate. Also, the autobiographical approach that Mr. Rosenwig utilizes is based on his assumptions that James's "wound" in his youth had a great effect on his life. This may be true, but Mr. Rosenwig's theories are based, not on fact, but on possibilities, and they become tenuous when viewed in this light.

Clifton Fadiman (1948) views Brydon and James as the same character in his interpretation of the story. Using Rosenwig's analysis as a point of departure, Fadiman agrees with the interpretation of the story as a "working out of the impulses of James's own unlived life."¹⁰¹ He, too, sees the ghost as "the self Brydon-James had rejected." Mr. Fadiman

believes in this auto-psycho-analytical view so strongly that he has made it the prime factor in James's artistic achievement ("the very fact that it is so unconscious is what makes it possible for James to treat his material artistically and with seeming detachment"),¹⁰² a statement which attributes too much to the unconscious and too little to the conscious artist in James.

The "Form" as the "might have been self" is developed in Edwin Honig's (1949) approach to the tale. Since his whole interpretation is based on the Dionysus legend and the "merciful fraud," one of the two, the ghost or Brydon, must be sacrificed; "either some disguise of the total self or the substitute-agent is sacrificed, released or destroyed, as a less worthy victim in the act of reaching completed consciousness of self."¹⁰³ To Honig, Brydon rids himself of the ghost by confronting him at the bottom of the stairs, "the scene of his earliest decision in youth,"¹⁰⁴ and the "black stranger" becomes the sacrifice so that Brydon may be "reborn." In order to fulfill Honig's requirements for the Dionysus legend, this theory would be correct, but it ignores the fact that both Spencer and Alice recognize its identity as Spencer's. Perhaps the interpretation would be more acceptable if viewed as a point of new departure for Spencer and Alice, and in this way the past could be destroyed or sacrificed.

Another critic using the "might have been" as his interpretation of the ghost is F. W. Dupee (1951). He believes that the ghost is "the brutal man of business" that would have developed from the young Brydon had he not fled to Europe. Mr. Dupee views this "exorcism" of his alter

age by Brydon as a means of freeing himself to love. This "act of courage" evidently comes at the right time to Dupee, for he states that it "saves" both Brydon and Alice. Evidently he is saved from a life of "apprehension" and will now have a "free" mind.¹⁰⁵

Brydon's recognition of himself is Miriam Allott's (1953) conclusion in her analysis of the story. She believes that the horror of the "ghost's" aspect is James's development of the theme of "violence which lies behind the golden display of great possessions."¹⁰⁶ The "stark brutality" of the figure and the crippled hand are indicative of Brydon's struggle for "easy money," a struggle that entailed an unknown degree of "violence and passion." As brief as her interpretation is, Miss Allott has stated something about Brydon's background that has been ignored by other critics; Brydon was leading as "hard" a life in Europe as he would have in America as a businessman. There is no reason why he would not be "ravaged" by these experiences as well as by a competitive business experience; and thus James's original words identifying the "ghost" and Brydon as one and the same receive their proper meaning.

An autobiographical approach is taken by Leon Edel (1953), who links the story to a childhood dream James had concerning his routing of a ghost in the Galerie d'Apollon. Mr. Edel's theory is that James's comments about the story in his notebooks are inaccurate, for the ghost won over Brydon. Technically, it is Brydon who overwhelms the ghost and banishes it, even though Brydon himself swoons when he recognizes the appearance. Edel also implies that through Brydon, James was revealing his fear of "the sense of the past." Although James stated that he "cherished" the

old, Edel believes that this cherishing "was also a merging of the philtres of love and fear. The past could inspire and it could also frighten."¹⁰⁷

(Edel does state in his introduction to his collection of James's short stories that the "ghost" is Spencer Brydon "as he might have been".)¹⁰⁸

Maurice Beebe (1954) has refuted Saul Rosenwig's analysis admirably in his discussion of Henry James as an artist. He has first revealed the untenable aspects of Rosenwig's conclusions and then discussed them in relation to "The Jolly Corner." Three of his main arguments are that James's injury as a young man was not the cause "of James's detachment or of his decision to become a writer"; that it did not cause him "regret," but rather "relief"; and that "James never repudiated the attitude of detachment,"¹⁰⁹ as Mr. Rosenwig implied in his analysis. Beebe also states that James even forgot the date of his injury later and that "he had come to grips with it"¹¹⁰ instead of repressing it, only for it to appear in later writings as Mr. Rosenwig believes. Finally, Mr. Beebe concludes that the alter-ego and Brydon are within the same person, meaning that "Brydon is both the detached and passive observer and the aggressive participant,"¹¹¹ making the confrontation then merely a device for reconciling the two aspects of himself. In viewing the "ghost," Mr. Beebe notes that the emphasis on the vision is an important aspect of the artist, "the eyes that see, the hand that writes."¹¹² The ghost, then, represents the "non-artist" side to Mr. Beebe, but that side is as important in making up Spencer Brydon's personality as is the artist side of him.

Robert Rogers (1956) believes that Saul Rosenwig's interpretation

is so "rich" in suggestion, that he must continue its exploration into the "neurotic patterns which Henry James wove into the fabric of his art."¹¹³ If Mr. Rosenwig emphasized the sexual aspects of the story too much, Mr. Rogers has gone to an extreme in discovering sexual implications. His view of the "beast" in the doorway is a masculine within a feminine symbol," which appears to be the basis of his whole interpretation - that Brydon is using the house as an outlet for his sexual repression. Rogers points out the phallic symbols of the candles, the keys and the doors ("apertures"). With these symbols and the conception of the return to the house as a return to the womb or mother, Rogers completes his analysis by viewing the ghost as the real Brydon, who regresses to "a childish dependence on the mother" after seeing himself in reality. Rogers also notes that the double eyeglass is "a concrete symbol" of castration and further links this to Henry James. Mr. Rogers believes that "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 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."¹¹⁴ No further comment on Mr. Rogers's analysis is needed unless it is that he really should have read Mr. Beebe's refutation of Saul Rosenwig before amplifying his interpretation.

A more literary interpretation is made by Floyd Stovall (1957), who believes that the ghost-alter ego is Spencer Brydon as he "might have been if he had remained in New York," but that the apparition is Brydon

"as he actually is."¹¹⁵ Stovall's interpretation is based on a combat between a double consciousness of the "actual self" and the "ghostly self." The whole nightmarish scene is read as a hallucination by Mr. Stovall, but it is a hallucination which is extremely important in interpreting the character and actions of Spencer Brydon. The separation of consciousness through the two "selves" becomes a self which does not really exist and which is never seen (the ghost), and a self which has existed and is seen, even if only in an hallucination (the apparition.) Mr. Stovall views Brydon's rejection of the ghost being his true self as "the confused projection of his double consciousness,"¹¹⁶ which misleads him, especially in the case of the eyeglasses. The rest of the figure - the fingers, clothes and face - are recognized as too hideously belonging to him, and Brydon becomes frightened at what he sees. Mr. Stovall concludes his interpretation by using Alice as a form of interpreter for Brydon. Through her words he "sees" what he is, which coincides with Mr. Stovall's point that Brydon has been "blind" to the true state of things up to this time, and that now he has clear vision. "There are then three 'selves' in the story: the real self that is released by Alice's love, the self she has believed in throughout; the false self that for thirty-three years has overlaid Brydon's true self and caused him to refuse to acknowledge his love for Alice; and the self that might have been had he never left New York, which is the ghost of the back rooms on the fourth floor of the house on the jolly corner."¹¹⁷ Mr. Stovall has very neatly tied up all the ends in the story, but his suggestion that there is still a "ghost" in the back rooms of the house does not fit James's story. James does

not let the reader think that there is still a ghost left in the house after the final confrontation. Rather, he concludes the story decisively with the encounter at the doorway and implies that the house has been freed from all "ghosts" - past, present or future.

To Quentin Anderson (1957) Spencer Brydon discovers "what he has been" in the ghost, so that he is free to recognize Alice Staverton's love for him. Mr. Anderson ties this into Alice Staverton's dream, which he says acts as a negation of the ghost, with Alice replacing it for Spencer. Through this process, Spencer is able to accept her love in place of a love of himself or life that he has lived. Through the strength of Alice's love, Brydon has been taken "back a third of a century and (has had) given him an actual second chance";¹¹⁸ he is now able to become "the inheritor of the house of life, delightedly dependent on fostering love."¹¹⁹ This is not too far astray in analysis, but it suits the tale better to view Alice as merely dreaming the same thing that Spencer was "viewing" because of her strong powers of divination and her intimate knowledge of Brydon's wishes and fears. She does not replace the ghost so much as explain it to Brydon to help him come to self-knowledge.

A brief mention by Morton Zabel (1958) in his introduction to an anthology of tales by James places the ghost in the role of "might have been." Zabel interprets Brydon as a man who has a divided mind "that makes him fear equally what he has become in Europe and what he might have become had he remained in America."¹²⁰ The search through the house has been an effort by Brydon to come to terms with his rejected self, and the confrontation is the climax of this search. Zabel notes that it is

not Spencer who realizes the meaning of the confrontation, but Alice, and through her love he is "released from self-regard for life and love at last."¹²¹

Christof Wegelin's autobiographical approach (1958) relates the story to what he calls "James's refusal to oppose one cultural value to another" and it "is symbolical of James's new vision of American wealth."¹²²

Through this interpretation he views the ghost as "the man Brydon would have been had he stayed in America,"¹²³ but he points out that it is the Europeanized Brydon that Alice Staverton is charmed by. Mr. Wegelin neglects to mention that Alice states that she would have liked Brydon in any form, and it is not necessarily the "European Brydon" she likes, but the Brydon she has known for years - before, during and after his flight to Europe.

In agreement with the idea of the ghost as the "would have been" is Marius Bewley (1959). Mr. Bewley views the story as "one of James's 'economic' stories," and in this light he believes the alter ego to be "the symbol of that age in America"¹²⁴ that is sinister because it deals with money and greed. Since Mr. Bewley interprets the story as "anti-American," this symbolism would fit the "ghost's" image; however, the story is not so much anti-American as it is a study of one man's problems and the eventual resolution of them. Again, there is a problem in reading, especially in the last dialogue, that Mr. Bewley has failed to note, establishing the ghost and Brydon as the same person.

Another advocate of the "might have been" is Charles Sanford (1961), who points out that both Spencer and the ghost have had a "ravaging

experience," but that the ghost has "fallen from grace" and Spencer has not. "Or if he has, he has succeeded in regaining paradise on a higher level of awareness, has achieved through the death of the stranger a rebirth."¹²⁵ Sanford, too, sees the "black stranger" as a symbol of the modern America that bothered James. Mr. Sanford has the same problem as Mr. Bewley in reading, with his exception of noting that the ghost and Brydon have both had "ravaging experiences." It remains a fact though, that the two are identical with the exception of the glasses, and that Brydon comes to recognition, not necessarily to rebirth through destruction of innocence as to "painful knowledge."

William Freedman (1962) also interprets the ghost as "the might have been," but he believes that Spencer Brydon comes to a "self-knowledge" through his confrontation and discovers that that knowledge is "having Alice and being himself - as he is."¹²⁶ Mr. Freedman's conclusion is correct, but if Spencer accepts himself "as he is," and he also admits to the ghost's identity as "his," then the ghost cannot possibly be "the might have been" for Brydon or the reader.

Dorothea Krock (1962) does not mention what the ghost is, but she does offer an interpretation for the close of the story. She states that Spencer "vanquishes" the ghost after his encounter (which is correct technically) and that "the work of redemption begun by his (Brydon's) own courage in pursuing it and in the end meeting it face to face (this last act, one may suppose, a figuring of the catclysmic movement of illumination in the quest for self-knowledge) is completed by the love proffered to him by the woman whose faith in him through the years has been steadfast

as it was intelligent."¹²⁷ This interpretation seems more than sensible, and fits the story better than most of the views offered up to this point.

Similar to Miss Krook's interpretation is Walter F. Wright's (1962) view of the story. Mr. Wright correctly observes that Brydon would not conceive of himself as being anything but "impressive" and "dignified," which at first the ghost appears to be. "But, of course he cannot admit that he has misused his life,"¹²⁸ and so is horrified when the figure "unmasks" himself and Brydon perceives that two fingers are missing.

"What was unsuspected as Brydon wandered about in Europe and then became recognized as a latent possibility is now seen for what it is, a part of Brydon's very nature."¹²⁹ Mr. Wright comes to the heart of the matter with this statement and then notes correctly that James had to create a "transformation" to end the story. This is achieved through Brydon's recovery on the stairs and Alice Staverton's conversation. As he states, "they both know that the man who now, for the first time, has admitted his need of her love will always be in part both men, and Brydon must live with that fact."¹³⁰ So, as Mr. Wright has succinctly pointed out, Brydon does not come back to his original "form," but to a man who is aware of what he is capable of and finally is.

Maxwell Geismar's Freudian-autobiographical interpretation (1963) links the whole story closely with Henry James, the man, instead of Spencer Brydon, the protagonist. He identifies the ghost first in the scene upstairs. At this point in the story Geismar states that the "prey" behind the closed door is none other than "the Jamesian unconscious," which is linked to the apparition Henry James viewed in a nightmare as a

youth. Geismar believes that behind the door is the real author, writer and creator that James refused to recognize in himself. The "ghost" is capable of viewing all of life and living it; whereas James, according to Geismar, is incapable of doing these things. Upon viewing the figure at the bottom of the stairs, which Geismar calls the "inhibited Jamesian 'id'" Spencer faints. Geismar attributes this and the recovery scene to James's refusal to recognize the dark, hidden side of himself and charges that James covers up his "self-portrait" by "the 'false' (that is to say, the conscious) ending of the story."¹³¹ Through Alice's statement that the ghost "might have been" Spencer if he had remained in America, Geismar believes that James is covering up the truth and revealing his "repressed late-Victorian" attitude towards art. It is hard to follow Mr. Geismar's interpretation because he strays from the story to establish a link with James's life. He also ignores Spencer's statements revealing that the ghost is himself, and thus, in interpretation is incomplete.

A more logical and sensible approach to the story has been taken by Krishna B. Vaid (1964). Mr. Vaid's interpretation is based on the story, not on autobiographical data that may or may not be relevant. Mr. Vaid establishes the vision as being "his might have been past," but he also notes that Brydon "has been reassured about what he has been to the extent of virtual rejuvenation."¹³² In this light, Brydon is seen as dispelling his "undesirable self" through the confrontation, and achieving "serenity of certitude." With Alice Staverton's arrival on the scene, Brydon is "reborn, and the sweetest fruit of this rebirth is the consummation of his love for Alice Staverton."¹³³ Mr. Vaid believes that the

"moral" of the tale is obviously that "it [the story] does not celebrate the repudiation of the unfulfilled possibilities of one's past, but only of certain kinds of unfulfilled possibilities."¹³⁴ To amplify Vaid's argument, the ghost is vanquished, but with Spencer's realization that it was indeed a vision of himself and that he is now free to do as he pleases, since he has come to a full realization of himself and his possibilities, for now and the future.

In reading John Clair's interpretation of the story (1965), it is hard to believe that he could conjure up such a fantastic view. He has carried the interpretation to its limits by piecing together little fragments of the story, and ultimately concluding that the whole thing was staged by Alice Staverton so that she could win Brydon as her husband. It is one thing to explore, but it is quite something else to read an unbelievable plot into the story, which is precisely what Clair does. It was noted in an earlier chapter that Clair's whole argument is based on his interpretation of Alice as a deceiver, which does not hold up under careful study of James's descriptions of her. In the confrontation, then, Clair states that the ghost is "a real agent who aids in the trickery against Pantaloon."¹³⁵ In order for this interpretation to appear valid, Mr. Clair dwells on the fact that Alice arrives at the house early, for which he gives the following reason: "Furthermore, the time scheme does permit the view that 'Harlequin' failing of his original objective - to surprise Brydon in the upper stories - did not encounter him until morning; Alice then, having had no word from her accomplice, hurried to the house later in the morning to learn of the outcome."¹³⁶ This whole

interpretation is implausible for two reasons: first, Mr. Clair has "obscured the basic dramatic conflict" himself, and second, he has taken fragments to piece together his interpretation instead of looking at the story as a whole.

Earl Rovit's search (1965) for a new meaning to the story has led him to conclude that the story is a three-part allegory. First he establishes that the alter ego is "what Spencer Brydon might have been or actually had been,"¹³⁷ and then he places Alice Staverton in the story as "a third part of a single total consciousness" representing "the conscience, the integrating spirit, the principle of divine love which makes selfhood possible in the fullest sense."¹³⁸ To carry out this interpretation more fully, Mr. Rovit uses a "quasi-psychoanalytical" approach. He refers to Brydon's rebellion against his father and concludes that "Brydon is involved in an exhumation of the corpse of himself and of his father as well, since the alter ego is both what he might have been and was not, the what he had actually become without realizing it, and the slaughtered progenitor of what he ultimately became."¹³⁹ Not only does the alter ego act as all the above mentioned things, but it is also the "slaughtered father (ineffectually castrated by the son) and an image of Brydon's own truncated development."¹⁴⁰ To complete his "three part" allegory, Rovit places Alice in the role of "the restored mother" who integrates the "spirit of past and present" and helps Brydon to "disengage" himself from his "guilt" and his "selfhood." "On one level of allegory, the 'mother' intercedes with the wounded 'father' that the son may live. On a different allegorical key, the spirit ('conscience,' 'divine love') is able to accept and absorb the raw thrust of matter

('lust,' 'greed,' 'justice'), and the total Spencer Brydon is reformed into a unitary whole."¹⁴¹ Mr. Rovit's fault lies in attempting to use every possible interpretation and link it to the story. If James meant the ghost to be all the things Mr. Rovit wishes it to be, he certainly would have placed more emphasis on background information concerning Brydon. As it is, he has given the reader just enough information and turned his literary skills to what he considered most important - Spencer Brydon as a character with a conflict, and the realization of that conflict.

Finally, S. Gorley Putt (1966) has attempted an interpretation of the story, which is not new in point of view. He sees the ghost as what Spencer "might have become." He then states that the recovery scene is linked to Henry James's past, primarily through the missing fingers, that Mr. Putt believes are "an instance of long-forgotten castration-complex."¹⁴² He refers to James's lack of involvement in American life as the result of fearing that the castration would be the price of "full involvement." Mr. Putt is vague in his comments, and he misses James's careful recording of Brydon's statement that his fingers were also missing. Thus Putt's statement that "Brydon is reprieved: he has Alice, he is not a hideous billionaire - and he has not lost his fingers"¹⁴³ is inaccurate and makes the interpretation tenuous.

After reviewing the criticism centering upon the confrontation, it becomes obvious that many critics have not read the story carefully, or have tried to fit the story to their idea of what it could be. The majority of them view the ghost as what Spencer might have been, but there are a few who have looked again and noticed that Spencer and the ghost

are the same (Allott, Stovall, Anderson and Wright). Perhaps if more emphasis were given to interpreting the stories as stories, and not as James's hidden fears or neuroses, the criticism would be more sensible. This is not to say that the writer does not reflect himself in his writing, but rather that the writing should stand by itself in interpretation, which is what James advocated in his discussions of literature.

FOOTNOTES

1. Henry James, Selected Fiction, ed. Leon Edel, (New York, 1953), p. 546. (Subsequent citations will be in my text.)
2. Saul Rosenwig, "The Ghost of Henry James," Partisan Review, XI (Fall 1944), p. 448.
3. Rosenwig, p. 449.
4. Rosenwig, p. 449.
5. Rosenwig, p. 455.
6. Leon Edel, Henry James: The Untried Years, 1843-1870, (Philadelphia, 1953), pp. 78-79.
7. Robert Rogers, "The Beast in Henry James," American Imago, XII (Winter 1956), p. 429.
8. Rogers, p. 437.
9. Rogers, p. 438.
10. Floyd Stovall, "Henry James's 'The Jolly Corner,'" Nineteenth Century Fiction, XII (June 1957), p. 83.
11. Stovall, p. 83.
12. Stovall, p. 84.
13. Quentin Anderson, The American Henry James, (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1957), p. 177.
14. Anderson, p. 177.
15. Christof Wegelin, The Image of Europe in Henry James, (Dallas, 1958), p. 155.
16. Wegelin, p. 156.
17. Wegelin, p. 156.
18. Marius Bewley, The Eccentric Design, (New York, 1959), p. 253.
19. Bewley, p. 253.
20. Bewley, p. 216.

21. Charles Sanford, The Quest for Paradise, (Urbana, Illinois, 1961), p. 216.
22. Sanford, p. 217.
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24. Walter Wright, The Madness of Art: A Study of Henry James, (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1962), p. 200.
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26. Wright, p. 200.
27. Wright, p. 201.
28. Maxwell Geismar, Henry James and the Jacobites, (Boston, 1963), p. 360.
29. Geismar, p. 359.
30. Geismar, p. 360.
31. Geismar, p. 439.
32. Fred C. Thomson, "James' 'The Jolly Corner,'" Explicator, XXII (December 1963), item 28.
33. Thomson, item 28.
34. Krishna B. Vaid, Technique in the Tales of Henry James, (Cambridge, 1964), p. 235.
35. Earl Rovit, "The Ghosts in James's 'The Jolly Corner,'" Tennessee Studies in Literature, X (1965), p. 67.
36. Rovit, p. 69.
37. Rosenwig, p. 448.
38. Edwin Honig, "The Merciful Fraud in Three Stories by James," The Tiger's Eye, IX (October 1949), p. 84.
39. Honig, p. 86.
40. John W. Shroeder, "The Mothers of Henry James," American Literature, XXII (January 1951), p. 428.
41. Shroeder, p. 428.
42. Maurice Beebe, "The Turned Back of Henry James," South Atlantic Quarterly, LIII (October 1954), p. 537.

43. Rogers, p. 440.
44. Rogers, p. 441.
45. Stovall, p. 79.
46. Stovall, p. 79.
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