MADNESS, THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE UNRELIABLE NARRATOR IN GUY DE MAUPASSANT'S LE HORLA AND HENRY JAMES'S THE TURN OF THE SCREW

A Senior Thesis

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Submitted to the
Office of Honors Programs and Academic Scholarships
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

1997-98 UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWS PROGRAM

April 16, 1998

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Abstract

Madness, the Supernatural, and the Unreliable Narrator

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In both Guy de Maupassant's Le Horla and Henry James's The Turn of the Screw, narrators of questionable reliability claim to encounter other-worldly beings, leaving the reader to wonder whether the apparitions are real or the narrators are insane. This madness/supernatural conundrum recurs because of certain trends within the writers' cultural and literary *milieux*. From a literary standpoint, both Maupassant and James were working in the *fantastique*, a genre which, by definition, indicates that the reader hesitates between natural and supernatural explanations for the story's events. And, from a cultural perspective, both writers were writing in environments where the distinction between spiritualism and psychology was often unclear. Maupassant leaves his reader in hesitation as a way of expressing the cultural ambiguity between madness and the supernatural, whereas James utilizes the blur between madness and the supernatural to explore the "reading effect" that the reader experiences when left in hesitation. By reading James's text in light of realist theory, it becomes evident that in achieving the "reading effect," James is intentionally challenging one of the principal tenets of realism, that all ambiguity must be resolved by the end of the story. Upon closer examination, Le Horla evokes a less conscious, although similar "reading effect" and thus pushes the boundaries of realism in a comparable way. As James's and Maupassant's texts demonstrate, the *fantastique* inherently entails a connection between natural/supernatural questioning and denial of the sense of resolution that realism demands.

Guy de Maupassant ended his 1887 novella Le Horla on a note of death and destruction. The narrator, who has become convinced that the Horla, an invisible creature, has come to usurp man's position at the top of the food chain, imprisons the being within his house and burns his home to the ground, hoping to eradicate man's successor from the earth. But, so focused on protecting the supremacy of the human race, the narrator forgets to release his servants from his house, and the tale concludes with images of death within the raging inferno. Despite the gruesome nature of the servants' demise, the primary terror of this scene is not in watching the domestics' fiery end. Rather, the frightening power is that even in this, the final scene of the novella, the reader is still uncertain about how to regard the narrator himself. Through skillful crafting throughout the tale, Maupassant has shed fundamental doubt on the reliability of the narrator. Even at the very end, the reader is left with a terrible choice: can he or she believe the narrator's testimony, that the Horla exists and that the inferno is a desperate attempt to save mankind from annihilation? or is the narrator mad and are the servants the tragic victims of his insanity?

Eleven years later, Henry James concluded The Turn of the Screw on similar notes of death and indeterminacy. The narrator, a governess, tells of the appearance of a ghost, of her charge, a ten year-old-boy named Miles, uttering the ghost's name, and of the boy then dying within her arms. As in the final scene of Le Horla, the reader remains uncertain how to interpret the nature of this death because, like Maupassant, James has been continually casting doubt on the governess' believability. The reader is left in a state of perplexity reminiscent of Le Horla: does the ghost exist and has he somehow killed her pupil or is the governess insane and has she, in her derangement, killed the boy with her own hands?

As can be seen in the nature of their final scenes, Guy de Maupassant's Le Horla and Henry James's The Turn of the Screw bear certain resemblances to each other. In both cases, the

narrators encounter other-worldly beings and in both tales, these visitings culminate in deaths of other characters. At the same time, both Maupassant and James skillfully craft their tales so as to cast doubt on the reliability of these narrators and so as to limit the reader's information to the testimony of these questionable sources. The results are The Turn of the Screw and Le Horla, two tales of fundamental ambiguity. In both cases, the reader is left with the same conundrum: are the revenants real or are the narrators insane?

At first glance, it seems possible that the similarities between The Turn of the Screw and Le Horla may stem from a direct influence that Maupassant may have had on James. After all, Maupassant and James were well acquainted with each other. Since Maupassant was a member of Gustave Flaubert's literary circle and since Henry James repeatedly visited Flaubert, the two writers saw each other regularly from 1876 until Flaubert's death in 1880 (Fusco 176). When Maupassant visited England in 1886, he secured a letter of introduction from Paul Bourget, a mutual friend of his and of James's. In this letter, Bourget asked James to look after Maupassant and to interpret for him since, as Bourget remarked, James was one of the few men in London with whom Maupassant could "talk as with the Gallo-Romans" (Bourget Rpt. Steegmuller). Few other references to James' and Maupassant's England visit have survived. Several extant letters allude to a dinner that James had with Maupassant, George du Maurier, and Edmund Gosse, but only one account remains concerning the conversation between James and Maupassant, an anecdote Oscar Wilde's biographer, Vincent O'Sullivan recorded:

> Wilde told me that when Maupassant visited London he was the guest of Henry James. James took him to the exhibition at Earl's Court and they dined in the restaurant. Maupassant said, "There's a woman sitting over there that I'd like to have. Go over and get her for me."
>
> James was horribly shocked.
>
> "But, my dear friend, I can't do that. She may be perfectly respectable. In England you have to be careful."

> After a few seconds Maupassant spotted another woman. "Surely, you know her at least? I could do quite well with her if you'll get her for me. Ah, if I only knew English!"
>
> When James had refused for about the fifth time, Maupassant observed sulkily: "Really, you don't seem to know anybody in London."
>
> That James had refused to do what he asked from motives of prudery and respectability never occurred to him. (O'Sullivan 206 Quot. Steegmuller)

Better documented that James' acquaintance with Maupassant the man is his familiarity with Maupassant the writer. Since French literature was one of his main interests, James stayed abreast of Maupassant's work. James kept at least thirteen of Maupassant's books in his library (Fusco 177)[1]. According to Edel, "all the books show signs of having been carefully read" and contain marginal notes on "descriptive passages" (179). In addition, James wrote two articles specifically on Maupassant; the first appeared in March of 1888 in Fortnightly Review, the latter in October 1889 in Harper's Weekly. In these articles, one of James' main purposes is to determine which works of Maupassant's are the strongest. In particular, James commends Maupassant's tales of Norman life, praising the strongly Norman novel Pierre et Jean and adding,"It is surely by his Norman peasant that his [Maupassant's] tales will live" (537). James devotes perhaps even more energy to attempting to resolve the apparent dichotomy between Maupassant's genius as a writer and what James sees as his cynical, amoral vision. Maupassant, James maintains, poses "an interesting case. . . an embarassing one, embarassing and mystifying for the moralist" (529). According to James, Maupassant is "a lion in the path" (529) to the critic who attempts to reconcile genius and morality. This particular epithet, "a lion in the path," has

[1] Au soleil, Bel-Ami, Claire de lune, Contes de la bécasse, Des vers, L'Inutile Beauté, Mademoiselle Fifi, Miss Harriet, La Maison Tellier, Sur l'eau, Une vie, La vie errante, and Yvette.

been perhaps James' most lasting contribution to Maupassant criticism. Francis Steegmuller entitled what has become the most famous biography of Maupassant A Lion in the Path.

Based in part on James' familiarity with Maupassant the man and the writer, Richard Fusco, in his book Maupassant and the American Short Story, argues that Maupassant may have had a direct influence on James. As part of this analysis, Fusco attempts to forge a connection between The Turn of the Screw and Le Horla. Fusco himself acknowledges the major difficulty behind demonstrating the influence of Le Horla on the James *oeuvre*, namely that James did not give the piece a favorable review (204). In his 1888 article, James declared Le Horla, "not a specimen of the author's best vein," and speaking of the tale, lamented "the only occasion on which he [Maupassant] has the weakness of imitation is when he strikes us as emulating Edgar Poe" (Henry James Literary Criticism II 536). Despite James' professed distaste for the tale, Fusco still argues that a certain influence may have been possible. The center of Fusco's argument is that James' initial objection had most likely been to the "descending helical" structure of Le Horla, the narrator's downward spirial towards emotional collapse and ultimate suicide, a structure that James identifies with Poe, "a *poeta non grata* for James and his literary circles" (Fusco 204).

The crux of Fusco's argument is that Maupassant's ultimate emotional and physical breakdown, his death in an asylum, may have changed James's mind about the believability of the "descending helical structure." Thus, Fusco argues, James may have actually employed this particular Maupassant narrative structure in The Turn of the Screw. Even in doing so, Fusco, however, feels compelled to qualify his remarks. For example, Fusco limits his statement of the direct influence of The Horla on The Turn of the Screw to the remark, "James' major debt to Maupassant in 'The Turn of the Screw' is. . . structural" (212). And, then, Fusco adds, "any debt

to Maupassant for the structure of 'The Turn of the Screw' could not be for James an isolable, conscious one" (214).

The direct influence theory becomes even more questionable when examining another of Fusco's arguments. In particular, Fusco argues for a direct influence on the grounds that James's interest in Maupassant seems to have been particularly strong during the 1890's, the decade when James wrote The Turn of the Screw. This argument rests on Fusco's observation that during the 1890's James' journal entries refer to Maupassant more than to any other writer (Fusco 186). Fusco's observation is correct, but upon examination, it is not particularly relevant to The Turn of the Screw. In his notebooks, James writes, "spirit of Maupassant, come to my aid! This may be a triumph of robust and vivid concision; and certainly ought to be (Complete Notebooks of Henry James 45). And, along the same lines, James expresses a desire to write "Something as admirably compact and selected as Maupassant" (57), referring to concise writing as *"à la Maupassant"* (48, 55). As these notebook entries suggest, James did indeed mention Maupassant's name many times during the 1890's; however, in almost all of these cases, James limits his references to the concise writing style for which Maupassant was famous. Thus, James' 1890's notebook references emerge as irrelevant to Le Horla, and Fusco's principal Le Horla / The Turn of the Screw direct influence argument becomes untenable.

The direct influence theory proving problematic, other explanations must be sought for the similarities between Le Horla and The Turn of the Screw: why would two men as different from each other as Henry James and Guy de Maupassant independently choose unreliable narrators and why would they use these narrators to create an ambiguity between madness and the supernatural.? The answers to these questions can perhaps best be found by examining Le Horla and The Turn of the Screw in the context of the literary and cultural *milieux* of the late nineteenth century.

From a literary standpoint, both Le Horla and The Turn of the Screw can be classified as examples of the genre of the *fantastique*. In The Fantastique: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre, Tzvetan Todorov defines the *fantastique* as "that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event" (25). In defining the *fantastique*, Todorov also explains the rationale which causes the reader to hesitate between natural and supernatural explanations:

> In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination --- and the laws of the world remain as they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality --but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us. (25)

As Todorov's remarks indicate, the *fantastique* touches the very definition of reality. Within the genre of the *fantastique*, contemplating that an event could be potentially supernatural, even if this is within the context of a story, forces the reader to reconsider the nature of reality. This is in direct contrast to works that Todorov identifies as marvelous, which recognize without question the existence of the supernatural, at least within the tale itself. The difference between the *fantastique* and the marvelous is essentially the difference between The Turn of the Screw and Le Horla, both of which Todorov cites as *fantastique*, versus marvelous works such as Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol. Within the famous story of Ebeneezer Scrooge, the reader never questions whether the ghosts are supposed to be real, and this recognition of the supernatural within the story in no way touches the nature of reality outside of the tale. In contrast, The Turn of the Screw and Le Horla both prompt the reader to hesitate between supernatural and natural explanations, stemming from the idea that ghosts and Horlas cannot live in reality as it is usually defined.

James, Maupassant, E.T.A. Hoffman, Prosper Mérimée, Charles Nodier, Edgar Allan Poe: the majority of authors that Todorov identifies as *fantastique* belong to the nineteenth century. As Nancy Traill stresses in Possible Worlds of the Fantastique: The Rise of the Paranormal in Fiction, the *fantastique* in fact reached its high-point in the second half of the nineteenth century (21). This was, of course, the time frame during which both Maupassant and James were writing Le Horla and The Turn of the Screw. To understand the significance of the ambiguity within these tales, it is therefore necessary to take a closer look at the *cultural milieux* in which Maupassant and James wrote.

The second half of the nineteenth century was home to a unique cultural climate. Orthodox religions had come under attack the century before by Deists, such as Benjamin Franklin, and atheists, such as Voltaire. The challenge to religious beliefs had been especially strong in France, which had abandoned the traditionally Catholic monarchy and had replaced it with a new *République* based on the secular ideals of *liberté, egalité,* and *fraternité*. The iconoclasm reached a new level throughout Europe with the publication of Darwin's On the Origin of Species in 1859, which questioned the Biblical story of creation, thus casting additional doubt on the divine inspiration of the Bible as a whole. Finding themselves increasingly alienated from traditional Christianity, people on both sides of the English Channel and within the United States began turning to less orthodox modes of spiritual expression. These included interests in seances, clairvoyance, ghost sightings, automatic writing, theosophy, and the occult. In France, perhaps the strongest manifestation of this tendency could be found in the nation's intellectual fascination with Mesmerism, a theory of man's endowment with "animal magnetism" that gave rise to the practice of hypnotism.

Of course, it should be noted that Mesmerism as it was conceived in the nineteenth century and even today bears little resemblance to Mesmer's original theory. Building off of Newton's ideas that the moon and sun caused tides in the oceans and the atmosphere, Mesmer surmised that bodily humors also displayed similar tidal effects (Gauld 1). He went on to argue for a new kind of force to explain universal gravitation and all corporeal properties, a force which he named "animal gravity" or "animal magnetism" (Gauld 2).

Based on this theory, Mesmer ultimately developed a whole treatment regime. Using his own magnetism, he would lay his hands on the patient, whom he theorized had through illness lost magnetic humor (Crabtree 7). As his following grew and he could no longer treat all of the potential patients, Mesmer designed an apparatus consisting of a wooden tub containing iron filings and bottles of "magnetised" water from which protruded moveable iron rods. Patients sat around the tubs, took the rods, and touched afflicted parts of their bodies with them. To encourage free circulation of magnetic fluid, the patients would link fingers, and the whole group would join themselves with a cord (Gauld 4). The treatment rooms were dimly lit and decorated with mirrors, which were supposed to reflect "animal magnetism", astrological symbols, and thick carpets. Harmonious music played in the background. Ultimately, this treatment was supposed to break down harmful blocks in the circulation of the patient's magnetic fluid. When this would happen, a "crisis" would occur, prompting some patients to laugh, to cry, to yawn, to sleep, to faint, or even to pass into convulsions (Gauld 5).

Despite the dim lighting and otherwise eery appearance of his treatment facilities and despite a certain resemblance that Crabtree has pointed out between Mesmer's treatments and the older traditions of laying hands on the ill to form miraculous cures (7), Mesmer saw nothing occult or mystical about his practices (Gauld 4). "Animal magnetism" was to him first and foremost a

scientific theory. Mesmer did believe that somnabulists could predict the future course of an illness and other events, but he rejected any supernatural explanations for this, maintaining instead that "animal magnetism" treatments tapped into a natural instinct to read future events (Crabtree 176).

However, for the purposes of examining the late nineteenth century, Mesmer's original theories are of less significant than the associations that had been forged with "animal magnetism" over the course of the nineteenth century. A contemporary of Mesmer's, the French mystic and philosopher, Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, remarked, "It is Mesmer--that unbeliever Mesmer, that man who is only matter and is not even a materialist--it is that man, I say, who opened the door to sensible demonstration of spirit. . . Such has been the effect of magnetism" (Viatte IV. 223 Quot. Crabtree). In practice, even in the 1780s, "animal magnetism" was said to hold spiritual powers. Le chevalier de Barberin, part of Lyon's masonic group *Les Frères de la Bienfaisance*, began conducting magnetisms without touch and began consulting somnambulists about daily affairs, the fate of the dead, the meaning of heaven and hell, and future events (Crabtree 69). Before long, the Swedenborgian Society of Stockholm began to work "animal magnetism" into their doctrine, viewing this "property" as confirmaton that "spiritual beings exert an influence upon the organs of the invalid" (Bush 1847, 261-62 Quot. Crabtree).

Into the nineteenth century, "animal magnetism" became a point of great debate. Some denounced it as a fraud; others claimed it was the work of the Devil. Detailed discussion of these matters can be found in Crabtree's From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing. For the purpose of looking at Maupassant's writing, what is critical to realize is that coming into the late nineteenth century, "animal magnetism" and "hypnotism" were subjects shrouded in great controversy: were they science or superstition?

Charcot was largely responsible for the resurgence of interest in hypnotism is late nineteenth-century France. Charcot, a neurologist and psychiatrist, who was appointed professor of pathological anatomy in the Paris Faculty of Medicine in 1882 and elected to the Academy of Science in 1883 (Gauld 306), commanded enough respect that in 1882 when he presented a paper to the Academy of Sciences that investigated hypnotism as a possible treatment for hysteria, hypnotism suddenly became a standard topic for all medical journals, philosophic and literary reviews, and the daily press, and whole journals were created that were devoted to exploring the issue (Guillain 167). As well as through the press, Charcot also spread his ideas through the public lectures and demonstrations that he gave twice a week. Delivered in a miniature theatre with stage lighting, photographic slides, and actual patients, Charcot's lectures attracted not only medical students but also writers, journalists, and society figures. Among the attendees of these lectures were Sigmund Freud and Guy de Maupassant himself. In fact, Pierre Bayard opens his book Maupassant Juste Avant Freud [Maupassant Right Before Freud] with a fictionalized account of how Maupassant and Freud may have met through their attendance of Charcot's lectures.

Maupassant most likely began to attend Charcot's lectures in order to discuss his and his mother's health with the renowned doctor (218). After all, both he and his mother Laure de Maupassant were already suffering from certain problems by the mid-1880's. From 1872, Maupassant's mother is documented to have suffered from *"crises nerveuses"* (Steegmuller 77); as her condition gradually worsened throughout her life, Laure de Maupassant ultimately became known as a "grande-hystérique" (79). At the same time that his mother was experiencing these emotional troubles, Maupassant was already beginning to suffer the effects of syphilis, which he probably contracted in the mid-1870's. By 1882, he had developed paralysis in his right eye

(Steegmuller 87) and had begun to suffer from terrible head pains. To alleviate these head-aches, Maupassant developed the habit of ether-inhaling (Steegmuller 148).

Maupassant's ultimate madness, his mother's emotional problems, his own use of ether, his interest in hypnotism: all of these prompt theories for his interest in insanity and the paranormal that culminated in Le Horla. The favorite of these seems to be that Le Horla was the expression of Maupassant's emerging madness. True, Maupassant did suffer a complete mental and emotional collapse in 1891 (Kellet xi), when increasing suffering due to syphilis lead him to try to take his life. After this suicide attempt, Maupassant was placed in an asylum in Paris where he deteriorated mentally and physically until his death in 1893. Theories connecting Le Horla to Maupassant's ultimate madness have a great deal of intuitive appeal; nevertheless, they remain very difficult to prove. Maupassant's valet François, Léon Fontaine, Paul Bourget, and Georges de Porto-Riche all claim that from 1884 on, he told them of having occasional hallucinatory experiences of a double sitting in his chair or reflected in his mirror (Lerner 220), two images that are both presented in Le Horla. And, of course, at this time, he was also relying on ether, a substance that can cause hallucinations, to ease his pain. However, other sources, such a Maupassant himself and his mother, insist that he was completely sane when he wrote Le Horla in 1887.

What is much clearer and much better documented, however, is the influence of scientists, such as Charcot, on the development of Maupassant's idea. In The Story of San Michel, Axel Munthe, a friend of Maupassant's, recalls Maupassant's involvement with Charcot:

> I seldom failed to attend Professor Charcot's famous *Leçons du Mardi* in the Salpêtrière, just then chiefly devoted to his *grande hystérie* and to hypnotism. The huge ampitheatre was filled to the last place with a multi-colored audience drawn from tout Paris, authors, journalists, leading actors and actresses, fashionable

> demi-mondaines, all full of morbid curiosity to witness the startling phenomena of hypnotism almost forgotten since the days of Mesmer and Braid. It was during one of these lectures that I became acquainted with Guy de Maupassant then already famous for his *Boule de Suif* and his unforgettable *Maison Tellier*. We used to have endless talks on hypnotism and all sorts of mental troubles, he never tired of trying to draw from me what little I knew on these subjects. He also wanted to know everything about insanity, he was collecting just then as material for his terrible book 'Le Horla," a faithful picture of his own tragic future. He even accompanied me once on a visit to Professor Bernheims clinic in Nancy which opened my eyes to the fallacies of the Salpêtrière school in regard to hypnotism.[2] (Munth 410 Quot. in Steegmuller 253)

Steegmuller expresses some doubt concerning the reliability of Axel Munth's testimony, citing certain inconsistencies and errors in some of the other remarks that he has made about Maupassant.

However, in this instance, Axel Munth's testimony is not particularly vital. Unlike theories concerning Maupassant's sanity or madness while writing Le Horla, Maupassant's own writing provides sufficient testimony to show his intellectual indebtedness to scientists, such as Charcot. In the years preceding the publication of Le Horla, hypnotism played a pivotal role in at least three other Maupassant short stories and in one of his newpaper pieces. Upon examination, these texts demonstrate how hypnotism, for Maupassant at least, began to suggest certain ambiguities, gray areas that Maupassant would later explore in Le Horla.

In the precursors to Le Horla, one of the central ambiguities that emerges is whether hypnotism belongs to the realm of science or superstition. This is the very issue that is raised in the short story "Magnetism." Describing the sorts of people who are interested in hypnotism, Maupassant writes:

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[2] At this time the Nancy school was beginning to discredit Charcot's theories concerning the different

> Presently, the skeptical, easy-going men, who cared nothing for religion of any sort, began telling stories of strange occurrences, incredible things which, nevertheless, had really occurred, or so they said, falling back into superstitious beliefs, clinging to these last remnants of the marvelous, becoming devotees of this mystery of magnetism, defending it in the name of science. (1)

As this passage indicates, magnetism provided the skeptical and non-religious the rare opportunity to "cling. . . to the last remnants of the marvelous" all in the "name of science" (1). In his newspaper article, "Aux Bains de Mer" [On Sea Baths], Maupassant makes a similar assertion:

> "L'hypnotisme, qui est en train de devenir un religion qui a ses miracles, ses apôtres, ses fanatiques, et ses incrédules, diffère des religions ordinaires en ceci que presque tous ses prêtres sont docteurs en médecine et non plus de théologie." ("Aux Bains de Mer" 346)
>
> [Hypnotism, which is in the process of becoming a religion that has its miracles, its apostles, its fanatics, and its skeptics, differs from ordinary religions in that almost all of its priests are doctors of medicine rather than of theology].[3]

In this passage, Maupassant makes an even more direct statement that hypnotism is becoming a religion for the scientific-minded, "the doctors of medicine rather than of theology" (17). Maupassant's word choice "en train de devenir" [in the process of becoming] is particular worth noting because it testifies to the immediacy of this phenomenon within Maupassant's cultural environment.

Stemming from this ambiguity concerning the scientific or superstitious nature of magnetism, in some of Le Horla's precursors, belief in hypnotism or similar paranormal phenomena emerges as sufficient grounds for questioning the believers' sanity. One such example is "Un Fou?" [A Madman?], in which a man's assertion that he possesses an uncanny "magnetic" ability to attract people, animals, and objects with his hands, prompts the narrator to question

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stages of hypnotic sleep.

whether the man is insane. The dual possibilities, that the man is crazy or that this "magnetism" is a viable force, are embodied in the title of the piece, which may call the man "un fou"' [a madman], but which follows this assertion with a question mark. Another Maupassant short story, "Letter from a Madman," poses a similar madman/paranormal dilemma as is present in "Un Fou?" In this tale, the narrator's sanity is questioned due to his obsession with trying to see the Invisible. What has prompted the narrator to undertake this mission has been his contemplation of such "imperfectly perceived mysteries as electricity, hypnotic sleep, though transference, suggestion and all magnetic phenomena" (386), which lead him to remark: "if we had several fewer organs, we would be ignorant of things that are admirable and strange, but if we had additional organs, we should discover about us an infinity of other things that we should never suspect due to lack of means of ascertaining them" (386). Thus, the narrator concludes that "Everything is uncertain and capable of being estimated in different ways. . . Everything is false, everything is possible, everything is doubtful" (387).

This concept emerging from hypnotism and other paranormal phenomena of the questionable nature of reality is most explicitly discussed in Maupassant's "Aux Bains de Mer" [On Sea Baths], a newspaper article that he wrote just two months before the publication of Le Horla. Maupassant remarks:

> . . .parmi les expériences faites par des hommes de science et de raison, il en est quelques-unes qui semblent indéniables, et qui présentent un intéret étrange et puissant. On sait que les magnétiseurs peuvent suggérer à leurs sujets préablement endormis la vision d'êtres ou d'objets imaginaires quelconques. Rien d'étonnant à cela.
>
> On dit: ---<<Voici un chat, un chien, un loup, un verre, une montre.>> Et l'hypnotisé voit un chat, un chien, un loup, une verre ou une montre.

[3] All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

> Je dis voit, et non pas croit voir, car l'examen de l'oeil avec un prisme au moment de l'hallucination y montre reflétée sur la rétine l'image de l'objet suggéré --- qui n'existe pas! --- Ce fait est affirmé en des ouvrages de médecine fort sérieux; et il confirme cette théorie que tout est illusion dans la vie. Les conséquences philosophiques de cette bizarre observation sont infinies et déconcertantes (346).
>
> [among the experiments conducted by men of science and of reason, there are some that seem undeniable, and that offer a strange and powerful source of interest. As one knows, the hypnotists can put visions of whatever imaginary beings or objects in the minds of their subjects who have been hypnotized. Nothing astonishing in that.
>
> One says, "Here's a cat, dog, a wolf, a glass, or a watch." And, the hypnotized person sees a cat, a dog, a wolf, a glass, or a watch.
>
> I say see, and not believe to see, because the examination of the eye with a prism at the moment of the hallucination shows the reflection of the image of the suggested object on the person's retina--an image that does not exist!---This fact has been affirmed by very serious medical studies; it confirms the theory that everything in life is an illusion. The philosophical consequences of this observation are infinite and disconcerting.]

In this passage, Maupassant ties hypnotism to a fundamental questioning of reality. Whether or not the "serious medical discoveries" were indeed credible, this passage indicates that, according to Maupassant's belief, hypnotism held the power to produce the actual reflection of a non-existant image on the retina of a patient's eye. As Maupassant indicates, the ability of the eye genuinely to perceive that which is not there does not merely suggest that illusions exist in life but rather that "everything in life is an illusion." Maupassant closes this section of his newspaper piece with a commentary on the implications of this discovery, "that the philosophical consequences of this observation are infinite and disconcerting."

Perhaps the best way to understand Le Horla is as an exploration of these infinite, disconcerting philosophical consequences that Maupassant examined in his newspaper piece and in his earlier short stories. The Horla is the tale of a man who undergoes a series of bizarre experiences. On the first day, May 8, the narrator seems perfectly tranquil and content as he watches a series of boats transverse the Seine. But, over the next couple of weeks, he begins to feel feverish and sad, a horrible feeling that gradually escalates into utter anguish, culminating with a series of nightmares that some mysterious being is hovering over him drinking his blood. Over the next couple of months, the narrator has a series of unexplainable experiences. Although he bolts all of his windows and doors, he awakens every morning to find his carafe inexplicably empty. One day, he sees a rose inexplicably floating in the air as if some invisible being is holding it, and another night, he sees the pages of his book start to turn themselves. Finally, he looks into the mirror to find his reflection momentarily obscured and concludes that the invisible presence is standing between him and the mirror. At this moment, he becomes convinced of its existence, christens it the Horla, concludes that it has come to take over mankind starting with him, and resolves to kill it. To do this, the narrator shuts up his house and burns it to the ground, but in doing so, he makes a horrible oversight; he forgets to release his servants, who burn to death. In spite of the inferno, the narrator remains unconvinced that he has killed the Horla and kills himself in despair.

As this short summary demonstrates, the plot of Le Horla is relatively simple. In fact, in the year preceding the famous 1887 version, Maupassant wrote an earlier version that consisted of only eight pages of text in contrast to the thirty pages of the second version. Upon analysis, this is not surprising, however, because in the 1887 Le Horla, the focus is not so much on the bizarre events themselves but upon searching for explanations for these happenings. Considering an array

of explanations that touch upon almost every late nineteenth century anxiety, the narrator becomes engulfed in the ambiguity inherent in the *fantastique*, a hesitation between between natural explanationals, supernatural answers and those that negotiate a space in between.

The first explanation that the narrator considers is to question the reliability of his senses. Four days into his tale, the narrator records his first feelings of distress, that he has felt somewhat feverish and sad for several days. To try to explain these abnormal body experiences, the narrator launches an argument that explains his inquietude through the presence of imperceptible forces that the senses overlook. He writes:

> D'où viennent ces influences mystérieuses qui changent en découragement notre bonheur et notre confiance en détresse? On dirait que l'air, l'air invisible est plein d'inconnaissables Puissances, dont nous subissons les voisinages mystérieux. . . Tout ce qui nous entoure, tout ce que nous voyons sans le regarder, tout ce que nous frôlons sans le connaître, tout ce que nous touchons sans le palper, tout ce que nous rencontrons sans le distinguer, a sur nous, sur nos organes et, par eux, sur nos idées, sur notre cœur lui-même, des effets suprenants, et inexplicables?
>
> Comme il est profond, ce mystère de l'Invisible! Nous ne pouvons sonder avec nos sens misérables, avec nos yeux qui ne savent apercevoir ni le trop petit, ni le trop grand, ni le trop près, ni le trop loin, ni les habitants d'une étoile, ni les habitants d'une goutte d'eau. . . avec nos oreilles qui nous trompent. . . Ah, si nous avions d'autres organes qui accompliraient en notre faveru d'autres miracles, que de choses nous pourrions découvrir encore autour de nous! (26-27)

> [The mysterious influences that change our happiness and our confidence into distress. . . Where do they come from? As we know, the air, the invisible air is full of unknowable Powers, the mysterious forces to which we must submit. Everything that we encounter, everything that we see without watching, everything that we pass by without knowing, everything that we touch without feeling, everything that we encounter without recognizing, has on us, on our organs, and through them, on our ideas even our heart, surprising and unexplainable effects.
>
> How profound is the mystery of the Invisible! We cannot fathom it with our pitiful senses, with our eyes that cannot see

> things that are too little, too big, too close, too far, neither the inhabitants of a star, nor the inhabitants of a glass of water. . . with our ears that trick us. . . Ah, if we only had other organs that could present other such "miracles" for us! Oh, the new things that we could discover around us!]

Within this section, the narrator reiterates the same argument that Maupassant has already made in "A Letter to a Madman," that man's perception of reality is limited. He may not be able to see the microscopic contents of a drop of water or the surface of a faraway star, but these objects nevertheless exist. In short, man is at the mercy of his limited perception. Having the narrator ponder the possible forces that may elude the senses, Maupassant opens Le Horla on a note of pushing the very boundaries of reality itself, a reality into which it is possible at least to argue for the existence of paranormal creatures, such as the Horla.

The scene in which the narrator witnesses a hypnotism develops further the narrator's concept of the limitation of the senses. Within this section, the hypnotist, Dr. Parent, presents hypnotism as an expression of this very idea. He remarks:

> Nous sommes. . . sur le point de découvrir un des plus importants secrets de la nature, je veux dire, un de ses plus importants secrets sur cette terre; car elle en a certes d'autrement importants, là-bas, dans les étoiles. Depuis que l'homme pense, depuis qu'il sait dire et écrire sa pensée, il se sent frôlé par un mystère impénétrable pour ses sens grossiers et imparfaits, et il tâche de suppléer, par l'effort de son intelligence, à l'impuissance de ses organes. Quand cette intelligence demeurait encore à l'état rudimentaire, cette hantise des phénomènes invisibles a pris des formes banalement effrayants. De là sont nées les croyances populaires au surnaturel, les légendes des esprit rôdeurs, des fées, des gnomes, des revenants, je dirai même la légende de Dieu. (37)
>
> [We are. . . at the point of discovering one of the most important secrets of nature, I must say, one of the most important secrets on this earth, because there are certainly other important beings out there in the stars. Since man began to think, since he has known

> how to say and to write his thoughts, he has considered the impenetrable mystery of his rough and imperfect senses, and he has tried to compensate, by the means of his intelligence for the powerlessness of his organs. When that intelligence still remained in a rudimentary state, this haunting of invisible phenomena took banally frightening forms. From this tendency was born popular beliefs in the supernatural, of legends of prowling spirits, of fairies, of gnomes, of ghosts, and I even would say the legend of God].

Dr. Parent takes the narrator's unreliability of the senses theory and articulates it in a way that encompasses phenomena hitherto thought supernatural. In Todorov's terms, Dr. Parent is redefining reality to include many "supernatural" occurrences within the realm of the natural world. Even more so than Dr. Parent's words, the narrator seems interested in the actual hypnotism that the doctor performs. Having hypnotized the narrator's cousin, Dr. Parent implants the idea in her mind to get up the next morning and to ask the narrator for a loan of five thousand francs, a sum of money that she does not in reality need. The following day when his cousin does exactly as she has been told, the narrator is impressed and tells the tale to many people that he knows. But, when several people make fun of him, the narrator laments, "Je ne sais plus que penser" [I no longer know what to think]. Upon reflection, he decides, "Le sage dit: Peut-être?" [The sage says: Maybe?]. Thus, Dr. Parent's paranormal explanations, at least early on within the tale, leave the narrator in doubt.

This is largely because the narrator is also considering both overtly supernatural and natural explanations for his uncanny experiences. The narrator encounters the realm of the supernatural when he pays a visit to the famous abbey-fortress Mont St. Michel. There the narrator visits with a priest who tells him a legend to explain the loud howl of the wind at the abbey-fortress. In this legend, the priest explains the uncannily loud sound of the wind around Mont St.

Michel as the bleeting of two invisible, supernatural sheep that follow their unseen shepherd across the sand. The priest asks the narrator if he believes the legend, and the narrator answers that he does not know and asks, "S'il existe sur la terre d'autres êtres que nous, comment ne les connaîtrons-nous point depuis longtemps; comment ne les auriez-vous pas vus, vous? comment les aurai-je pas vus, moi?" (32) [If there exist other beings on the earth sides us, how could we have not known it for so long; how could we have not seen them? How could they have not seen me?]. The narrator himself has already pondered about the very answer to this question, but perhaps in asking it of the priest, he is attempting to solicit a religious perspective. What is most striking about the priest's reply is the strong resemblance that it bears to the commentary of the narrator himself, and how compatible it even is with Dr. Parent's theories, the very ones that explained how man created God. The priest replies:

> Est-ce que nous voyons la cent millième partie de ce qui existe? Tenez, voici le vent, qui est la plus grande force de la nature, qui renverse les hommes, abat les édifices, déracine les arbres, soulève la mer en montagnes d'eau, détruit les falaises, et jette aux brisants les grands navires, le vent qui tue, qui siffle, qui gémit, qui mugit, -- l'avez-vous vu, et pouvez-vous le voir? Il existe, pourtant" (31-32).
>
> [Do you see the hundred thousandth part of what exists? Take the wind, for example, which is the strongest natural force, which throws down men, knocks down edifices, uproots trees, engulfs the ocean and mountains with water, the wind which kills, which whistles, which howls, which bellows, --Have you seen it, and can you see it? It nevertheless exists].

One of the great ambiguities of Le Horla is how little difference exists between rationalistic, "scientific" explanations and the religious, or supernatural view. Still, it should be noted that the priest's remarks do not attempt to explain supernatural beings, such as God or the Invisible Sheep, within the realm of the natural world in the same way that is evident in Dr. Parent's way of

thinking. For the priest, the mystery of the wind is not an explanation for God or Invisible Sheep; it is rather evidence that things can exist that cannot be seen or fully understood. The narrator does not know what to think of the priest's statement. Although the priest employs the same image of the wind, the narrator regards the priest's remarks, unlike his own theories, as supernatural. Thinking back on this visit later within the tale, the narrator remarks, "Croire au surnaturel dans l'île de la Grenouillère, serait le comble de la folie. .. mais au sommet du Mont Saint-Michel? [Believing in the supernatural in the Grenouillere Isle, that would be the height of craziness. . . but at the summit of Mont St. Michel?]. First of all, this remark demonstrates that the narrator considers the explanations that he heard at Mont St. Michel as supernatural. Secondly, it shows a distaste on his part for credence in the supernatural, which he implies is at least possible grounds of insanity. But, finally, this remark leaves the narrator in a state of mind similar to his reaction to his cousin's hypnotism. The narrator does not know what to believe.

Considering the third kind of explanation, an answer that is viable within the generally accepted natural world, the narrator explores psychological options for his abnormal experiences. Recounting his recurring nightmare that an invisible being has been sucking his blood, the narrator asks, "Ai-je perdu la raison?" (33) [Have I lost my mind?]. Having found that his glass is once again mysteriously empty and finding himself in agitation over trying to explain this occurrence, the narrator asks himself how a well-brought up, reasonable man could become terrified of a glass of water. Reflecting on this, the narrator asks himself once again, "Je deviens fou" (34) [I am going crazy]. Several days later, when visiting Paris and going to the theatre have seemed to cure his problems, the narrator presents a psychological theory to explain his uncanny experiences: "Quand nous sommes seuls longtemps, nous peuplons le vide avec de fantômes" [When were are alone for a long time, we fill the void with phantoms]. It is only near the end of the tale that the

narrator admits that he has shown a certain madness, remarking, "C'est lui, lui, le Horla, qui me hante, qui me fait penser ces folies! Il est en moi, il devient mon âme" (52) [It's him, him, the Horla, who haunts me, who makes me think these crazy thoughts. He is in me, he is becoming my soul]. Indeed, this quote does show a certain admission of madness on the narrator's part, but as the words "fait penser" [make to think] suggest, the narrator attributes the cause to an outside force, the Horla. This is because despite the many explanations that the narrator wavers between, he finally settles on one.

After much reflection, the narrator finally concludes that some other being must exist. The narrator comes to this decision when he sees a rose break itself off the bush and suspend itself in the air as if someone is holding it. At this point, about two-thirds into the story, the narrator announces:

> je suis certain, maintenant, certain comme l'alternance des jours et des nuits qu'il existe près de moi un être invisible, qui se nourrit de lait et d'eau, qui peut toucher aux choses, les prendre et les changer de place, doué par conséquent d'une nature matérielle, bien qu'imperceptible pour nos sens, et qui habite comme moi, sous mon toit. (43)
>
> [I am certain, now, certain as the alternance of night and day that there exists near me an invisible being, which nourishes itself on milk and water and can touch things, take them and change their places, endowed with a material nature, although imperceptible to our senses, and which lives like me under my roof.]

This passage is perhaps the narrator's clearest declaration of how he came to believe in this being. One by one, the narrator alludes to the events that led him to this conclusion. That the creature lives on water and milk accounts for the strange disappearances of the substances from the narrator's glasses. That he can touch things, take them and change their places accounts for both the suspended rose and several dishes that have mysteriously broken while locked in the cupboard

overnight. As well as suggesting the events that led the narrator to believe in the invisible being, this passage is also significant because it clearly establishes the creature's position within the natural world. It is invisible, basically imperceptible to human senses; nevertheless, it is real, of "une nature matérielle" [a material nature], as demonstrated in its power to drink, to touch things, and to move objects. For the narrator, at least, this is the point in the story at which the hesitation ends. Having recognized that another being exists, the narrator names it le "Horla" meaning, "hors" [out], "là" [there]. The narrator concludes that there is something "out there" that is "invisible," "inconnaissable," [invisible, unknowable], a "rodeur d'une race surnaturelle" [a prowler of a supernatural race] (46) that "possède [son] ame" [possesses his soul] and "la gouverne" [governs it]. With the words,"La règne de l'homme est fini" [The reign of man is over] and "après l'homme le Horla"[after man, the Horla] (56), the narrator indicates more precisely what the Horla is, a seemingly supernatural race that has come to usurp the power of man.

If the reader is to believe the narrator, no ambiguity remains during the latter portions of this tale. However, throughout the novella, Maupassant has led the reader to question the narrator's reliability. Casting doubt on the narrator's reliability is his behavior in a couple of scenes in particular. One example is how he classifies himself according to his own definition of what it is to be crazy. The narrator remarks:

> J'ai vu des fous; j'en ai connu qui restaient intelligents, lucides, clairvoyants même sur un point. Ils parlaient de tout avec clarté, avec souplesse, avec profondeur, et soudain leur pensée, touchant l'écueil de leur folie, s'y déchirait en pièces, s'éparpillait et sombrait dans cet océan effrayant et furieux, plein de vague bondissantes, de brouillards, de bourrasques, qu'on nomme <<la demence>> (43).
>
> [I have seen madmen; I have known some of them who were intelligent, lucid, clear-sighted to a large extent. They would speak about everything with clarity, with cunning, with

> profundity, and suddenly their thought, tripping on the stumbling block of their madness, would collapse in pieces, scattering and darkening in a frightening and furious ocean, full of leaping waves, and hazes, and squalls, that one calls insanity.]

In this passage, the narrator essentially says that a madman can still appear to be normal--intelligent, lucid, and capable of thinking profound thoughts. But, upon uttering this phrase, he comes to the conclusion that he himself cannot be mad because of his "complète lucidité." Of course, this phrase clearly violates what the narrator has just said about how a madman can be lucid. The repetition not only of this idea but of this very same word in different forms, "lucide" [lucid] and "lucidité" [lucidity], underscores the fallacy of the narrator's logic. By his own criteria, he cannot rule out the possibility that he is mad. That he would do so casts a certain doubt on his ability to think.

Another moment when the narrator's behavior emerges as odd is when he perceives the pages of his book to be turning. In the beginning of this scene, the narrator mentions that he has been awakened by an "émotion confuse et bizarre" [confused and bizarre emotion]. In this state of mind, the narrator remarks, "il me sembla qu'un page du livre resté ouvert sur ma table venait de tourner toute seule" (48) [It seemed to me that a page of the book that was open on my table began to suddenly turn itself]. With the phrase "il me semble" [it seemed to me], the narrator recognizes that he is not completely certain that anything has occurred. It is only forty minutes later, after he has spent that entire time waiting, that he can finally declare, "je vis, je vis, oui, je vis de mes yeux" [I saw, I saw, yes, I saw with my eyes] that another page turned itself. From the sight of the pages turning, the narrator immediately remarks that he "compri[t]" [understood] that the other being is there, sitting in his armchair. Of course, the narrator cannot see the creature, yet he just knows he

is there. From staring at a page for forty minutes until he sees it turn the narrator has come to this conclusion, one of the most questionable in the novella.

As well as the narrator's questionable credibility within the two previous scenes, the "out-there-ness" of the Horla can also come into doubt because of its resemblance to some sort of unconscious self. Indicating this is the full quote in which the narrator explores the possibility of an unconscious. Searching for an explanation for his disappearing drink, the narrator makes a remark of especial interest:

> Alors, j'étais somnambule, je vivais, sans le savoir, de cette double vie mystérieuse qui fait doubter s'il y a deux êtres en nous ou si un être étranger, inconnaissable et invisible, anime, par moments, quand notre âme est engourdie, notre corps captif qui obéit à cet autre, comme à nous mêmes, plus qu'à nous-mêmes (33)
>
> [At that time, I was sleepwalking, I was living, without a doubt that mysterious double life that makes one doubt whether there are two beings in us or if an alien being, unknowable and invisible, takes our body captive during moments when our soul is languid. Our body obeys this being as if it is our self, more than our-self] (33).

Setting up these two options in a "whether this or that" structure, this particular passages behaves as if it is presenting two entirely distinct options. The narrator himself seems to believe that he is setting up a choice between some sort of idea of an unconscious self, as indicated with the words, "two beings in us," and an invasion of the self by some sort of outside creature, an "alien being." However, the conditions under which this outside creature is supposed to come into power, "when the soul is languid," seems to invite psychological interpretation. The "languid soul" is not the creature's effect but rather the factor that causes it to occupy a person in the first place. Maupassant's diction seems to indicate a certain similarity between the double self and the

interloping being, because in both cases he uses the word "être" [being] to refer to the creatures. When reading this sentence, the use of this "être" twice within five words seems to be likely a deliberate choice on Maupassant's part. He could have so easily varied his diction, employing another work, such as "créature," for example.

Even more than the preceding passage, the way in which the narrator ultimately "sees" the Horla creates suspicion that this creature could be a part of the narrator himself. Near the end of the tale, the narrator turns to the mirror to find that he cannot see his reflection in the glass. After a moment, his reflection slowly returns, but the narrator is terrified. Because of his momentary inability to see his reflection, the narrator has assumed that the Horla has been there in his presence. He goes on to say, "Je l'avais vu!" (53) [I have seen it!]. That not seeing himself indicates seeing the Horla forges a strong connection between this being and himself.

The narrator's compatibility with his own definition of madness, his bizarre behavior in the book scene, and the resemblance of the Horla to some sort of unconscious self: all of these cast fundamental doubt on the narrator's reliability; however, at the same time, it should be stressed that Maupassant presents a number of other elements that prevent the reader from dismissing the narrator altogether. An important detail is that one of the servants seems to be suffering from the same malady. And, even more striking than that is the article that the narrator quotes within the text. This article from "La Revue du Monde scientifique" [Review of the Scientific World] recounts how some of the inhabitants of San-Paulo, Brazil, have left their villages in terror, saying that they are being pursued and possessed by invisible beings that are sorts of vampires that drink their blood during their sleep and mysteriously consume their beverages. Reminding the reader of the opening scene when a Brazilian boat transversed the Seine outside of his home, the narrator makes a reasonably strong case that the Horla could be real. Coupling these other cases with

mentions of Mesmerism, the wind, and the limitations of sight, all of which invoke earlier discussions of the limitations of the senses, thus questioning man's fundamental idea of reality, the narrator's concept of the Horla emerges with at least some merit.

So, in the end, Le Horla, remains indeterminate, thus achieving for Maupassant what he very well might have been after. The cultural ambiguities that he has presented in his tale--1)hypnotism and the way this potentially questions man's perception of reality; 2) an excessive faith in magnetism or other paranormal phenomena and the doubt that this can cast on a man's sanity--these philosophical questions remain open in the end. True to the testimony of the "madman" in the Le Horla precursor "A Letter from a Madman," "Everything is uncertain and capable of being estimated in different ways. . . Everything is false, everything is possible, everything is doubtful" (387)

As with Maupassant's Le Horla, to understand the ambiguity in The Turn of the Screw it is also helpful to look at the cultural *milieu* in which the author was writing. Much in the same way that Mesmerism caught the attention of the French, spiritualism became strong in late nineteenth century England. According to Peter Beidler, much of this interest stemmed from Catherine Steven Crowe's The Night Side of Nature: or Ghosts and Ghost Seers, which was published in 1848. In her book, Crowe combined "real" ghost narratives with philosophical discussion of the human soul after death of the body, praising German scientists for being more open-minded than their English counterparts about the possibility of life after death (21-22). Beidler maintains that Crowe's The Night Side of Nature was to psychical research in England what Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin was to the abolitionists of slavery in the United States. It lead people to ponder an issue to which they hitherto had devoted little thought.

In response to this new-found interest in spiritualism, in 1851 several members of Cambridge University founded a society to carry out what Crow had recommended: to investigate matters hitherto dismissed as "delusory or supernatural" (22). This group, which consisted of both faculty and students, sent out flyers asking individuals to submit accounts of any supernatural experiences that they had had. At this time, interest in the supernatural was strong, yet paranormal phenomena had gained little societal acceptance. As evidence of this opposition, Beidler cites Robert Dale Owen's refusal to name any of the members of the "Cambridge Ghost Club."

This attitude changed by 1882, by the time an old "Cambridge Ghost Club" member, Edmund Gurney, assumed the presidency of a new organization, the Society for Psychical Research. Beidler surmises that the success of this organization may have been largely due to Gurney's prominence as a professor of moral philosophy at Trinity College. In any case, unlike the "Cambridge Ghost Club," which felt compelled to maintain a certain secrecy, the Society for Psychical Research publicly announced its intent: to "without prejudice of prepossession of any kind, and in the same spirit of exact and unimpaired inquiry which has enabled Science to solve so many problems. . . to investigate that large body of debatable phenomena designated by such terms as mesmeric, psychical, or spiritualistic" (25). The Society of Psychical Research's intent was well received, and in 1890, it boasted seven hundred members, including prime ministers, bishops, titled persons, scientists, and writers, such as Tennyson and Ruskin (25).

Both the English and American Societies for Psychical Research embodied the blur between science and the paranormal prevalent at the end of the nineteenth century. In his circular announcing the creation of the American Society for Physicical Research, William James clearly stated their aim:

> The Council of the American society feel that the evidence published by the English Society is of a nature not to be ignored by scientific men, especially when the alleged facts, would, if real, permit verification and the conditions allow control.
>
> In other branches of human experience, the publication of observations, made with as much apparent care, and under such distinguished auspices, immediately invites many careful students to work on the corroboration or disproof. The personal ability and character of the English investigators and the accuracy of their methods, if they do not compel the doubter forthwith to believe their conclusion, seem at least to make it impossible for him dogmatically to deny them, without support from something more solid than general presumptions about the order of nature, and the fallibility of human testimony.
>
> The Council of the American Society therefore feels that the duty can be no longer postponed of systematically repeating observations similar to those made in England, with a view of confirming them if true, to definitely pointing out the sources of error in them if false. If true, they are of value, and the tracing of their limits becomes a scientific duty. If false, no time should be lost in publishing their refutation; for, if allowed long to stand uncontradicted, their only effect will be to re-enforce powerfully the popular drift towards superstition. (7)

What is particularly interesting about this circular is that it clearly demonstrates that although the Society for Psychical Research delved into subjects labeled supernormal or preternatural, members such as William James regarded their investigation as a scientific inquiry. One way that James demonstrates this is in his use of scientific vocabulary to describe the Society and their investigations. For example, the ghost accounts published by the English Society are viewed as "evidence" that "permit verification " from "scientific men" [The American Society] provided that "conditions allow control" (7). As the passage progresses, James moves this implied connection between psychical research and science into a concrete argument. The second paragraph praises the care with which the English Society has gathered their information and remarks, "in other branches of human experiences" (7), people would feel compelled to respond to these findings in

some way, either by corroboration or disproof. Therefore, in the third paragraph, James concludes, the American Society has "a scientific duty" (7) to delve into psychical research.

In another article on psychical research, William James extends his aim beyond applying scientific techniques to the analysis of psychical phenomena. According to James, the time has come for science to redefine itself in a way that encompasses the paranormal. William James writes:

> I find myself suspecting that the thought-transference experiments, the veridical hallucinations, the crystal-vision, yea, even the ghosts, are sorts of things which with the years will tend to establish themselves. All of us live more or less on some inclined plane of credulity. The plane tips one way in one man, another way in another; and may he whose plane tips in *no* way be the first to cast a stone! but whether the other things establish themselves more and more or grow less and less probable, the trances themselves I speak of have broken down for my mind the limits of the admired order of nature. Science, so far as science denies such exceptional facts, lies prostrate in the dust for me; and the most urgent intellectual need which I feel at present is that science be built up again in a form in which such facts shall have a positive place. Science, like life, feeds on its own decay. New facts burst old rules; then newly divined conceptions bind old and new together into a reconciling law. (99-101)

Thus, the writing of William James shows an expectation similar to that of Maupassant, that science will find a way to explain "exceptional facts" of the paranormal. Subjects such as thought-transference, hallucinations, and "yea, even ghosts" (99), James predicts, will stop being considered mysterious or "supernatural" and will ultimately become an explained part of the natural world. Of course, it should be noted that William James was one of the most famous psychologists of his day, so his very probing into the supernormal, James' word of choice for the unexplained, inherently forges a connection between supernatural and psychological thought.

Unlike his brother, Henry James was not a member of the Society for Psychical Research; however, he definitely had a certain awareness of the group and its meetings. On October 31, 1890, Henry James read before the Society a letter of his brother's that described William's experiences with Mrs. Piper, a woman who claimed that while in her trances, she could serve as a vehicle through which the dead could speak. In the "Piper letter," William James overall seems to think the woman's case credible, with one exception, which is worth noting. In describing Phinuit, one of the personas who supposedly speaks to the woman, William James writes:

> Phinuit himself. . . bears every appearance of being a fictitious being. His French, so far as he has been able to display it to me, has been limited to a few phrases of salutation, which may easily have had their rise in the medium's "unconscious" memory; he has never been able to understand *my* French; and the crumbs of information which he gives about his earthly career are, as you know, so few, vague, and unlikely sounding, as to suggest the romancing of one whose stock of materials for invention is excessively reduced. ("Proceeding of the Society of Psychical Research" Quot. Essays in Psychical Research. 651-59)

This letter of William James' is particularly worth noting because it presents two options for the paranormal powers of Mrs. Piper; perhaps, they reveal that she is indeed a spiritual medium, but the other option is that these visions come from her "unconscious" memory. Since Henry James read this letter aloud to the Society for Psychical Research, it is possible to say definitively that he was aware of these ways of thinking: that both supernormal and psychological explanations where circulating in the intellectual circles as explanations for phenomena hitherto unexplained.

Of course, just because he was aware of his brother's views does not mean that Henry James necessary shared them. Perhaps "sharing" is not even exactly the right word here. Concerning psychical matters, the primary difference between William and Henry James is not necessarily one between credulity and incredulity, but rather between concern and indifference.

This can be seen in the letter in which Henry James agreed to read the "Piper letter" before the Society for Psychical Research. He wrote:

> I have waited a day just to think a little whether my complete detachment from my brother's labour and pursuits, my outsidedness, as it were, to the S.P.R., my total ignorance of Mrs. Piper and my general aversion to her species ought not (to myself, who have the full and inner measure of these limitations) to appear to disqualify me from even such a share in your proceedings as would be represented by, and restricted to, the lending of my (barely audible) voice to his paper. But,even after so much reflection I can't make up my mind! Therefore, I don't pretend to make it up--but give sentiment the benefit of the doubt. If it will do the paper the least good--or do you either---I will read it, as pluckily as possible, on the day you designate. Might you very kindly let me have a look at it before that? (Henry James Letters III 153)

This letter provides a powerful testament to Henry James' lack of interest in psychical matters. In his own words, he has a "complete detachment" from his "brother's labour and pursuits," an "outsidedness. . . to the S.P.R.," a "total ignorance of Mrs. Piper," and "an aversion to her species" (153). Henry James does not, however, completely dismiss the validity of the case, as he himself admits with the words, "I can't make up my mind!" (153). Despite Henry James's statement that he has reached this conclusion or lack thereof "after so much reflection" (153), from his ensuing comments the depth of his reflection becomes questionable. Henry James may claim that he has reflected a great deal, yet he declares his indecision flippantly and with little explanation: "I don't pretend to make it [my mind] up--but give sentiment the benefit of the doubt" (153). From looking at these quotations, what seems to separate Henry James from his brother William is that Henry does not seem to care enough about these matters to try to come to a definitive conclusion about them.

Henry James' relationship with the Society for Psychical Research becomes particularly important when looking at The Turn of the Screw. Just as the juxtaposition of madness and the paranormal in Le Horla stems from the ambiguity of these issues in Maupassant's environment, so the madwoman/ghosts conundrum in The Turn of the Screw is likely connected to similar forces in James' cultural *milieu*. James' connection to these currents in contemporary thought was largely through his brother. As just established, James had at least some familiarity with his brother's work in the Society for Psychical Research. James' reading of the "Piper letter" shows that James was aware of his brother's use of the supernormal and the psychological as alternative explanations for the same phenomena. These are, of course, the two explanations between which critics have wavered in the critical history of The Turn of the Screw.

In addition to William James' psychical research, Henry James' relationship with his sister Alice is also worth mentioning. Alice was a hysteric. In "The Turn of the Screw and Alice James," Oscar Cargill argues that while discussing Alice's illness with his brother William, James may have become familiar with the emergence of psychoanalytic theory. The Turn of the Screw, Cargill argues, is James' effort to discuss Alice's problems through the guise of a ghost story, a choice of form that prevented the public from realizing that James was writing of his sister. To justify his thesis, Cargill attempts to discredit James' professed source for The Turn of the Screw. In a notebook entry dated January 12, 1895, Henry James cites as a *donnée* a ghost story that the Archbishop of Canterbury told him two days before. Although Henry James professes to only remember "the mere vague, undetailed, faint sketch of it," he is very specific about the date, Thursday the 10th, that he heard the story and the manner in which it was presented, "very badly and imperfectly." Despite the specificity of these details and although this whole passage was

written in James' notebooks, which would not have been available to his readers during his lifetime, Cargill argues that the Archbishop's story is a hoax meant to protect Alice.

What Cargill fails to realize is that the Archbishop's tale inspiring The Turn of the Screw and Alice's illness playing a similar role are not two mutually exclusive options. After all, in a letter to F.W.H. Myers on December 19, 1898, James wrote,"The one thing and another that are questionable and ambiguous in them [James' "small inventions" in The Turn of the Screw] I mostly take to be conditions of their having got themselves pushed through at all" (112). This statement can easily imply that it was the ambiguity inherent in his subject matter that prompted him to write about it in the first place. As already suggested, madness and the paranormal offered this exact ambiguous appeal. To bring this cultural ambiguity into the very heart of The Turn of the Screw, Henry James casts the reliability of the governess' narrative in constant doubt.

One of James's ways of questioning narrative reliabiltiy is to suggest explicitly that the governess may be mad. On two occasions, the governess' confidant, Mrs. Grose, implies that her friend may be less than completley sane. When the governess asserts that she is afraid of not seeing Miss Jessel anymore, Mrs. Grose responds, "we must keep our heads" (47), and upon hearing the governess read sinister meaning into Miles' statement, "Think, you know, what I *might* do!" (71), Mrs. Grose comments, "Lord, you do change!" (71). Nevertheless, it is most often the governess herself who calls her sanity into question. When the governess tells Mrs. Grose of her revenant, whom the housekeeper identifies as Peter Quint, the governess remarks with relief, "she [Mrs. Grose] accepted [the vision] without directly impugning my sanity" (38). And, several scenes later, when the governess is explaining how she believes that Miles and Flora are talking about the ghosts, she remarks, "I go on, I know *as if I were crazy*; and it's a wonder I'm not. What I've seen would have made *you* so; but it has only made me more lucid, made me get hold of still

other things" (71). In explaining what she has "gotten ahold of," a belief that the children are feigning their goodness, the governess once again alludes to the possibility of madness, qualifying her accusations with the phrase, "mad as that seems" (72). Finally, when Mrs. Grose objects to writing the uncle on the grounds, "And, if they [Miles and Flora] are [mad]" (73), the governess retorts, "And if I am myself, you mean?" (73). As these phrases demonstrate, the governess unlike the narrator of Le Horla, is never willing to consider seriously that she may have lost her mind. With phrases, such as "as if I were crazy" and "mad as that seems," the governess, in fact, argues that this is not the case at all. Nevertheless, the governess' need to defend her sanity undermines her credibility because it explicitly prompts the reader to consider insanity as a possible alternative explanation for the ghost sightings.

In addition to these explicit questions of the narrator's sanity, Henry James casts doubt on the governess' reliability by having her come to conclusions that seem unwarranted. For example, when she receives the note that Miles has been released from school, the governess inexplicably jumps to the assumption "That [Miles] is an injury to the others" (17). Attesting to the rashness of the governess' judgment, Mrs. Grose's feels compelled to insist, "See him, miss, first. *Then* believe it!" (17). The governess comes to a comparably unwarranted conclusion upon learning that Peter Quint is dead and therefore she has seen a ghost. She infers, "He [Quint] was looking for little Miles" (39). In this instance, the governess seems to recognize that her knowledge of such a detail may seem a bit uncanny. Explaining her new-found enlightenment, the governess remarks, "A portentous clearness now possessed me" (39).

As part of this same questionable capacity for detecting the undetectable, the governess tends to put words into other people's mouths. In the scene by the lake, when Flora looks into the governess' eyes and then drops the fern that she is holding in her hand, the governess remarks,

"What she and I had *virtually* said to each other was that pretexts were useless now" (103). Elaborating on Flora's "virtual" remark, the governess attributes to the little girl the phrase, "I'll be hanged . . . if *I'll* speak" (103). Similarly, in the governess' eyes, Miles' request that she play the piano emerges as "quite tantamount to his saying outright, "The true knights we love to read about never push an advantage too far. I know what you mean now: you mean that - to be alone yourself and not followed up - you'll cease to worry and spy on me, won't keep me so close to you 'will let me go and come' . . . (97). The most notable of all the speechless dialogues is the one when the governess claims that while on her way home from church, she had "a talk with Miss Jessel" (89). The governess recounts how Miss Jessel told her that "she suffers the torments . . . of the damned" (89) and that "She [Miss Jessel] wants Flora" (49). However, the careful reader will recall the governess' reference within the preceding chapter to this same meeting with Miss Jessel, in which, according to the governess' own words, the visitant appeared before her "dishonored and tragic" and "passed away" (87) without saying a word. This episode is significant because it is the only one in the novel where the reader can say without a doubt that the governess has contradicted herself.

To heighten doubt concerning the governess' reliability, Henry James also implies possible psychological explanations for her visions. For example, by having her remark that she "slept little" (12) her first night at Bly, Henry James suggests that she may have felt uneasiness from the very beginning of the tale. Also notable is the governess' admission that she was "carried away in London" by the uncle at Harley Street. Since this same uncle who has given the governess expressed instructions not to contact him at any time for any reason, it is possible that she could be suffering from some sort of psychological distress stemming from unrequited affection. In addition, the governess' description of dining with Miles suggests the possibility of some emotional problem.

She remarks, "We continued silent while the maid was with us – as silent, it whimsically occurred to me, as some young couple who, on their wedding-journey, at the inn, feel shy in the presence of the waiter" (118). This analogy between her conversation with Miles and the behavior of a bride and groom on their honeymoon implies that the governess may regard her pupil in some sort of romantic or sexual manner. Comparably disquieting is the passage where the governess describes her reaction when Mrs. Grose fails to see Miss Jessel:

> Of what first happened when I was alone I had no subsequent memory. I only knew that at the end of, I suppose, a quarter of an hour, an odorous dampness and roughness, chilling and piercing my trouble, had made me understand that I must have thrown myself, on my face, to the ground and given way to a wildness of grief. I must have lain there long and cried and wailed, for when I raised my head the day was almost done. (107)

With talk of lapses in memory, falling prostrate to the ground, and crying all day, this passage perhaps more than any other describes the governess' experiences in terms that could easily describe those of the emotionally disturbed—or even those of the insane.

Having explicitly questioned the governess' sanity, having shown her as prone to jump to irrational conclusions, and having supplied possible indications of psychological problems, Henry James casts fundamental doubt on the credibility of the governess' tale. Confronted with these reasons for doubt, the reader can almost come to the point of declaring the ghosts imagined and the narrator mad. However, Henry James sets up the tale in a way that keeps the reader from ever passing that final judgment. Despite the questionable reliability of the governess' narration, several episodes prompt the reader to consider seriously that the ghosts may be real.

In this respect, the most important scene is the one in which the governess describes her vision of Peter Quint. She remarks:

> He has red hair, very red, close-curling and a pale face, long in shape, with straight, good features and little, rather queer whiskers that are red as his hair. His eyebrows are somehow darker; they look particularly arched and as if they might move a great deal. His eyes are sharp, strange - awfully; but I only know clearly that they're rather small and very fixed. His mouth's wide and his lips are thin, and except for his little whiskers he's quite clean-shaven. He gives me a sort of sense of looking like an actor (36).

This passage is striking in the very detailed description that the governess provides. She is able to describe the color and texture of Quint's hair and is able to paint a detailed picture of his face--not only its overall shape, color, and appearance but also distinguishing qualities of his individual features. Later in the conversation, the governess supplies even more details about her vision--that he is not a gentleman, that he is handsome, and that he is dressed in "smart [clothes], but they're not his own" (36). From this description, Mrs. Grose is able to guess without hesitation, "Quint" (36). From reading the governess' description, it seems almost impossible for the governess to have surmised all of the details that she provides, particularly since red, curly hair, being rather uncommon, would have been a poor guess and since her facial descriptions include accounts of each individual feature. The governess' description strongly attests to her having some prior knowledge of Quint's appearance. Of course, theoretically, it seems possible that she could have seen a picture or heard Flora describe Quint while she was showing her around the grounds. However, both of these explanations require incredible speculation on the reader's part since the scene where Quint is identified does nothing to solicit these conclusions. Despite the governess' questionable reliability throughout the tale, in this scene, at least, the most reasonable explanation seems to be that the governess has seen a ghost. Whereas the governess' "talk with Miss Jessel" comments supply the strongest argument for her unreliability, the identification scene provides the strongest case that the ghosts may indeed be real.

Rather than argue against psychological explanations, a couple of other scenes simultaneously cast doubt on both sorts of explanations--the psychological and the otherworldly. One such example is the scene where Mrs. Grose tells the governess, "I believe" (113). At the beginning of this interlude, Mrs. Grose approaches the governess and finally tells her, "Your idea [to take Flora and leave]'s the right one" (112). Of course, this comment can be easily read in two ways: Mrs. Grose is obviously sufficiently afraid to believe that she should flee Bly with Flora; however, it remains unclear whether she is afraid of ghosts or of the governess herself. Mrs. Grose's explanation for deciding to leave is equally vague--that she's "*heard*. . . horrors" from Flora (112) that "justify" the governess. In this phrase, it remains unclear whether it is the governess' apparitional claims or merely her assertion that Flora and Mrs. Grose leave Bly that has been "justified." Mrs. Grose's elaboration on what Flora has said heightens the doubt . According to Mrs. Grose, Flora has made comments about the governess that are "beyond everything; for a young lady; and I can't think wherever she must have picked [them] up" (113). As with Mrs. Grose's earlier comments, this statement can be read in two ways: Flora's remarks can be so indicting of the governess that Mrs. Grose cannot believe them, or they can be such an indication of evil that they must have been "picked up" from some pernicious, outside force. All of these remarks culminate in Mrs. Grose's avowal, "I believe" (113), a statement that seems to resolve the doubt in favor of an apparitional explanation. But, then, again, it is always possible that Mrs. Grose could be attempting to appease a woman whom she believes insane.

The conclusion heightens this sense of ambiguity. In the final moments, when the governess shrieks, "No more, no more, no more!" (127) to her vision of Peter Quint, Miles somehow seems to suspect that someone might be around and responds by saying, "Is she *here?*" (127). The governess then supplies the antecedent herself, "Miss Jessel, Miss Jessel, Miss Jessel!"

(127), a name that the governess remarks, "he [Miles] with sudden fury gave me back" (127). Of course, since Miles' actual dialogue is not recorded, it is impossible for the reader to know the source of this "fury"-- whether Miles is astounded that the governess would see an apparition or whether he knows that his ghostly interludes have been discovered. In this case, the fact that he does not see the apparition himself is inconsequential, because as the governess has asserted a few scenes earlier, that the children's eyes are now more sealed than hers. The ambiguity deepens with the governess' remark, "It's not Miss Jessel!" (127), which prompts from Miles the question, "It's *he?*" (127). In this case, the governess insists that Miles himself supply the antecedent, which he does, uttering the phrase, "Peter Quint--you devil" (127). Thus, Miles himself declares Peter Quint's name, a statement that the governess takes as a confession and could very possibly be viewed as such. However, since the governess has mentioned Miss Jessel earlier in the dialogue, producing the name of Quint, the former governess' companion, may have just been a logical guess on Miles' part. And, of course, it must be noted that despite the governess' request, Miles was allowed to see his sister Flora before her departure, a meeting during which Flora may have told Miles of the governess' Miss Jessel sightings, thus preparing Miles for the possibility that the governess may speak of seeing ghosts. Nevertheless, the greatest ambiguity surrounding this scene concerns who is the "devil" in the phrase, "Peter Quint--you devil!" (127). Miles is speaking to the governess of Quint, so grammatically the name could modify either. Since knowing the identity of the "devil"--either the evil ghost Quint or the deranged governess--would reconcile the ghosts/madwoman conundrum once and for all, the phrase "you devil" is the ultimate statement of ambiguity in The Turn of the Screw. Not only does the mystery remain unsolved, but the reader does not even know how to explain Miles' death a few moments later: has Quint killed him or has the governess smothered him in her arms?

Thus, The Turn of the Screw, like Le Horla, emerges as fundamentally ambiguous. After casting substantial doubt on the governess' testimony, James includes the scene in which her detailed description of Quint seems to corroborate her claims. And, then, to highlight the ambiguity, James adds the "I believe" and "Peter Quint--you devil" scenes, which can be read to argue for either a psychological or a supernatural explanation. The evidence simply does not come to a clear verdict.

Over the past one hundred years, this however, has not prevented critics from relentlessly searching for the missing fact, statement, or connection that might finally resolve the mystery. In as much of an analysis of these critics as of The Turn of the Screw itself, Shoshanna Felman has written the famous essay, "Turning the Screw of Interpretation." The Turn of the Screw, Felman argues, is essentially a trap that Henry James has written to ensnare the readers, both those who argue that the ghosts are real and those who seek psychological explanations. James' purpose for writing The Turn of the Screw, Felman argues, is to set the reader in motion, going around and around in circles, like the turning of the screw, producing what Felman calls a "reading effect." Essentially, Felman urges critics to "read. . . the ambiguity" rather than to attempt to resolve it (163).

As Felman's essay suggests, The Turn of the Screw touches upon the very meaning of ambiguity. In light of what Felman calls the "reading effect," perhaps the madness/supernatural dilemma is not even The Turn of the Screw's primary concern. Especially when viewed alongside Maupassant and his writing, The Turn of the Screw does not seem to have this great obsession with the madness/apparition issue that has developed in the text's critical history. Highlighting Maupassant's fascination with madness and the paranormal are the prevalence of these issues within his *œuvre*; as already demonstrated, many of Maupassant's early writings deal with the

same ambiguous issues that appear in Le Horla. In contrast, no other Henry James story bears a similar resemblance to The Turn of the Screw. Henry James wrote other ghost stories, such as "Owen Wingrave" and "The Jolly Corner," but typically these are written in the third person and leave little doubt in the reader's minds concerning whether he or she is supposed to believe that the ghosts exist within the context of the tale. It is only within The Turn of the Screw that James produces the combination that recurs in Maupassant's *œuvre* : the juxtaposition of the issues of madness and the supernatural through the use of an unreliable narrator.

Just as madness and the supernatural do not recur *vis-à-vis* each other as in Maupasssant's texts, these topics are not emphasized in as explicit way in The Turn of the Screw as they are in Le Horla. As already discussed, the narrator of Le Horla spends much of the text exploring possible explanations for his uncanny experiences. He not only questions his sanity but provides "scientific" theories to explain how an Horla could really exist unbeknownst to man. In contrast, The Turn of the Screw does not seem to concern itself with what it means to see a ghost. The closest thing to analysis on this issue is the governess' phrase, "Nothing was more natural than that these things should be absolutely as they were not" (44). Much more so than ghost sightings, The Turn of the Screw does make an effort to probe into madness and its possible causes and effects. As part of his effort to cast doubt on the narrator, James does provide both potential causes and evidences of the governess' possible derangement. However, since no case is made for how ghosts really could exist unknown to the majority of men, The Turn of the Screw does not leave the reader with the same super-textual philosophical questioning about the madness/supernatural dilemma. Upon analysis, The Turn of the Screw seems less interested in the ghost/madwoman mystery and more concerned with ambiguity as an issue in itself.

To recognize the full significance of the ambiguity in The Turn of the Screw, it is necessary to retreat momentarily from the ghost/madwoman issue and to read the text for what it most fundamentally is: tale about not telling—of not transmitting definitive, meaningful information. From the outside frame opening, which has a purpose of contextualizing the telling of the story, James seem to talk more about what has not been said than what has. In fact, the first word of introduction that Douglas says about his tale is in fact, "Nobody but me, till now, has ever heard" (4) the story. For the past twenty-years, Douglas has been been making the transmission of the story impossible by constraining the manuscript "In a locked-drawer" (94). This tendency towards not-telling extends to the governess, the very primary source of the tale. Until she was on her death bed, Douglas maintains, "she [the governess] never told anyone" her story, a fact that he himself has had to surmise because the governess has never explicitly told him about not telling her story.

This pattern of not-telling continues into the governess' tale itself. In the inner frame, not-telling sometimes means providing insufficient information. For example, when Miles' school sends a letter saying that he has been dismissed, they leave out what seems to be the most important detail, the reason for his expulsion. But, on other occasions, rather than providing insufficent information, not-telling can mean simply saying nothing at all. The characters seem to remain particularly reticent concerning Miss Jessel and Peter Quint. Both the governess and Mrs. Grose repeatedly stress, Miles and Flora are said never to speak of them at all. At first, Mrs. Grose seems to abide by this same policy as she avows with the comment, "I won't tell tales" [about Quint and Jessel] (19). Upon analysis, the dictum of the uncle at Harley Street emerges as a variation on this same idea: in telling the governess "never to trouble him- but never, never;

neither appeal nor complain nor write about anything" (9), the master is issuing an actual command not to convey information.

Whereas in the preceding examples the failure to convey information can be equated with being silent, in many other cases in The Turn of the Screw, not-telling involves a great deal of talking. The little boy, Miles, is perhaps the master of this technique. For example, he tells the governess, "I think, you know, of this queer business of ours" (91), without ever specifying what this "business" is. The governess assumes that it is their mutual understanding about Quint and Jessel, but Miles could just as easily be remarking on how atypical it is that he has not returned from school. In another scene, Miles pronounces an equally ambiguous phrase, "Of course we've all the others" (119). Just as the true nature of the "queer business" was unclear within the context of the first example, in this phrase, it is impossible to ascertain exactly who the "others" are. The governess assumes that he is speaking of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel, but he could just as easily be talking about the servants. Even in his "confession" of what he did to be expelled from school, Miles says, "Well, I said things" (125), without ever specifying what he has said to whom. The ambiguity within Miles' dialogue continues into the very last scene. Asking the governess if someone is present, Miles speaks in pronouns, the antecedents of which remain unclear. The governess' responses to Miles' pronouns both indicate that the antecedent needs to be supplied. For example, when Miles enquires, "Is she *here*?" the governess must stare at him before he specifies, "Miss Jessel, Miss Jessel!" And, in response to Miles' question *"Is he here?"* (127), the governess feels compelled to ask, "Whom do you mean by he?" (127), to which Miles finally specifies Quint.

As with Miles, Mrs. Grose often employs many words essentially to say nothing of clear significance. This is particularly the case in the scene where Mrs. Grose finally decides to "tell tales" (19) about about Quint and Jessel. To a barrage of questions from the governess, Mrs.

Grose provides a succession of vague responses bordering on non-answers. For example, when the governess asks, "Come, there was something between them" (Jessel and Quint) (49), Mrs. Grose retorts, "There was everything" (49). And, when the governess responds to Mrs. Grose's already vague remark, "He [Quint] did what he wished" (49), with the question, "With *her?* [Miss Jessel]," Mrs. Grose gives another unclear answer, "With them all" (49). Despite Mrs. Grose's volubility in this scene, the governess does not really learn any more concerning exactly what has happened to whom. Compounding the difficulties behind transmitting meaningful information is Mrs. Grose's admission at the end of this scene that she knows "nothing" definitive about Mrs. Jessel's death (49). As this remark suggests, the governess' only sources of information are ambiguous sentences provided by a person who herself has admitted that she knows less than the whole truth.

Particularly worth noting is Mrs. Grose's ensuing remark: although she does not know the truth, Mrs. Grose stresses, "I still imagine [the cause]. And what I imagine is dreadful" (50). To this, the governess replies that Mrs. Grose may imagine dreadful things about Quint and Jessel, but they are certainly "Not so dreadful as what I do" (50). In this phrase, each layer of silence seems to increase the magnitude of the surmised "dreadfulness."

This relationship between adding a layer of ambiguity and increasing the expectation of "dreadfulness" points to a key idea that emerges in The Turn of the Screw. Ambiguity is such a subject of inquiry in itself that James endows it with a value judgment within the tale. In the introductory sentences to his tale, Douglas remarks, "Nobody but me, till now, has ever heard. It's quite too horrible" (4). Here within the first few paragraphs of the tale, James forges an association which will continue throughout --an assumption that if a story or part of a story has not been heard, the reason for this silence must be that the tale is "quite too horrible" (4). This idea recurs in the governess' statement that Flora has told her, "Not a word --- that's the horror" (46).

Since saying "not a word" modifies "that," this sentence essentially declares that not speaking is the horror of the situation. This association between not-telling and horror reaches its full extent is the governess' assumption of what is necessary for Miles to be saved. Telling Mrs. Grose how she is going to save Miles, the governess remarks, "He'll confess. If he confesses he's saved" (114). Nobody, of course, has told the governess such a detail; however, it seems to be the logical conclusion, if remaining silent is inherently construed to be some sort of implication of "horror." This association between ambiguity and horror is confirmed in Henry James' Preface to the 1908 Edition., in which he James explains that he has remained vague with an intention to "make him [the reader] think the evil" (123). In assuming that the reader will choose to "think. . . evil" when confronted wth ambiguity, Henry James makes his ultimate connection between these two items.

With its deep investigation of the meaning of ambiguity, The Turn of the Screw emerges fundamentally as a tale about not telling. Ambiguity, of course, forms the essence of the not telling part. But, at the same time it is important to realize that the governess' adventures are essentially a tale, a story that somehow must be constructed out of the ambiguity that pervades the text.

This sheds new light on the ghost/madwoman conundrum that has sparked one of the greatest literary debates of all time. From the publication of Edmund Wilson's "The Ambiguity in Henry James" in 1934, critics have become increasingly skeptical of the governess' sanity. However, at the same time another group has continued to champion supernatural interpretations, namely that the ghosts are real. One of the most recent of these is Peter Beidler's Ghosts, Demons, and Henry James: the Turn of the Screw at the Turn of the Century. Both sides of the debate seem to behave as if there is some "true story" to be discovered if one can only find the missing clue. Only in recent years have critics such as Felman begun to expect that no such resolution is possible.

What often gets lost in the debate is that in the case of The Turn of the Screw is that no "true story" necessarily exists. The Turn of the Screw is of course fiction–just a story. This may seem to be an tautological statement, but it is worth noting since The Turn of the Screw itself attests to the story quality of the governess' narrative. True, when Douglas claims that he has a story to top all of those that have been told around the fire, he attests the governess' true existence, remarking, "She was my sister's governess" (5), and indicating that the manuscript he will procure is in "an old faded ink" (4) of her hand. However, two factors indicate that at least on some level, Douglas' story is only a tale.

First, it is worth noting the context in which Douglas presents the governess' narrative. The opening lines of the novella are, "The story had held us, round the fire, sufficiently breathless" (3). This opening tale is a told by a man named Griffin, and this is followed by a "story not particularly effective" (3). Two nights later, Douglas responds to Griffin's tale by asking, "If the child gives the effect another turn of the screw, what do you say to *two* children-?" (3). Significant about these opening details is that they set the inner tale of the governess within an outer tale of story telling. Douglas' reference to Griffin's story within the introductory remarks to his own demonstrates that the tale that he is going to tell is a part of this larger exchange of stories. His remark, "what do you say to *two* children" (3), is also significant because it shows an intention on Douglas' part to outdo Griffin's tale, which in contrast only had one child. The audience response attests to the efficacy of Douglas' strategy; after remarking, "two children give two turns!" to the screw, they add, "Also we want to hear about them" (3). Douglas' remarks, "Nobody but me, till now, has ever heard, it's quite too horrible" (3-4) and "Nothing at all that I know touches it. . . for dreadfulness" (4), increase the audience's anticipation for hearing the tale.

Just as Douglas sets up the governess' account as if it were one more story to be told around the fire, the audience's reaction indicates that they feel the same way about the tale. Douglas remarks that, "Nothing at all touches it. . . for dreadfulness!" (4), and one of the women replies, "Oh how delicious!" (4), a comment that would not be publicly acceptable if she and the rest of the listeners were viewing the tale as a part of real life. When Douglas continues, stressing that the tale is unsurpassed in general uncanny ugliness, and horror and pain" (4), the outside frame narrator shows a similar lack of sympathy that suggests that like to the other woman, the story is merely a story to him. Hearing about the horror and pain, he tells the outside frame narrator, "Well, then. . . just sit right down and begin" (4). Further emphasizing the listeners' assumption that what they are about to hear is a tale is a demand from one of them for the "manuscript" (4), a word that is, of course, associated with literature.

Within the frame, the governess shows a similar expectation that her experiences are supposed to form a story. This manifests itself in the way she perceives events to conform to certain narrative patterns. For example, upon arriving at Bly, the governess remarks, "I had the view of a castle of romance inhabited by a rosy sprite, such a place as would somehow, for diversion of the young idea take all colour out of the story-books and fairy-tales" (15). A specific story that the governess seems to relate to her own is that of Jane Eyre. The governess' very willingness to take the situation at Bly, one the uncle at Harley Street concedes is "prohibitive"(9), could perhaps be related to a Jane Eyre inspired expectation that "gentlemen in his station [actually do] marry their governesses" (277-78). Suggesting this are the governess' remarks right before encountering Peter Quint for the first time:

> It was plump, one afternoon, in the middle of my very hour: the children were tucked away. One of the thoughts that, as I don't in the least shrink now from noting, used to be with me in these

> wanderings was that it would be as charming as a charming story suddenly to meet someone. Someone would appear there at the turn of a path and would stand before me and smile and approve. I didn't ask more than that--I only ask that he should know; and the only way to be sure he knew would be to see it, and the kind light of it, in his handsome face. (24)

From the governess' ensuing remarks it becomes clear exactly who "he" is supposed to be, the uncle on Harley Street. She writes, "the figure that faced me was--a few more seconds assured me--as little any one else I knew as it was the image that had been in my mind. I had not seen it in Harley Street - I had not seen it anywhere" (25). The governess' fantasy of encountering the master of the house while on a walk through the grounds is reminiscent of Jane's first meeting with Rochester while walking through Hay Lane. Emphasizing both the general influence of the "story" on the governess and her specific attachment to that of Jane Eyre is her comment a couple of pages later, "Was there a 'secret' at Bly - a mystery of Udolpho or an insane, an unmentionable relative kept in unsuspected confinement?" (27). The latter reference to the "insane. . . unmentionable relative" (27) of course recalls Rochester's mad wife, Bertha, in Jane Eyre. Bly, as the governess explains, has "a roomful of old books. . . last-century fiction some of it, which, to the extent of a distinctly deprecated renown, but never to so much as that of a stray specimen, had reached the sequestered home and appealed to the unavowed curiosity of my youth" (60). Thus, throughout her stay, the governess is likely to be spending a great deal of time reading, immersing herself in the concept of how the "story" is supposed to unfold.

Much of the governess' imagery attests to her tendency to view her life around her as if it is supposed to be a story. For example, she remarks:

> The attraction of my small charges was constant joy, leading me to wonder afresh at the vanity of my original fear, the distaste I had begun by entertaining for the probable grey prose of my office. There was to be no grey prose it appeared, and no long

> grind; so how could work not be charming that presented itself as daily beauty? It was all romance of the nursery and the poetry of the schoolroom. I don't mean by this, of course, that we studied only fiction and verse; I mean that I can express no otherwise the sort of interest my companions inspired. (28-29)

As in this passage, the governess often describes her life with the pupils in literary terms. In contrast, to the "probable grey prose" that she expected of her life, the governess finds the "romance of the nursery" and the "poetry of the schoolroom." Particularly worth noting in this passage is the governess' statement that she employs this sort of terminology because she "can express no otherwise the sort of interest that [her companions] inspired." In one sense, this serves as a hyperbole to emphasize her care and concern for the children. But, in another sense, particularly when viewed in context to her other "story" references, this phrase can mean that the governess is incapable of looking at the children in any other terms. Emphasizing her reliance on the "story" is the governess' ensuing remark that Miles and Flora are like, "those cherubs of the *anecdote* who had - morally, at any rate - nothing to whack" (29).

From the moment that Mrs. Grose identifies the governess' visitant as Peter Quint, completing the story takes on a new form for the governess. As already mentioned, upon learning of the ghost's identity, the governess instantly concludes, "He [Quint] was looking for little Miles" (39), adding, "A portentous clearness now possessed me" (39). Explaining her feeling, the governess adds:

> I had an absolute certainty that I should see again what I had already seen, but something within me said that by offering myself bravely as the sole subject of such experience, by accepting, by inviting, by surmounting it all, I should serve as an expiatory victim and guard the tranquility of the rest of the household. The children in especial I should thus fence about and absolutely save. (39)

When looking at this second phrase, it becomes clear what the "something within" the governess is calling her to be; "bravely" to be the "sole subject of such experience," to "accept," to "invite," to "surmount" the threat: this is language that evokes images of a hero. Adding the terms, "expiatory victim" and speaking of "saving" the children, this heroism reaches an almost Christ-like status. Later within the same chapter, the governess explicitly mentions her own feelings of heroism:

> I scarce know how to put my story into words that shall be a credible picture of my state of mind; but I was in these days literally able to find a joy in the extraordinary flight of heroism the occasion demanded of me. I now say that I had been asked for a service admirable and difficult; and there would be a greatness in letting it be seen. . . I confess I rather applaud myself when I look back. . . It was, in short, a magnificent chance. (42)

As this passage implies the motivation to find "a service admirable and difficult" (the calling to protect the children from the ghosts) is exactly what the governess needs to "find a joy in [an] extraordinary flight of heroism." Regardless of the existence or non-existence of the ghosts, the governess' conclusion that she has been called to protect is an assumption of her own. The governess' own connection between being Miles' and Flora's protector and fulfilling the role of the hero indicates that in attempting to impose meanings on her ambiguous environment, literary conventions serve as her chief guide.

This connection takes on new significance when viewed alongside the outside frame of the tale. In addition to establishing that the listeners view Douglas' tale as a story, the outside frame provides information concerning the listeners' expectation of what a story is supposed to do. Although no one has said anything to make this indication to the people around the fire, one of the immediate assumptions is that the tale will have within it some sort of romance. Upon hearing Douglas remark, "She [the governess] had never told any one [her story]. . .You'll easily judge

when you hear" (5), the outside frame narrator somehow concludes, "I see. She was in love" (5). Although this turns out to be the case, as suggested in Douglas' remark, "You *are* acute. Yes, she was in love. That is she *had* been" (5), it is worth noting that no early remark of Douglas' has justified the outside narrator's assumption. The discussion of romance becomes particularly worth noting in the responses to Mrs. Griffin's question, "Who was she [the governess] in love with?" (5) Hearing this question, the outside frame narrator instantly responds, "The story will tell" (6). But, Douglas retorts, "The story *won't* tell. . . not in any literal, vulgar way" (6). To this another listener responds, "More's the pity then. That's the only way I ever understand" (6). Thus, like the governess, the characters within the outside frame use their expectations of how a story is supposed to go as a guide for filling in the ambiguities within the tale.

The outside frame narrator's assumption that "The story will tell" (6) is a powerful indication of the expectations that the audience carries to the tale. In remarking that the tale must ultimately tell, the outside frame narrator is evoking a powerful tenet of realism. This becomes clear when viewing the outside narrator's remark in light of Elizabeth Ermarth's book Realism and Consensus in the English Novel. In this book, Ermarth defines realism as a set of literary conventions that require that a text culminate in a single, unified vision, a consensus, as Ermath calls it. Creating this single vision requires that at least by the end of the narrative, all uncertainties are supposed to be resolved. Ambiguity, Ermarth stresses, is not only acceptable but common in the middle of a realist text, but the central tenet of realism is that it is supposed to be clarified by the end. This is the very principle that the outside narrator is proclaiming when he remarks, "The story will tell" (6).Thus, in having Douglas stress, that no, "The story *won't* tell" (6), James is setting up the governess' story as a direct violation of the principles of realism.

The unreliable narrator is the essence of this breakdown of realist structure. When no voice within a text can be trusted to articulate the consensus, the reader or audience must remain in doubt to the very end. Shoshanna Felman has describes the feeling of dismay, of having lost oneself in the text, of going in circles wavering between different explanations, the "reading effect." James highlights this issue in the response that one of the audience members makes to Douglas' statement that, "The story *won't* tell" (6): "More's the pity then. That's the only way I ever understand" (6). In demonstrating that the violation of the realist structure, the idea that the story must tell, produces a sense of discomfort, James is exploring the very meaning of unresolved ambiguity, the reason that it carries with it such feelings of horror: ambiguity is frightening precisely because it violates every realist expectation of what a reader expects to find in a text. Exploring unresolved ambiguity, its relationship to the tenets of realism and the effect that this has on the reader is perhaps the central idea around which he has constructed The Turn of the Screw.

Upon close analysis, Maupassant shows a similar interest in exploring this very concept of the breakdown of realism and the resulting "reading effect. Maupassant's conscious use of ambiguity is not entirely apparent in within Le Horla's itself. To recognize the full extent of Maupassant's ambiguity it is necessary to take a look at the textual history of the tale. As already discussed, many precursors exist to Le Horla, tales that anticipate certain issues that will appear in the text. But, what has not been emphasized before is that Maupassant actually wrote two texts by the name "Le Horla." The text hitherto called Le Horla is the more famous, thirty page 1887 version. But, it should be noted that the famous 1887 text is actually a rewritten version of an 1886 text by the same name, one that was only eight pages in length. Except for the final scene where the narrator burns his house down in an attempt to kill the Horla, the 1886 and 1887 texts recount the same basic plot; however, the two versions had very different receptions. The 1887

version was a sensation in its day--so famous that a leading French aeronaut christened his balloon "Le Horla" as a publicity stunt and paid Maupassant endorsement fees for riding in the balloon (Steegmuller 257). The 1887 Le Horla was quickly translated and gained popularity all over Europe and the United States and still remains standard reading in French literature classes today. In contrast, the 1886 "Le Horla" is almost entirely forgotten. As said before, event by event, the 1886 and 1887 Le Horla's tell the same basic story. The difference between the two is essentially one of form, a shift in presentation that attests to Maupassant's emerging awareness of the full power of ambiguity.

In the 1886 version of Le Horla, Maupassant presents the narration through a three level frame. On the outermost level, Maupassant tells his tale in third person, which gives the tale a firm sense of grounding. First, the third person introduction explains the rhetorical situation in which the patient (the character analogous to the 1887 narrator) will be telling his story. The doctor Marrande has assembled three other psychiatrists and four other scientists to spend an hour in his insane asylum to hear the tale of one of his inmates. In addition, the third person introduction provides seemingly objective commentary on the two characters who will be telling the rest of the story. For example, the third person introduction describes the patient as "maigre comme sont maigres certains fous" (192) [thin as certain madmen are]. This description sets the tone for the entire piece. By stating that this man's appearance resembles that of a "fou" but by stopping short of asserting that the man is insane, this statement forges a connection in the reader's mind between the patient and madness without passing a clear judgment of the man's sanity. As stressed before, this narration is in third person, a form that bears the semblance of objectivity. Thus, this insinuation of madness carries much more force than the first person insanity/sanity comments that pervade the 1887 version. The third person opening is also significant because it provides

apparently objective praise of the doctor Marrande as "le plus illustre et le plus éminent des aliénistes" (192) [the most illustrious and eminent of psychiatrists], thus adding credibility to the doctor's testimony within the story and thus prompting the reader to accept his narrator as reliable.

Inside of the outer-most frame, two different characters take the narrative voice: the patient (the man who has encountered the Horla) and the doctor Marrande. The portion of the text in which the patient provides the narration is basically analogous to the narration in the 1887 version. As in the later version, the patient's narration is a questionable reliability, but unlike in the 1887 text, the early version supplies an additional voice, that of Dr. Marrande. Especially since he has been described as one of the most famous and respected psychiatrists, Marrande supplies the 1886 "Le Horla" with a reliable narrator.

The presence of a reliable narrator is significant because it absolves the reader from having to decide how he or she should react to the text. At the very beginning, the doctor introduces the patient's case as "le plus bizarre et le plus inquiète que j'aie jamais rencontré" (192) [the most bizarre and troubling that I have ever encountered], telling the reader in advance how he or she should react to the tale that the patient is about to tell, in short, that the reader should find it abnormal and disturbing. But, even more importantly, the doctor tells the reader the interpretation at which he should have arrived by the time that he has finished reading the tale. The doctor remarks, "Je ne sais si cet homme est fou ou si nous les sommes tous les deux. . . ou si. . . si notre successeur est réellement arrivé"(199) [I don't know if this man is crazy or if we both are. . . or if. . .if our successor has really arrived]. This ultimate conclusion of uncertainty may seem to be a non-answer, but it is significant because, despite its apparent ambiguity, it absolves the reader from having to try to reach the consensus that a realist text demands. Thus, this first version of "Le Horla" fails to produce the "reading effect." As can be seen in The Turn of the Screw, the

"reading effect" signifies not only that the narrator has been left in hesitation, but also that according to the tenets of realism, he or she feels compelled to try to resolve this sense of doubt.

In contrast to the 1886 version, Maupassant presents the 1887 Le Horla in a fundamentally different form. Unlike the 1886 "Le Horla," which is presented through a series of frames, the 1887 version is in diary format. One significance of this diary format is that it allows Maupassant to relate the narrator's thoughts and feelings as he experiences them, without the benefit of reflection. For example, on the first day, when the narrator declares, "Quelle journée admirable" (25), he has no knowledge of the events to come. On May 12, when he first writes, "J'ai un peu de fièvre depuis quelques jours" (26) [I have had a little bit of fever for several days], the narrator shows almost no alarm, as his choice of the word "peu" [little] indicates. Gradually, though, his alarm escalates until by the end he decides that the Horla is out to destroy mankind, a conclusion prompts him to try to burn the creature to death. The significance of the shift in diary form begins to become clear when viewed in light of Ermath's Realism and Consensus in the English Novel. Diaries are essentially types of epistolary fiction, a form that Ermath stresses is antagonistic to the kind of unity that realism demands. Writing of Samuel Richardson's Pamela, Ermath remarks, "The gaps between letters and between journal entries are the blanks that represent her periods of immersion in experience, and their blankness constantly suggests the presence of threats to the stable consciousness" (101). This statement could easily refer to the 1887 Le Horla's narration. As has already been stressed, the ambiguity in The Turn of the Screw partially stems from the periods of silence that exist between each level of the tale's transmission--between the action and the governess' writing of the manuscript, between Douglas' receipt of the manuscript and his reading of it to his friends, between Douglas' reading and the outside frame narrator's retelling of the story. Since the 1887 version of Le Horla is written in diary form, a

similar silence occurs between each entry. And, as Ermath stresses, it is in this gap of silence that the story's action takes place. The reader is both removed from the action of the story and denied the "overarching patterns" (101) that a narrator can impose on his or her tale when recounting it after the fact. The resulting tale is disjointed and ambiguous.

Adding to the ambiguity of the diary format is that it gives Maupassant a logical reason to omit much of the background information that appears in the earlier version. In the first version, the patient recounts his story with a group of doctors in mind as his audience. Since they could not be expected to know his background, it is logical that he offers a certain exposition about himself. But, by rewriting the story as a diary, a form in which the patient is his own intended audience, the second version offers much less detail concerning the patient's background. In the first version, the narrator states that he is forty-two years old, that he is not married, that his "fortune est suffisante pour vivre avec un certain luxe" (192) [his fortune is significant to live with a certain luxury], that he lives in a large house on the banks of the Seine, near Rouen, that he loves to hunt and fish and that his live-in servants include a coachman, a gardener, a valet, a cook, and a laundry woman. In contrast to this long list of details presented in the first version, few appear in the second version and most of these in a much less direct fashion. The only detail that is presented as explicitly in the second version as in the first is the information concerning the location of the patient's home. The patient's statements in the second version that he can see the Seine from his house and that this river leads to Rouen bear a relatively close resemblance to his assertion in the first version that he lives on a property on the shores of the Seine, near Rouen. The only other background information is presented much less directly in the second version than in the first. Whereas in the first version, the patient explicitly declares that his fortune is sufficient to live with a certain luxury, in the second version the man's *bourgeois* status must be inferred. The most concrete indications of his

wealth are the reference seven pages into the tale that he has a coachman and the final indication that he has locked his servants in his house. But, of course, the reader does not have this information at the beginning of the tale. The result is that, while reading the 1887 Le Horla, the reader finds himself on the edge of a void. He has little idea who is speaking, what kind of man he is, what his interests are, what his relationships are like. Essentially, everything the reader knows about this man involves his encounter with the Horla. In this respect, Le Horla is even more ambiguous than The Turn of the Screw. Unlike James' text, which supplies information such as the relationship with the uncle at Harley Street, the reader of Le Horla lacks the information even to produce a theory as to how the narrator may have lost his mind.

Nevertheless, the most important difference between the 1886 and 1887 versions is that the latter contains no reliable narrator. The narrator has come to a conclusion of his own, that the Horla exists. By the tenets of realism, the reader should believe his account, but throughout the text Maupassant has cast doubt on the reliability of the narrator's testimony. Without a doctor Marrande, the reader has no reliable source of information to tell him or her that the story is supposed to be ambiguous, to free him or her from the expectation that he can make sense of the tale. Nobody articulates the viewpoint, "Je ne sais si cet homme est fou ou si nous les somme tous les deux. . . ou si. . . si notre successeur est réellement arrivé" [I don't know if this man is crazy or if we both are. . . or if. . . if our successor has really arrived]. Thus, the 1887 Le Horla, unlike the early version, is indeterminate about its own indeterminacy. Placing the reader in an ambiguous environment without freeing him or her from the expectation that it is possible to come to a definitive conclusion, in the 1887, unlike the 1886 version of Le Horla, Maupassant achieves what Felman has dubbed the "reading effect." The terror produced by this "reading effect" is the

difference between these tales, the distinction that has made one nearly forgotten and the other a classic of French literature.

That Maupassant decided to move Le Horla into an increasingly ambiguous form is not surprising when viewed in the light of a newspaper article that he wrote entitled, "Le Fantastique." Maupassant maintains:

> Lentement, depuis vingt ans, le surnaturel est sorti de nos âmes. Il s'est évaporé comme s'évapore un parfum quand la bouteille est débouchée. . . Quand le doute eut pénétré enfin dans les esprits, l'art est devenu plus subtil. L'écrivain a cherché les nuances, a rôdé du surnaturel plutôt que d'y pénétrer. Il a trouvé des effets terribles en demeurant sur la limite du possible, en jetant les âmes dans l'hésitation, dans l'effarement. Le lecteur indécis ne savait plus, perdait pied comme en une eau dont le fond manque à tout instant, se raccrochait brusquement au réel pour s'enforcer encore tout aussitôt, et se débattre de nouveau dans une confusion pénible et enfiévrante comme un cauchemar.
>
> L'extraodinaire puissance terrifiante d'Hoffman et d'Edgar Allan Poe vient de cette habileté savante, de cette façon particulière de coudoyer le fantastique et de troubler, avec les faits naturels où rester pourtant quelque chose d'inexpliqué et de presque impossible. ("Le Fantastique" 256-257)

[Slowly, over the past twenty years, the supernatural has left our souls. It has evaporated like perfume evaporates when the bottle is opened. . . Once doubt finally penetrated people's minds, art became more subtle. The writer searched for nuances, prowled around the supernatural rather than to penetrate it. The writer found terrific effects by lodging at the limits of the possible, throwing souls into hesitation, into fear. The indecisive reader no longer knows, having lost his footing as if in water, the bottom of which is continually missing, suddenly hangs on to the real to make it grow all the more immediate, and struggles in a confusion that is painful and enervating like a nightmare

The extraordinarily terrifying power of Hoffman and of Edgar Allan Poe comes form this learned skill, from this particular fashion of juxtaposing the fantastic next to that which is troubling, the natural occurrences in which there still lies something unexplained and almost impossible].

The way that Maupassant describes the indecisive reader having lost his footing as if in water, the hanging on to the real, and the struggle and confusion that result all seem to describe the very feeling that Felman would later dub the "reading effect." Thus, this passage shows a conscious awareness of this phenomenon on Maupassant's part. However, at the same time, Maupassant's primary interest seems to be elsewhere. From the first sentence, with his perfume escaping from a bottle analogy, to his final remarks when he praises Poe's and Hoffman's abilities to juxtapose "natural occurences in which there still lies something unexplained and impossible," Maupassant shows a focus on his cultural *milieu*, its waning belief in the supernatural, and the effects that this has had on literature. This article, like Le Horla, suggests that Maupassant's primary interest is in capturing within his writing his culture's ambiguous attitude toward the supernatural . The "reading effect" emerges as simply a "terrible effect" that a writer can achieve in constructing these sorts of tales. Describing these "terrible effects," Maupassant sets up "fear" as an appositive of "hesitation," thus equating hesitation and fear. By this chain of ideas, which sets up hesitation as the result of the "terrible effects" and fear as the result of "hesitation," one can ascertain Maupassant's intention for evoking the "reading effect": a desire to grip his readers with terror. This statement in which Maupassant equates the "reading effect" with a desire to inspire fear is important: 1) because it provides a likely explanation for his change in form between the 1886 and 1887 versions; 2) because it sets up Maupassant in direct contrast to James; for Maupassant the "reading effect" emerges as a means for making a story more effective, whereas for James, as already demonstrated, it serves as the primary subject matter for the story itself.

These contrasting uses of the "reading effect" touch upon the much more fundamental difference between Le Horla and The Turn of the Screw. For Maupassant, textual ambiguity is a vehicle through which he can explore his fascination with madness and the supernatural, whereas

for James, the madness/supernatural conundrum is a springboard for probing into the meaning of textual ambiguity itself. However, despite this distinction, an important commonality arises: a relationship between ambiguous attitudes within the cultural environment and the breakdown of realism within the literary *milieu*. This essentially is the *raison d'être* of the *fantastique*. As Todorov maintians, the *fantastique* is "that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event" (25). In being a genre, the content of which, must fall within the gray area between the natural and the supernatural, the *fantastique* invites topics that are regarded with anxiety and ambiguity within the cultural environment. And, in being a genre of hesitation, a genre that precludes the very possibility of coming to a consensus, the *fantastique* inherently suggests a breakdown of the realist structure. The unreliable narrator, in its resistance to allowing consensus--in relieving hesitation--is an ideal medium of communication for the *fantastique*. Living in an age when, as Maupassant writes, the supernatural was evaporating from people's souls like perfume from a bottle, when emerging psychoanalytic theories were taking its place, and when realism was starting to come under attack, it should hardly be surprising that Maupassant and James, although very different men and writers, gravitated to madness, the supernatural, and the unreliable narrator as ways of reconciling the literary and cultural winds of change.

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