



**The Use of the Super-
natural in Henry James's
Short Fiction**

Asst. Instr. Ameer Abd Hadi, in the Univer-
sity of Babylon, College of Basic Education,
Department of English.

And

Prof. Salih Mahdi Hameed, Ph. D., lecturer
in the University of Babylon, College of
Education, Department of English.



خلاصة البحث

كتب هنري جيمس عدداً جديراً بالاهتمام من الأعمال الروائية التي تظهر فيها جليا خوارق الطبيعة، استهلها بقصته "ألرومانسيه من بعض الملابس القديمة" عام 1868 وختمها بروايته غير المكتملة "بمعنى من الماضي" عام 1914. تعد الفترة التي تمتد منذ بداية 1890 وما تلاها أكثر فترة من حيث غزارة النتاج الأدبي لمثل هذه الأعمال، حيث تزامنت هذه الفترة مع محاوله جيمس في الكتابة للمسرح.

يشير مصطلح خوارق الطبيعة إلى كل ما هو غير خاضع للقانون الطبيعي. وقد كرس هذا البحث لسبر جيمس لخوارق الطبيعة في قصتين هما "أوين ونكريف" عام 189 و"أصدقاء الأصدقاء" عام 1896. وقد استند اختيار هذان النصان من أعمال جيمس كونها كتبا في فترة تمثل النضج الفني لدى الروائي تزامنت مع اضطراب فكري لدى الروائي من جدوى الاستمرار بالكتابة الروائية أو البدء بالكتابة المسرحية.

وتقع الدراسة في مبحثين كل مبحث مخصص لنص واحد. وينتهي البحث بالاستنتاج الذي يلخص النتائج التي تم التوصل إليها.

استخدام خوارق الطبيعة في قصتي «أوين ونكريف» و «أصدقاء الأصدقاء» لهنري جيمس.





...Abstract...

The supernatural is a term which refers to anything that is not applicable to the natural law. It includes everything that is paranormal or metaphysical.

Henry James wrote a considerable number of narrative pieces in which the presence of the supernatural is evident; this was commenced with "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes (1868)" and ended with his unfinished novel *The Sense of the Past* (1914). The prolific production of such works fell during and after the period that coincided with his attempt to write for the theatre in the early 1890s.

This research is devoted to the critical investigation of James's exploration of the supernatural in his two stories; "Owen Wingrave" (1893), and "The Friends of the Friends" (1896). The selection these two stories is based on the fact that they are written in a period which represents, for the novelist, his artistic maturity with which he had an intellectual unrest whether or not to stop fictional writings and begin with theatrical writings.

The study is divided into two sections, each section deals with a text.

Finally, the study ends with the conclusion which sums up all the findings of the study.





III. "Owen Wingrave"

Rare are the works in which Henry James criticizes the military institution. "Owen Wingrave" is one of James's supernatural stories that blends the employment of the supernatural with social and moral dilemmas. In the story, James mixes the presence of the supernatural with the ideals of courage and heroism through which he criticizes the army traditions.¹

The idea of the story is taken from a real story of one of Napoleon's generals called Marcellin de Marbot. In the days that follow the death of James's sister, Alice, 1892, he sat reading the memoirs of that French soldier who died in the battlefield and began to haunt, through a supernatural force, the life and consciousness of one of his descendants who is completely of a different temperament.² A year later, James wrote his story which opens with a speech by Spencer Coyle to Wingrave "Upon my honour you must be off head!" (p.316), Coyle is Wingrave's military coach. He is agitated by Wingrave's decision of giving up the army all together and living his social life. Wingrave is of a military ancestry, his father and grandfathers have been enlisted in the army. For Wingrave's family, army is their "profession". Wingrave's father dies "from an Afghan sabre" (p.322) in a battlefield. The story is abundantly rich in tragic memories caused by wars. One day, the Wingrave family, Mr. and Mrs. Coyle, and Lechmere, Owen's close friend, all meet in the house of Owen's aunt Miss Wingrave at Paramore for dinner. Owen declares that he feels distressed not because he has decided to leave the army but because he hears "strange voices" (p.336) that mutter at him in the house and he is terrified by one of the portraits that belongs to his dead grandfather on the wall beside the staircase. The house contains many portraits of the Wingrave family warriors that have laid dead in wars. There is a haunted room in the house called "the White Room" in which the apparition of dead Colonel Wingrave is sometimes seen. Though he is a courageous colonel, he has not died in a battlefield, he died





out of sorrow for his poor child who died by a catastrophic accident. Kate Julian, who is Owen's cousin whom Owen wants to marry, tells Mr. Coyle of her reaction to Owen's decision; that it is not an act of a gentleman. Coyle tries to defend him as a "fighting man" but she says he should prove it. She challenges Owen to spend a night alone in the haunted room. Owen accepts the challenge and goes into the haunted room. A moment later, a shriek is heard and Mr. Coyle rushes to find Owen Wingrave lying dead on the threshold of the room "like a young soldier on the gained field." (p.352)

The supernatural being in the story is a member of the family; he is the grandfather of Owen. The setting in which the story is presented is not likely expected from a supernatural story. It is springtime, and the place in which the ghost is supposed to appear is a room in an inhabited house. This gives James's use of the supernatural its household sense that differs from most of the supernatural literary works. The job Owen Wingrave does is the same as his ancestors' and this is a hint that soldiering and army affairs are connected with tragic ends like his grandfathers, that is why he wants to quit army. The very name "Owen Wingrave" is symbolic. It symbolizes the honour and heroism of the family: "Owen" means "Young soldier" in Scots or Welsh, and "Wingrave" is composed of the verb "Win" and the noun "grave". Thus, his name is the young soldier who wins his grave. From its title, the tone of the story is known and the tragic presence is felt.³

Unlike the other works of the supernatural, there is no prelude for the existence of the supernatural in the story. Virginia Woolf believes that the story is divided into two parts and the dividing factor is James's enforcement of the supernatural overtly in the third section with Owen's reference to "the old ghosts" (p.336) of his ancestors. Woolf objects that James, at the beginning of the story, endows the characters with a great deal of "stir and importance" without these traits leading anywhere. She says "we seem to be setting for a long absorbing narrative; and then, rudely, incongruously, a shriek rings out; poor Owen is found stretched on the threshold of the haunted room; the supernatural has cut the book in two."⁴ Through its sto-





rytelling and characterization, Woolf believes that in the first part of the story the first impression the reader feels is that he is going to read a long narrative about an ordinary life of a group of people when reading. For instance,

The spring day was warm to his [Owen's] young blood, and he had a book in his pocket which when he had passed into the Gardens... He stretched his long legs and began to read;... . (p.318)

Miss Wingrave is seated in her Baker-street lodging with "a fat catalogue of the Army and Navy Stores, which reposed on a vast desolate table-cover of false blue." (p.325) Mrs. Coyle is "a fair fresh slow woman" (p.332) who admits that she loves her husband's pupils, whereas Spencer Coyle and Wingrave's intimate friend Lechmere bear upon the question of Owen's temperament and situation. Wingrave is a boy who has been in the army and now rejects all the military principles.⁵ Suddenly, Wingrave speaks about bizarre voices he hears from the haunted room:

"Oh, the house— the very air and feeling of it. There are strange voices in it that seem to mutter at me— to say dreadful things as I pass... . I don't enjoy it." (p.336)

The voices increase more:

"I've started up all the old ghosts. The very portraits glower at me on the walls. There's one of my great-great-grandfather...that fairly stirs on the canvas— just heaves a little— when I come near it." (p.336)

Woolf believes that the story is divided into two parts: the first one is socially and morally perceived, whereas the second contains scenes of violence and sensation.⁶

However, Gert Buelens tries to find some connections between the two parts of the story, as classified by Woolf. He traces some uncanny events happening in the history of the Wingrave family. Two death incidents occur, the first is of "a lad just growing up" (p.339) during the time of George the Second's reign. The lad has done a very disturbing mysterious act that angers the father and pushes him to strike his son dead. The second death is that of the father who suf-





fers the death of his lad and that leads him to die in sorrow in the same room that his son has been laid.⁷

The poor man lay dead on the floor, in his clothes...without a wound, without a mark, without anything in his appearance to indicate that he had either struggled or suffered.(p.339)

Such facts may indicate that there is a family curse haunting the house. The act the lad has done is unknown and it can be something humiliating the army and the father kills him for that. The spirit of the grandfather remains in the house to punish whoever dares to make fun of the army and by Owen's decision, the ghost of the "great-great-grandfather" appears to take Owen's soul.⁸

T.J. Lustig focuses on how the past is inescapable and how it influences the present,

*"the patterns of the past being simultaneously repeated and altered... . It is impossible for Owen to break with his family's military past since in fighting it he inevitably perpetuates it. But his replication of the past is also a transformation of those patterns."*⁹

The past of the family seems more powerful than Owen. Buelens believes that the ghost of Owen's grandfather holds out to Owen as "the yardstick of family morality."¹⁰ His portrait on the staircase looks powerful and controls "the family circle". The placing of the portrait on the "grand staircase" is to indicate the family belief that their military line is to take them up.¹¹

It is worth to mention that the story has been adapted for the theatre. Wingrave's supernatural tragic end has caused George Bernard Shaw to launch a keen criticism on James for this decision. In a letter to James about his choice of Owen's end, Bernard Shaw writes:

It is really a damnable sin to draw with such consummate art a houseful of rubbish, and a dead incubus of a father waiting to be scrapped; to bring on for us the hero with his torch and scrapping shovel; and, then, when the audience is saturated with interest and elated with hope, waiting for the triumph and the victory, calmly announce that the





rubbish has choked the hero, and that the incubus is the really strong master of all our souls. Why have you done this? If it were true to nature— if it were scientific— if it were common sense, I should say let us face it, let us say Amen. But it isn't. Every man who really wants his latchkey gets it. No man who doesn't believe in ghosts ever sees one. Families like these are smashed every day and their members delivered for bondage, not by heroic young men, but by one girl who goes out and earns her living or takes a degree somewhere. Why do you preach cowardice to an army which has victory always and easily within its reach?¹²

Shaw criticizes James's putting a supernatural tragic end to Wingrave caused by his grandfather's ghost and believes that the spirit of the family finally wins and this means that the military tradition appears to be victorious over Owen who rejects the false ideals of war.¹³ He argues that since Owen decides to confront the supernatural manifestation of the family honour in the haunted room, he should overcome the ghost. Shaw feels that the death of Owen Wingrave represents the triumph of the Wingrave's environment.¹⁴ He sees that the death of Wingrave is the very reverse to James's interest in life and that James had "given victory to death and obsolescence[sic]" rather than to "life and regeneration."¹⁵ In its theatrical version, Shaw urges James to add another act in which Owen does not die and the spirit of his grandfather appears condemned.¹⁶ James, however, defends his decision by saying:

There was only one question to me, that is, that of my hero's within my narrow compass, and on the lines of my very difficult scheme of compression and concentration, getting the best of everything, simply; which his death makes him do by, in the first place, purging the house of beastly legend, and in the second place by his creating for us, spectators and admirers, such an intensity of impression and emotion about him as must promote his romantic glory and edifying example forever.¹⁷

The death of Wingrave at the end of the story by the horror he sees in his grandfather's ghost is needed to warn the family against



the curse of soldering, to “purge” the house from the false idealism. Owen’s death makes his family rethink of their wrong idealism towards war. Thus, Owen’s death is fruitful and he becomes a martyr. It warns the others against enlisting in the military institution.¹⁸ David L. Swartz believes that “Owen dies as a soldier against soldierdom.”¹⁹ Hence, appears the difference between Shaw and James as to Owen’s end which lies in treatment. They are both against war, but they differ in the way each one criticizes it.

What confirms James’s intention is that the text tells that Owen has visited the haunted room twice. In the first time, he escapes “unscathed”, whereas the second visit proves to be fatal, in which he dies.²⁰ The first visit occurs privately, nobody, except Mr. Coyle, knows about it when Owen shows him the uncanny room. Owen’s second visit to the room ends his life because it occurs publically in order that the others may take a moral lesson of it and it may undeceive them from the false ideals of war. This is what Buelens calls “the theory of performativity”, that Owen’s performance at the beginning has been without spectators to condemn war, whereas his second performance is watched by his relatives and friends, his death will be a shock to the others to make them reconsider their ideology of war.²¹

In one of the passages that occurs when Mr. Coyle and Lechmere talk about Owen’s decision of quitting the army, Mr. Coyle tells Lechmere that army for the Wingrave family represents religion, “It has been their religion!”(p.320) To add a religious touch to the Wingrave obsession with the military, such people have even replaced their spiritual faith with that of the army. They are like George Stransom in “The Altar of the Dead” whose religion is the “religion of the Dead”(p.358). Stransom is haunted by the ghost of his dead beloved, at the end, his ‘religion’ kills him to become a candle in the church like his departed beloved he uses to mourn.²² Owen is a victim of his family’s false religion which also kills him at the end. As Diane Long Hoeveler believes, James’s supernatural fiction springs from “acts of concealment, obfuscation, and the contortions... ”²³ The ghost of Owen’s grandfather may represent a hidden family secret the family





cannot escape. Thus, the ghost becomes “part of the narrative logic of the tale.”²⁴

The unexpected death of a courageous attractive boy like Owen leads to deduce that he may have committed suicide as a result of the repression he is under to follow his family principles. When he accepts the challenge and decides to go in the haunted room he says, “I want to go away— I don’t care if I never come back again.”(p.337) The speech shows Owen’s desperate state and how he is liable to die, as if he is predicting his death. The use of the characters’ portraits is always connected with ghosts in James’s stories of the supernatural. The portrait of Colonel Wingrave haunts Owen:²⁵

the very portraits glower at me on the walls...that fairly stirs on the canvas...it’s rather awkward!...it’s a kind of indestructible presence... .(p.336)

The ‘family curse’ is attached with the existence of the supernatural in James’s supernatural fiction. It is found in James’s early supernatural story “De Grey: A Romance”(1868).²⁶ In “Owen Wingrave”, the family curse is in the form of a haunting supernatural being that has the power to interfere in the affairs of the natural beings and take the soul of one of the family members. As if the curse of the military stretches out to the present and what Wingrave has always been trying to escape, the damnation of the army, is, ironically, very near him in his house. Another point in James’s supernatural works is that love and marriage are doomed and always end tragically. Owen loves his cousin Kate Julian and wants to marry her, that pushes him to accept the challenge and sleep in the haunted room. Therefore, his love and marriage desire is his fatal flaw that leads him to his disastrous end. Martin Scofield thinks that Kate Julian is a more disturbing figure than the unseen ghost itself. She plays a negative role by instigating Owen to his fatal confrontation with the ghost.²⁷ The battlefield in which Owen is killed is a “marriage bed” as Hoeveler sees.²⁸

One of the instances that shows James’s concern with his use of the supernatural is that in the first edition of the story, Mrs. Coyle asks her husband about the house: “Do you mean to say the house



has a ghost?”, in the revised edition, she asks “Do you mean to say the house has a proved ghost?” [italics mine]. In addition, the ghost of Owen’s “great-great-grandfather” does not appear visually to Wingrave or to the reader. The reader only knows that Wingrave accepts a challenge, sleeps in a haunted room, and dies there. The reader does not read about scenes picturing, for instance, the ghost’s movements, or its speaking with a character, nor does James seem to intend his ghost to be seen.²⁹ It is involved in such a way as to intensify the world of the supernatural, it is left for the reader to imagine what is beyond the natural.

The story depicts a moral theme, James’s condemnation of the war can be caused by the injury James received when he tried to extinguish fire in New Port in the fall of 1861; an injury James describes as “a horrid even an obscure hurt.”³⁰ Wars always produce injuries and catastrophes, and James does not forget the catastrophes of the Civil War. His introduction of the supernatural to the story seems to empower the story’s theme. In one of his notebooks James says “one could introduce the supernatural element in it... .”³¹ Thus, James has morally employed the presence of the supernatural in the story to show the ugliness of the military traditions and to provide a shock that may awaken those people who are advocates of wars. Owen is killed finally by the confrontation with the ghost; he dies for his noble principles.

IV. “The Friends of the Friends”

“The sense of the state of the dead is but part of the sense of the state of the living”,³² Henry James once mentions in his book *The Art of the Novel*. An idea in the novelist’s mind develops to be incarnated in one of his intricate works, that is “The Friends of the Friends” (1896). The story represents James’s “perfect example” of the Jamesian tale of the supernatural,³³ through which, the novelist depicts a social theme, that is a romantic relationship of an unnatural kind: a love relationship between a natural being and a supernatural being. The presence of the supernatural here is employed to show a human instinct; jealousy in woman. It is there to focus on the





jealousy of the narrator.

The story begins with an anonymous "I" narrator who tells a short prologue, and informs the reader that what is going to be narrated is a personal document of a woman for whom he only uses the pronoun "she".³⁴ From the first narrator, the reader knows that the woman is a writer who has "her diaries...less systematic than I hoped; she only had a blessed habit of noting and narrating." (p.396) Her story was written years ago. As the prologue ends, the narration shifts to the woman herself to tell her story in person. It has been a long time ago that the woman narrator has been trying to bring the man, to whom she is engaged, with a woman who is her friend. The couple share common things in their lives. Both have witnessed the death of their parents, and both have encountered supernatural scenes. The man lives far from his mother, and one day afternoon, he sees the ghost of his mother standing before his room with a smiling face, but when he goes to her, she "vanishes". The next day he receives the news of her death. The woman also sees the ghost of her father after his death "the one...who saw her father's ghost." (p.398) The woman narrator keeps trying to introduce each one to another for years but "it was this peculiar diffidence" (p.304) that always stands as a hinder. Eventually they achieve this but only at the moment of the woman's death. Though the woman is now dead, their meetings continue, and she affects him more after her death than when she has been alive. At first, the man evades from telling his fiancée about his relationship with the dead woman but, later he admits it. The woman narrator feels jealous and decides to break their engagement. After six years of their (the man's and the woman narrator's) disunion, the woman narrator hears about his death which occurs suddenly. She interprets it as caused by the ghost of the dead woman.

The fact that all the Jameses have been religious except for Henry whose religion is art may lead to the fact that he has taken the idea of the eternity of spirit from the religious environment he lives in and mingles it with the love theme which he takes from his art and thus the story becomes secularly and religiously perceived.³⁵ One of





the queries that may arise about the story is why the narrator tries to bring together her fiancé and the woman and what purpose she aims at by doing so. Her intention for her doing so is that

they were so awfully alike: they had the same ideas and tricks and tastes, the same prejudices and superstitions... .
(p.402)

seems strange and unpersuasive for a woman who loves her fiancé and has an overt jealousy for him. Tony Tanner attributes that to an instinct in the woman, a fear to know her place for her fiancé. By bringing a rival, she tries to test her fiancé and herself because a self can only realize itself by comparing itself with another. It is a “psychic journey”³⁶ the woman undergoes out of her love to her fiancé. She is like Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* who chooses a house to live in and a partner to live with to find herself in the society.³⁷ The woman tries to test whether or not her fiancé’s love is ideal. But, the result is disastrous since the man fails in the challenge and it develops to be a divine love between him and the apparition of the dead woman.

It is quite interesting that such a theme of the supernatural, a love between two extremely different entities, is present in James’s earlier works like “*The Last of the Valerii*” (1874), but it differs in treatment. In “*The Last of the Valerii*”, James employs *prosopopeia*,³⁸ where the Count falls in love with an extraordinary beautiful Greek statue of Juno in the Roman Villa of Count Camillo Valerio to the extent that it isolates him from his beautiful wife Martha who suffers to discover the mystery behind the change of her husband’s attitude. The passionate love between the human and material affects the passionate earthly love between the Count and Martha and that pushes her to have the statue buried to regain her husband.³⁹ In “*The Friends of the Friends*”, James shows a developed idea and a mature mentality concerning the treatment of the supernatural to be more persuasive and more earthly. The love here is between a man and a woman, and they share common things in their lives. It progresses to become between the man and the ghost of the woman, and this love destroys the earthly love between the





man and his fiancée and their planned marriage to show that the spiritual world has the power over the earthly world.⁴⁰

The author prepares the reader for the supernatural by scenes of sudden death which seem to pervade throughout the story. At the very beginning, the narrator tells the death of the woman's father, "the poor father, suddenly and violently seized, had died that morning." (p.398) The man's mother also dies unexpectedly, and the narrator shows that

He had been in the August afternoon on the river. Coming back into his room while it was still distinct daylight he found his mother standing there as if her eyes had been fixed on the door. He had had a letter from her that morning out of Wales, where she was staying with her father. At the sight of him she smiled with extraordinary radiance and extended her arms to him, and then as he sprang forward and joyfully opened his own she vanished from the place.(p.399)

After that, the woman's husband, from whom she has been separated for seven years, is also announced dead. At last, the long awaited meeting between the woman and the man occurs at the moment of the woman's death which is sudden and unexpected, as well. All of such scenes are but references that there is something unnatural going on, and they are prelusions for the supernatural phenomena which are going to happen, as if the absence of one character leads to the absence of the other.⁴¹

The gap begins with the irony that occurs between the narrator and her fiancé as to whether the woman he finally meets is really her or her ghost. On returning from Richmond after knowing that the woman has died, the narrator goes directly to tell him:

*I drove to his chambers...and the instant we were alone I produced my news: "She's dead"
"Dead?"
He was tremendously struck, and I observed that he had no need to ask whom, in this abruptness, I meant.
"She died last evening __ just after leaving me."*





He stared with the strangest expression..."Impossible! I saw her."

"You saw her?"

"On that spot__ where you stand..."

"In the hour of death __ I understand: as you beautifully saw your mother..."

"I saw her living __ I saw her to speak to her__ I saw her as I see you now!"(p.411-12

The narrator believes that the man cannot see the woman because when the woman has left her, she has been shortly announced dead that night, whereas the man claims that he has met her the same night. This moment proves to be a turning point in the story from which the struggle of the narrator starts and she begins to doubt a queer relationship between her fiancé and the ghost of the dead woman.⁴²

James follows a technique of investigation and argument between the woman narrator and the haunted man to reveal his metaphysical liaison with the spirit of the dead woman. The narrator begins to investigate by asking her fiancé about the woman, and by noting his behaviours.⁴³

"And was the way you took it the way she expressed it?

"She only expressed it by being here and by letting me look at her. That was enough!" he exclaimed with a singular laugh. I wondered more and more. "You mean she didn't speak to you?" "She said nothing. She only looked at me as I looked at her."(p.413)

In this revelation on the part of the man, there is a direct reference to James's employment of the ghosts influenced by the reports of "The Society for Psychical Research",⁴⁴ that ghosts do not speak or make noise, and this is applicable to the ghost of the woman as the passage shows.

Arthur A. Brown argues that the reappearance of the dead woman may represent a salvation to the man away from the woman narrator. The narrator's interest in bringing together two persons having sad memories and having seen the supernatural through the ghosts





of their parents, seems to be uncanny. The woman narrator may be playing a trick and she may be a witch; her jealousy can be a mere hoax. The narrator could have deceived other men before her fiancé, and now she is deceiving him. Like the appearance of the ghost of Orme in "Sir Edmund Orme" (1891) which appears to prevent Charlotte from wronging another man as her mother has done by wronging Orme which leads him to kill himself.⁴⁵ It is also possible that the woman narrator preys her fiancé; consequently, she is punished. A similar theme recurs in James's first publication of his first published story "A Tragedy of Error" (1864), which is a melodramatic story of an adulterous wife's intrigue to have her husband drowned but it results in the drowning of her lover instead.⁴⁶

Most likely, Brown's argument may not stand strong enough. In the prologue, James endows the woman narrator with characteristics like:

She had...a blessed habit of noting and narrating. She summarised, she saved; she appears seldom indeed to have let a good story pass without catching it on the wing... . She writes sometimes of herself, sometimes of others, sometimes of the combination.(p.396)

A testimony from a character with such characteristics is to be considered and taken seriously. Such characteristics do not designate that the narrator is suspicious; rather it indicates that she is an intellectual woman who has got elegant mind and personality, she is a good writer and narrator and what she is going to narrate is, therefore, trustworthy.

Part of the ambiguity and mystery of the story is that there are no scenes that show the supernatural meetings between the man and the spectre of the dead woman. But, such a belief is inferred by the woman narrator when she feels the changes on the man and his behaviours towards her. To witness the influence of the woman's ghost, the narrator shows the change on her fiancé in the ceremony of the woman's burial:⁴⁷

Each of the strange visitations contributed to establish the other. He had a different feeling; but he had also, I



hasten to add, an unmistakable desire not to make a stand or, as they say, a fuss about it.(p.420)

For the man, the woman is not dead; hence he is not present at her burial, nor is he ready to mourn her for she is still alive for him as the narrator later tells.

In his book, *Nature*, Ralph Waldo Emerson writes that, "every spirit builds itself a house, and beyond its house a world, and beyond its world a heaven."⁴⁸ The narrator's fiancé is put in an imaginary altar and this altar represents a world for him where he lives spiritually with his beloved, but physically he lives with his fiancée. A world takes him at the end to heaven. Such a theme is typical in stories like "The Altar of the Dead", where George Stransom devotes his life to the memory of his dead beloved, rejecting the physical world. As if the man has found what satisfies his soul in the supernatural love rather than the material one.⁴⁹

Thomas Otten focuses on the relationship between the conceptual and the material in James's fiction, labelling such a relationship as "a recursive movement between the material and the conceptual"⁵⁰ as the central framing in James's fiction. He describes such a framing process as "a thickening of the conceptual."⁵¹ The conceptual meaning of the ghost of the woman thickens to the extent that it materially affects the man and makes him leave his fiancée.

The portrait motif in James's fiction is often connected with the absent and nonexistent. As in "Owen Wingrave" where the portrait of Colonel Wingrave indicates the presence of his ghost, the narrator's suggestion to have portraits for each the woman and the man as a way to see each other is but an inception that the two are going to meet supernaturally in the nonexistent world after failing to achieve it in the existent world.⁵² Besides, as mentioned in "Owen Wingrave", marriage, for James, represents a threat to life and one of the partners is at the end doomed. Such a theme is present in the story. Since the woman narrator and the man are going to be married, the man is doomed and dies in the end, and James involves the supernatural as a means to link such a threat with the metaphysical world.⁵³





Breaking the borderlines between what is natural and what is supernatural, and between life and hereafter is mostly related with vampirism and horror. Paul de Man stresses the fearful logic that is inherent when breaking such lines, “by making the death speak...by the same token, that the living are struck dumb frozen in their own death.”⁵⁴

But such a horror is not there in James’s story, the living and the dead are unified by a secular target which is love.⁵⁵ The use of the supernatural is “tranquil, beautiful, like the closing chords in harmony; and yet, somehow obscene.”⁵⁶ The living man and the dead woman, the spiritual and the material have their access by virtue of the supernatural. It does not produce any feeling of fear.

Furthermore, the story contains a recurring theme in James’s novels, that is of a man who renounces a life at the expense of the other and engages himself in a private pursuit. Ralph Pendrel in *The Sense of the Past* rejects Aurora Coyne for his obsession with the sense of the past, Herbert Dodd in “*The Bench of Desolation*” rejects Kate Cookham for his pride, the same thing is with the man who rejects his fiancée for the ghost of the woman. Besides, the story’s hauntings of the supernatural are concerned with the present and the future. The narrator suspects her fiancé meet with the ghost of the woman. She is afraid of her future with him. The hauntings are not concerned with the past.⁵⁷

The last section of the story shows the intrusion of the supernatural world as it is clearly stated in the conversation that takes place between the woman narrator and her fiancé when the former says:

I put it before him on a certain evening that we must reconsider our situation and recognize that it had completely altered.

He stared bravely. “How has it altered?” “Another person has come between us.” He hesitated a moment. “I won’t pretend not to know whom you mean.” ...he meant to be kind. “A woman dead and buried!”

“She’s buried, but she’s not dead. She’s dead for the World —she’s dead for me. But she’s not dead for you.”... .





“She missed you for five years,” I said, “but she never misses you now... .You see her –you see her: you see her every night!”... . “Do you dare to deny...that you habitually see her?”... he suddenly said: “Well, my dear, what if I do?”(pp.422-3)

The conversation assures the credibility of the narrator as to the supernatural meetings between the woman’s apparition and the man. Such an assurance threatens to put an end to their relationship “You must choose between me and her.” (p.423) The narrator tells the man, and the conversation is put to add tension to the narrative and to dramatize its central theme as well as giving a wide horizon to the supernatural world and its influence upon the natural world. The man’s death can be a rebirth in the supernatural world and a response to the call of the woman’s ghost,⁵⁸ as the narrator tells:

I heard of his death... . It was the result of a long necessity, of an unquenchable desire...it was a response to an irresistible call.(p.424)

Part of James’s technique in his writings of the supernatural is that meaning is not on the surface unless an exegesis is taken over. There are telling points: the man has kept himself single to the end of his life, his abandoning of his fiancée, and his sudden death, all refer that the ghost of the woman has a domineering power him.⁵⁹ The fact that he keeps single to the end of his life is to assure that he may have been married to the ghost of the woman and his unexpected death is merely a response “to an irresistible call” of the dead woman. In addition, at the end, the narrator’s turning away the idea of marriage from her fiancé represents a capitulation to the ghost of the woman and an acknowledgement of its power.⁶⁰ One of the telling points is the fact that even though the narrator has kept her fiancé, she does not marry him, so that she may freely give him up to the ghost. She believes that since her fiancé and the woman’s ghost have a spiritual sympathy for each other, there is no room for her between them. Therefore, she firmly believes that it is the ghost of the dead woman that has visited her fiancé on the night of the woman’s death.⁶¹





Indeed, James has succeeded in employing the supernatural in the story to show the eternity of spirits and the influence of the dead upon the living; a belief held by James after his mother's death when he pretends to hear her voice and feels comfort.⁶² Besides, the story proves what James has in mind that "the sense of the state of the dead is but part of the sense of the state of the living."⁶³ James is after the marriage of the living and the dead. He has shown how possible the connection between the natural world and the world of the supernatural is. It shows how the supernatural world shapes the natural world and intrudes in the human affairs.

-
1. Martin Scofield, introduction to *Tales of Mystery and the Supernatural: Ghost Stories of Henry James*, rev. ed. (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2008), xii.
 2. Leon Edel, ed, *Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1963), 311.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Virginia Woolf, "The Ghost Stories" in Edel, 52.
 5. Ibid.
 6. Ibid.
 7. Gert Buelens, "Uncanny Doublings in 'Owen Wingrave,'" in *Henry James and the Supernatural*, ed. Anna Despotopoulou and Kimberly C. Reed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 152.
 8. Diane Long Hoeveler, "Homospectrality in Henry James's Ghost Stories," in Despotopoulou and Reed, 129.
 9. T. J. Lustig, *Henry James and the Ghostly* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), xi.
 10. Buelens, 152.
 11. Ibid.
 12. George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) as quoted in Leon Edel, ed. *The Complete Plays of Henry James* (Philadelphia: New York University Press, 1949), 643.
 13. Edel, *Stories of the Supernatural*, 315.





14. David L. Swartz, "Bernard Shaw and Henry James," *The Shaw Review* 10, no. 2 (May, 1967): 55, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40682129> (accessed December 21, 2011).
15. Shaw as quoted in Swartz, 57.
16. Swartz, 55.
17. Henry James as quoted in Edel, *The Complete Plays*, 646.
18. Scofield, x.
19. Swartz, 55.
20. Buelens, 156.
21. *Ibid.*, 162.
22. Hazel Hutchison, "Haunting the Churches: Henry James and the Sacred Space in 'The Altar of the Dead,'" in Despotopoulou and Reed, 61.
23. Hoeveler, 113.
24. *Ibid.*, 113, 126.
25. *Ibid.*, 127, 130.
26. "De Grey: A Romance" is one of James's supernatural stories published in the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine July 1868. It contains, for the first time, James's vampire theme.
27. Scofield, xii.
28. Hoeveler, 131.
29. In one of the story's theatrical performances, Gertrude Kensington, an English stage director, brings on the stage a form of a fleeting white figure represents the ghost of Owen's grandfather. When James hears about it, he gets agitated and writes to the producer: "There is absolutely no warrant or indication for this in my text and I view any such introduction with the liveliest disapproval." Henry James's speech as quoted in Despotopoulou and Reed, 135.
30. Henry James as quoted in Darrel Abel, *A Simplified Approach to Henry James* (New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1964), 17.
31. F. O. Matthiesen and Kenneth B. Murdock, eds., *The Notebooks of Henry James* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), 120.
32. Henry James, *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 244-5.
33. Edel, *Stories of the Supernatural*, 396.





34. Arthur A . Brown, "Ghosts and the Nature of Death in Literature: Henry James' 'Sir Edmund Orme'" *American Literary Realism, 1870-1910*, 31, no. 1, (Fall, 1998): 61, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27746755> (accessed October 30, 2011).
35. William Troy, "The Altar of Henry James," in Tony Tanner, ed., *Henry James: Modern Judgments* (Bristol: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1968), 46.
36. Tanner, "The Fearful self: The Portrait of a Lady," in *James: Modern Judgments*, 143.
37. Ibid.
38. Prosopopeia is a "figurative literary device used when either an inanimate object or an abstract concept is spoken of as though it were endowed with life or with human attributes or feelings." M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 7th ed. (Heinle and Heinle, 1999), "s.v." 'figurative language', 99.
39. Michael Swan, *Henry James* (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1950), 25-6.
40. Donatella Izzo, *Portraying the Lady: Technologies of Gender in the Short Stories of Henry James* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 58.
41. Ibid., 128
42. Maurice Beebe, "The Turned Back of Henry James," in Tanner, 84.
43. Masayuki Akiyama, "A Comparative Study of Supernatural Stories in the West and East" *Comparative Literature Studies* 22, no.1, (Spring,1985):46,<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40246515>(accessed October 30, 2011).
44. The reader may see certain points reported by the S.P.R., vol. II, 1884, 139 as quoted Francis X. Roellinger, "Psychical Research and The Turn of the Screw," in *Henry James: The Turn of the Screw*, ed. Robert Kimbrough, (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1966), 136.
45. Arthur A . Brown, "Ghosts and the Nature of Death in Literature: Henry James' 'Sir Edmund Orme'" *American Literary Realism, 1870-1910*, 31, no. 1, (Fall, 1998): 63, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27746755> (accessed October 30, 2011).
46. Abel, 21.
47. Akiyama, 46.
48. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (Boston: James Munroe, 1849), 73.





49. Krishna Baldev Vaid, *Technique in the Tales of Henry James* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 215.
50. Thomas Otten, *A Superficial Reading of Henry James: Preoccupations with the Material World* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006), 157.
51. Ibid.
52. Izzo, 132.
53. Edel, *Stories of the Supernatural*, 26.
54. 54 Paul de Man, "Autobiography as De-Facement," in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984): 78, quoted in Izzo, 65.
55. Izzo, 65.
56. Woolf, 50.
57. J. R. Ward, *The Imagination of Disaster: Evil in the Fiction of Henry James* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 158, 163.
58. Vaid, 220.
59. Tanner, 46-7.
60. Izzo, 70.
61. Akiyama, 46.
62. Immediately after his mother's death, he writes: Her death has given me a passionate belief in certain transcendent things... . She is with us, she is of us-the eternal stillness is but a form of her love. One can hear her voice in it-one can feel, forever, the inextinguishable vibration of her devotion. ... thank God that certain supreme impressions remain! Matthiesen and Murdock, 41.
63. James, *The Art of the Novel*, 244-5.





Conclusion

The supernatural is a term that includes any phenomenon that goes beyond what is naturally perceived. It proved to be of interest for a large number of literary men- ancient and modern, and it has been employed in different literary genres for various purposes. Its use varies according to each writer's style and technique.

James's employment of the supernatural proves to be unique. For James, the supernatural is used as a means to depict natural issues. He employs the supernatural to present realistic themes for moral and social purposes. For instance, the ghost of Owen's grandfather is employed to show the ugly face of war in "Owen Wingrave", when it comes to take Owen's soul filling the family with horror, whereas it is love and jealousy that is the main theme of "The Friends of the Friends." The liaison between the natural man and the supernatural woman is love. The characters who encounter supernatural occurrences are human beings, They do not possess extraordinary powers to confront the supernatural.

James mainly relies on the existence of ghosts in his depiction of the supernatural. It is the ghost of Owen's grandfather that kills him, and it is the ghost of the woman which stands between the man and his fiancée. Ghosts seem to be part and parcel of man's life and they have a direct influence upon human beings. James tries to make the reader feel that the natural world is but part of the supernatural world, and man is to expect being visited by supernatural visitants. Furthermore, the supernatural world seems more powerful than the natural world. For example, the ghost of Owen's grandfather kills Owen, and the ghost of the dead woman comes to put an end to the planned marriage of the woman narrator and her fiancé in "The Friends of the Friends".





One important element in James's use of the supernatural is the geographical setting: simple domestic settings, small hotel rooms, New York homes, and known realistic places in America or in Europe. Old castles, sliding panels, and dark dungeons of the old traditional supernatural are not present. Occult and fearful feelings, which are sought by the traditional supernatural fiction, are now not gained on the crime, cadaver, chains, blood, secret trapdoors, and mythological creatures walking at midnight but, by human-like ghosts walking mostly in broad daylight. The supernatural is presented in natural settings and the ghosts which appear are those of real people. Ghosts appear in inhabited places like Owen's house in Paramore. Besides, James's depiction of the supernatural does not contain scenes of bloodshed or vampirism as do other supernatural works contain. There is also no room for fairies, witches, and magic. It is more earthly than the traditional one.

The presence of the female as a narrator and partaker in the events is obvious: the woman narrator in "The Friends of the Friends" Furthermore, there is always a close connection between love and the supernatural. It is Owen's love to his cousin Kate Julian that leads him to sleep in the haunted room and face his supernatural catastrophic destiny. With "The Friends of the Friends," love represents the moving centre around which the story evolves, where love is transformed from the natural into the supernatural.

James's use of the supernatural gives him an ample space for writing where the intervention of the supernatural complicates matters and opens the narrative for a wide range of imagination and interpretation. Indeed, James's exploration of the supernatural is of a special kind, it can be called a 'Jamesian supernatural.'





Bibliography

1. Abel, Darrel. *A Simplified Approach to Henry James*. New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1964.
2. Akiyama, Masayuki. "A Comparative Study of Supernatural Stories in the West and East." *Comparative Literature Studies* 22, no.1, (Spring, 1985):40-51. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40246515> (accessed October 30, 2011).
3. Beebe, Maurice. "The Turned Back of Henry James." In *Henry James: Modern Judgments*. Edited by Tony Tanner, 71-88. Bristol: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1968.
4. Brown, Arthur A. "Ghosts and the Nature of Death in Literature: Henry James's 'Sir Edmund Orme.'" *American Literary Realism, 1870-1910*, 31, no. 1, (Fall, 1998): 60-74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27746755> (accessed October 30, 2011).
5. Buelens, Gert. "Uncanny Doublings in 'Owen Wingrave.'" In *Henry James and the Supernatural*. Edited by Anna Despotopoulou and Kimberly C. Reed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 150-162.
6. De Man, Paul. "Autobiography as De-Facement." In *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.
7. Quoted in Donatella Izzo, *Portraying the Lady: Technologies of Gender in the Short Stories of Henry James*. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2001, 63-69.
8. Edel, Leon, ed. *The Complete Plays of Henry James*. Philadelphia: New York University Press, 1949.
9. Henry James. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1960.
10. _____, ed. *Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1963.
11. _____, ed. *Henry James: Stories of the Supernatural*. New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., Inc., 1970.
12. Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Nature*. Boston: James Munroe, 1849.
13. Hoeveler, Diane Long. "Homospectrality in Henry James's Ghost Stories." In *Despotopoulou and Reed*,





127-131.

14. Hutchison, Hazel. "Haunting the Churches: Henry James and the Sacred Space in 'The Altar of the Dead.'" In Despotoulou and Reed, 59-77.
15. James, Henry. *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974.
16. Lustig, T. J. *Henry James and the Ghostly*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
17. Matthiesen, F. O., and Kenneth B. Murdock, eds. *The Notebooks of Henry James*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947.
18. Otten, Thomas. *A Superficial Reading of Henry James: Preoccupations with the Material World*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006.
19. Scofield, Martin. *Tales of Mystery and the Supernatural: Ghost Stories of Henry James*. Rev. ed. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2008.
20. Swan, Michael. *Henry James*. London: Longman, Green and Co., 1950.
21. Swartz, David L. "Bernard Shaw and Henry James." *The Shaw Review* 10, no. 2 (May, 1967): 50-59. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40682129> (accessed December 21, 2011).
22. Tanner, Tony. "The Fearful self: The Portrait of a Lady." In *James: Modern Judgments*, 143-159.
23. Troy, William. "The Altar of Henry James." In *Tanner*, 46-51.
24. Vaid, Krishna Baldev. *Technique in the Tales of Henry James*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964.
26. Woolf, Virginia. "The Ghost Stories." In *Edel*, ed. *A Collection of Critical Essays*, 47-54.

