The Jolly Corner Study Guide

The Jolly Corner by Henry James

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

First published in the inaugural issue of *The English Review* in 1908, "The Jolly Corner" also appeared the following year in the definitive New York edition of James's work. The main character of the story, Spencer Brydon, is a middle-aged man who returns to his birthplace of New York City. He has lived abroad for thirty-three years, and while visiting his childhood home—situated on "a jolly corner"— he questions if leaving the States was the best decision. He walks around the vacant house late at night, wondering about what could have been. The story reaches a climax when he believes that he is being haunted by his alter ego.

Some critics praise James's creation of a ghost story worthy of Edgar Allan Poe with "The Jolly Corner." The protagonist's decision to move from his homeland echoes the lives of famous, romanticized writers who died far from home—Percy B. Shelley, Lord Byron and Margaret Fuller—and foreshadows the themes and experiences of other great expatriate writers—Gertrude Stein, James Joyce and James Baldwin.

Author Biography

Henry James was born in New York City in 1843, where he lived until his family moved to Boston during his childhood. His father, Henry James, Sr., was a renowned theologian; his brother, William James, would become a famous philosopher and professor at Harvard.

James left the United States in 1875 to live in England. In fact, he spent most of his adult life there. His novels and short stories often focus on Americans traveling in Europe and the inevitable culture clash between the Old World and the New World.

James was very prolific, writing several novels, short stories, plays, travel reflections, and literary criticism. Much of his fiction was serialized in popular literary magazines like *The Atlantic Monthly, Harper's,* and *The New Review*.

After living abroad for many years, he returned to America for a visit in 1905 and recorded his impressions in the travelogue *The American Scene*. In America, he found that many of his friends and members of his family had passed away; moreover, he found the people and landscape very different than he remembered. The economic prosperity of a new industrial age had resulted in the elimination of older buildings in favor of towering skyscrapers. The social landscape had changed nearly as dramatically. "The Jolly Corner" was written shortly after James returned to England and reflects some of his impressions of the United States.

Before he died, James became an English citizen. In 1916 he received the prestigious Order of Merit from King George V for his literary accomplishments. He died in 1916.

Plot Summary

At age fifty-six, Spencer Brydon returns to New York City after spending thirty-three years of his life in Europe. When he left New York, he left behind his family and a promising business career to pursue his appreciation of art. While he is quick to remind himself that he returned merely for the practical task of looking into two pieces of property that he has inherited after the death of his brothers, he is also curious to see how his hometown has changed over the years.

He is shocked by what he finds: the monstrous skyscrapers; the crush of the crowds; the exciting bustle of the social scene; and the thriving economy. Overwhelmed by the change, Spencer feels alienated from the people around him.

While in New York, Spencer renews an acquaintance with an old friend, Alice Staverton. Spencer's family—his parents, two brothers and "favourite sister"—are dead and Alice is the only remaining person he was close to in his youth. Throughout the story, Alice accompanies Spencer as he visits his property, listening to him reminisce. Of all the people he meets in New York, only Alice has the patience and deep sense of the past necessary to understand his complex reactions and emotions.

He is especially drawn to the house on "the jolly corner"—Fifth Avenue near Washington Square—the place where he grew up. Spencer divides his days between his hotel, his eating club, and his two properties. He decides to renovate one of the properties, increasing the already lucrative rents that have supported his life in Europe. Yet although his childhood home—the house on "the jolly corner"— would be an extremely lucrative apartment, Spencer refuses to surrender it to the marketplace. Instead he employs a woman, Mrs. Muldoon, to keep the vacant house clean.

One day, Alice wonders what might have become of Spencer had he stayed in New York those thirty-three years ago. She even admits having seen a different version of Spencer in her dreams—a Spencer who had remained in New York and became a real-estate baron.

Spencer has been wondering the same thing. In fact, he becomes obsessed with what he might have been. In hindsight, his decision to leave seems foolish; his time in Europe seems a relative waste, a "selfish, frivolous, scandalous" life. He begins to walk the halls and rooms of his childhood home late at night, reflecting on the memories of his youth and bemoaning his lost potential. At times he hopes to find his "alter ego": the man he would have been had he stayed in New York all those years ago.

Alice suggests that he take up permanent residence in the house. Disconcerted by the thought, Spencer goes to the empty house and believes that his alter ego is in the house with him. Noticing that a door he had left open has been inexplicably shut, he believes that his alter ego is sitting in the room behind the closed door.

Unwilling to open the door, Spencer attempts to make his escape. As he descends the stairway, he catches a glimpse of another door that should be closed but is not. Through this open door Spencer finally faces his alter ego. The apparition, described as a "black stranger," is dressed in evening wear but has a monstrous face. Shocked, Spencer collapses.

The next afternoon, Alice finds and revives Spencer. Professing her love for him, she explains that she also saw the "black stranger" in her dream. Instead of the revulsion at the image of an alternative Spencer, Alice felt pity for him. When she pulls Spencer to her breast, it seems that he is finally home to stay.

Characters

Spencer Brydon

A wealthy, cultured man, Spencer Brydon returns to New York City after spending thirty-three years living in Europe and pursuing an interest in art. He is overwhelmed by the changes he finds in the city.

Now fifty-six, Spencer revisits the house on the "jolly corner" of Manhattan where he grew up. His parents, sister, and two brothers have passed away, leaving him the sole owner of his childhood home and another property.

While Spencer oversees the renovation of one of his properties, he discovers an affinity for project management and negotiating a business deal. Surprised by his natural business acumen, he wonders what his life would have been if he had stayed in New York. Soon is obsessed with thoughts of what he has missed.

Mrs. Muldoon

Mrs. Muldoon is a cleaning woman employed to keep Spencer's childhood home clean.

Narrator

The story is told by an anonymous narrator with limited omniscience who addresses the reader as a social acquaintance. At least twice, the narrator uses the first personal pronoun "I." At another point, the narrator explicitly associates with the reader, referring to the story's characters as "our friends."

Alice Staverton

Alice is a childhood acquaintance of Spencer's. She accompanies him on his business trips and listens to him reflect on his past. She seems to be the only person who enjoys listening to his reminiscences. A single, middle-aged woman, Alice seems lonely and suggests that Spencer move back to New York City for good. At the story's end, Alice confirms that she is not only very fond of Spencer but possibly in love with him.

Themes

Memory and Reminiscence

Spencer Brydon's return to New York, his friendship with Alice Staverton, and his attraction to the house of his youth illustrate his overwhelming need to analyze his past. He needs to reflect on past events in order to understand who he is now. In particular, Spencer needs to come to terms with what he could have been had he remained in New York; in that way he can accept himself and move on with his life.

Alienation and Loneliness

When Spencer left New York as a young man, he was rejecting a life in business and embracing a career in art. Upon his return, he discovers the full implications of his decision. He has he lost his family; also, New York City has irrevocably changed to the point where he hardly recognizes it. In some ways, Spencer's experience is universal: in an attempt to recapture the past, he discovers that the world he remembers does not exist anymore. As a result, he feels alienated, cut off from his past and his own identity.

The American Dream

After living abroad for so many years, Spencer is able to view the American Dream as an outside observer. As a child, Spencer grew up in a wealthy, privileged household. As an adult, Spencer has continued to live comfortably on inherited wealth. When he returns to New York, he is disgusted by the ambitious and materialistic nature of the American businessman. From his privileged position, he views the capitalistic system as one that robs its citizens of integrity and culture.

Art and Money

Spencer rejects a career in business and escapes by pursuing a career in art in Europe. Yet while Spencer vilifies the American scene as materialistic and obsessed with money, he continues to live off the profits of that world. The rents from his properties make it possible for him to travel without financial restriction and to live abroad without having to work. The story implies that the pursuit of art is inextricably linked with money; to deny the connection is hypocritical.

Gender Roles

Spencer's rejection of a business career raises questions about what it means to be a powerful man in the early twentieth century. When he leaves New York City, he seems to have left behind the opportunity to marry and have a family as well as a thriving

business career. By linking Spencer's rejection of business to his absence of family, the story implies that personal choices are related to public pressures. In a sense, Spencer's pursuit of art is a protest against one-dimensional concepts of masculinity—concepts that relate economic power to one's worth as a man.

Alice also raises questions about how women are supposed to live their lives. While she stays in Manhattan her entire life, she never marries. The reader learns little about her life apart from her relationship to Spencer. Is her final embrace of Spencer a strong assertion of her will or a late and failed capitulation to the stereotypic woman's role of passive and dutiful wife?

Transformation and Change

The story hinges on Spencer confronting his alter ego. The story's conclusion suggests Spencer and Alice will end up together and that Spencer's wandering has ended. But what has Spencer learned? It is an open question whether Spencer has accepted his past and truly been transformed.

Style

Point of View and Narration

In "The Jolly Corner," the narrator is nearly omniscient, relating exactly what Spencer sees, thinks, and feels. However, this perspective is a limited one. For example, Alice's opinions are presented by Spencer; all impressions of her character— as well as others — are presented through him.

Also, at a few points in the story the narrator addresses the reader directly, implying perhaps a collaboration between the reader and narrator. Another narrative technique utilized by James is the slightly different narrative tone used for the different sections of the story. In the second section, Spencer wanders the house alone and the narrative voice nearly becomes his point of view. In the first and third sections, the narrator is more objective in explaining not only Spencer's impressions but other characters' actions and opinions.

Setting

The story takes place around the year 1908, shortly after James visited New York City after having lived for many years in Europe. The house "on the jolly corner" is in Manhattan on Fifth Avenue near Washington Square. On a personal level, Spencer is yearning to comprehend both the passing of his family and friends and the emergence of a new type of urban social environment. Therefore, the incredible growth of heavy industry and architectural innovation—such as the proliferation of skyscrapers—represent progress, ambition, and power: things that he left behind when he moved to Europe.

Symbol and Images

Spencer's childhood home is the most fully developed image in the story. As a symbol, the house operates on many different levels. While walking in the rooms of the house Spencer recalls the time when the building was his home. The house also symbolizes his economic circumstances; his choice to protect the building as a sacred space is enabled by his wealth, partially generated from the rents he collects on the other property. Spencer's personal quest to revisit the past are connected to the business operations he has attempted to avoid.

In Henry James' other writings, he utilizes architectural metaphors—including "the house," and "the window"—metaphorically, symbolizing the structure that organizes and communicates meaning in fiction. In the preface to his novel *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), James describes the ideal "house of fiction" as having millions of windows, each representing distinct perspectives on the world.

Structure

The story is divided in three parts, each with a different narrative tone. The first introduces us to Spencer and Alice, explaining Spencer's return to New York. The second section chronicles Spencer's attempt to track down his alter ego and is characterized by dense narrative description. In the third section Alice revives Spencer and pledges her love to him.

Historical Context

Robber Barons

At the turn of the century, American industrial production greatly increased. As technological innovations facilitated large-scale agricultural production, many small farmers were put out of business. Factories—often situated in urban areas— needed a large labor force and attracted people from rural areas, the South, and immigrants from all over the world. With so many people looking for work, companies kept wages low and conditions poor. Working people began to protest the unfairness of the economic system, organizing the Populist Party and labor unions.

The financial rewards in business were enormous. Those men that were industrious, ambitious, and lucky had a decent chance of success. A few number of men earned the title "captain of industry," controlling very large companies and becoming rich. However, the concentration of this wealth took place at the expense of average workers who often worked long hours in unsafe conditions to support their families.

In response to the greed and exploitation, the Populist Movement became popular promoting working- class interests. Eventually the movement was superseded by the Progressive Era's politics of accommodation. In the early twentieth century, the Progressives attempted to break up giant corporate trusts and monopolies. Despite some anti-trust legislation, big business continued to prosper.

The focus shifted to the effects of immigration on the United States. In 1907 Congress set up the Immigration Commission to study immigration. Restrictions on immigration from China, Japan, and Korea were already being imposed by individual states and national diplomatic agreements. After World War I, strict immigration quotas were established.

United States Imperialism

As the United States became the preeminent industrial power in the world, the nation began to expand its political and economic interests to former colonies of Europe in the Pacific. In the 1890s a scholar named Frederick Jackson Turner proposed a "frontier thesis" to explain the incredible power of United States economic advancement.

According to Turner, the exploration and settlement of the Western frontier had been an inspiring challenge for a young nation. As the twentieth century began, the new frontier would become the development of American economic influence all over the world, especially in Asia. In Samoa, Hawaii, the Philippine Islands, Cuba, Central and South America, the United States acted like an imperial power: claiming possession, backing these claims up with military force, and exercising economic influence.

Critical Overview

"The Jolly Corner" has generated much critical commentary. On one level, Spencer Brydon's experience is quite familiar and represents a painful but inevitable aspect of the human condition. Critics explore the implications of his self-doubt and insecurity as well as the meaning of the story's conclusion. Is the final scene a moment of redemption for Spencer; or, is Spencer incapable of really coming to terms with his past?

Some commentators view the story as autobiographical. Like Spencer, James left the United States (in 1875), lived in Europe for a long period of time, and returned to find America much changed. Spencer's conflict between Europe and America is subject of much of James's fiction, literary criti cism, and diary entries. Moreover, Alice Staverton's name echoes James's beloved younger sister.

Spencer's alter ego represents a personal and philosophical crisis that James's father often spoke about—the "vastation." Henry James, Sr. was in- fluenced by the moral philosopher Emmanuel Swedenborg, whose ideas explored the unmanageable energies of nature and the extremes of human consciousness. The "vastation" was a visitation by one's evil self that forced one to confront their most sensitive weakness.

One well-established view is that by facing the "black stranger," Spencer confronts Henry James's alter ego. Leon Edel, James's most meticulous and authoritative biographer, considered Spencer's con- flict emblematic of whether James regarded the United States or England as the source of his fiction. In *Henry James, The Master: 1901-1916* (1972), Edel responds to early criticism of James's career, most notably that of Van Wyck Brook. In *The Pilgrimage of Henry James* (1925) Brook charged James with turning his back on the United States in an ineffective attempt to associate with the more highly esteemed, genteel class literary tradition of England.

By focusing on James's later work, and reading Spencer's crisis as a final acceptance of America, Edel recasts James's aesthetic effort as being primarily an attempt to reconcile, understand, and depict what it means to be American in an increasing international world. Edel's argument echoes earlier appraisals of James, the most notable appraisal by F. O. Matthiessen in *Henry James: The Major Phase* (1944). In these accounts, Spencer is reconciled with his alter ego.

Some critics are skeptical of Spencer's redemption at the end of the story. In *The American Henry James* (1957), Quentin Anderson views Spencer as hopelessly self-centered. In "The Beast in 'The Jolly Corner': Spencer Brydon's Ironic Rebirth" (1974), Allen Stein argues that Spencer actually sees who he will become. Stein not only sees Spencer as lacking self-awareness but an ugly human being. Instead of redeeming Spencer, Alice may simply be an enabler, shielding him from what he really is.

Alice is considered an enigmatic figure in the story. A few critics have examined the character of Alice with interesting results. In "'Doing Good by Stealth': Alice Staverton and Women's Politics in 'The Jolly Corner'" (1992), Russell Reising views Alice as a

major character. Within the context of her time, Alice seems to be an anomaly or outcast — unmarried, no children and self-supporting.

However, instead of symbolizing failed femininity, Alice is viewed by some critics as manipulative and deceptive. Some have even characterized her as an artful liar. It is a bit disconcerting, however, that despite Alice's apparent strength and independence she is so set on marriage to Spencer. Has she spent thirty-three years merely waiting for her man to come home?

Recent criticism has both emphasized Spencer's egotism and attempted to uncover the full role of Alice in Spencer's resurrection. In "A New Reading of Henry James's 'The Jolly Corner'" (1987), Daniel Mark Fogel contends that as the story ends Spencer realizes that the monstrous stranger is his alter ego. Only Alice's love will save him. In Alice's embrace and Spencer's return, Spencer saves himself from tragic fate. At the story's end, Spencer is "loving and beloved," enjoying "at last a blessed state the beauty of which the black stranger had never tasted or could never taste."

Criticism

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Critical Essay #1

Johnson teaches American literature at the University of Pennsylvania where he recently received his Ph.D. In the following essay, Johnson explores the function of windows in "The Jolly Corner."

Opening a window may not seem an important event in life; after all, Brydon hired Mrs. Muldoon "for a daily hour to open windows and dust and sweep." Yet when Brydon opens the window after retreating from his alter ego, the effect is nearly magical, "a sharp rupture of his spell." By looking closely at how windows function literally and figuratively in the story, one can understand both Brydon's limitation as a hero and James's subtle criticism of the protagonist's simplistically oppositional thinking. With images of architecture and specifically of windows, James explores the boundaries between public and private, as well as individual and community.

In the 1908 preface to his New York Edition of *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), James proposes that fiction can best be described as a house. Like a house, the plot of a story depends on a certain structure; like a comfortable home a good story is something the writer and reader share in personal ways.

Describing fiction as a house may ostensibly imply an inflexibility of form, conformity to blueprint, and hostility to individuality; however, James explains that it is up to the individual writer to make the house of fiction her or his own, carving a window into the structure, a window through which he or she can see the outside and communicate that vision to the world. For James, "the house of fiction" theoretically has potential windows to accommodate everyone's perspective.

In James's metaphor, the window is not a given fact but the product of individual will. The author's "vision" and "pressure of individual will" pierces the house of fiction with unique perspective. Every individual sees something different although watching the same material world. The "house of fiction" is theoretically moldable to any perspective. It contains not "one window" "but a million" or rather, "a number of possible windows not to be reckoned." For James, the structure of fiction is not in itself interesting. Instead, the eyes and I's behind each window and each story are the true curiosity.

James's metaphor seems particularly apt for Spencer Brydon. Following the preface's logic, one can surmise what motivates Spencer by considering the view he manages from his room. Through most of the story, the window operates as a lens to the world, emphasizing Spencer's feeling of transcendence above the vulgar, "awful modern crush" of the public life below. At night he opens the shutters, allowing the light from the street to illuminate his own private theater of nostalgia. The window is more than a transparent glass-plate but a psychological buffer to the world. The elevated point of his view is important to his world view, setting him literally over the city that he judges and condemns.

Importantly, Spencer does not feel that he is doing anything as he stands before the window feeling powerful. Effortlessly, his window acts as a lens, providing the focal point through which the disparate elements of the world are arranged for his vision.

The magisterial attitude with which Spencer surveys the world scene complements his hyperbolic self-image as a heroic knight, a big-game hunter tracking the "beast in the forest," or as "the traveller emerging from an Egyptian tomb," "assaulted" by the "outer light of the Desert." When Spencer performs his midnight vigil he characterizes his reflections as requiring the concentrated force of an exceptional individual will. This sacred routine generates his life's most concentrated tension and he finds "no pleasure so fine" as his "stalking" the alter ego.

Like the Greek hero Ulysses, Spencer has traveled the world for many years, leaving behind his Penelope in Alice Staverton. The story evokes a potentially epic melancholy, spotlighting a man whose world has passed him by while he wandered. During the night of the final showdown, Spencer chooses a self-description that makes the heroic nature of his inner conflict explicit.

Keenly aware of his alter ego's presence, he holds to the conviction "to show himself, in a word, that he wasn't afraid." While walking down the stairs he imagines himself "a physical image, an image almost worthy of an age of greater romance." The hyperbole intensifies as Spencer gauges his present showdown as unmatched by any "age of romance." By proving to himself that he is not spooked by his alter ego, Spencer envisions himself "[proceeding] downstairs with a drawn sword."

This exaggeration foreshadows Spencer's exceptional opening of the window even as it threatens to disturb the structure of Spencer's story. His hyperbolic terms invite the reader to scrutinize Spencer and to doubt that he offers a reliable window onto the world. After all, what value does Spencer claim to hold that makes him feel so superior to the world below?

Throughout the story, Spencer considers himself brave because he has resisted the call of the New York business world. Instead he wants to find "values" other than those that depend on the "beastly rent-values" of New York. As a young man he rejected his father's advice and turned his back on business and the United States, leaving for Europe where he pursued his interest in art.

Spencer's alternative idea of "value" is hard to discern. He seems unable to explain a positive ideal behind his decisions, characterizing his thirty-year absence as "a selfish frivolous scandalous life." In order to prove himself, Spencer prepares for a series of showdowns—with the construction representative, his alter ego, and Alice's implicit request for him to stay with her in New York. Spencer's heroism is a series of confrontations through which he makes himself "stand up." His operating logic is binary opposition, yes or no propositions that he accepts or rejects. The properties he returns to administer reflect this polarity. One is sacred, "consecrated," and the other a symbol of vulgar money interest.

Spencer's confrontational egotism saturates the image of the honorable knight. He manages to build his heroic status only by dominating someone else. His search for the alter ego runs parallel to his confrontation with the "representative of the building firm" at his other property to whom Spencer also "[stood] up." In both instances, Spencer masters a threatening adversary. His alter ego is a personification of this violent opposition: "some erect confronting presence, something planted in the middle of the place and facing him through the dusk." Spencer yearns to win, to "turn the table on the apparition," proving again that he is not scared by scaring someone else.

The broader effect of this attitude is that Spencer seems incapable of recognizing those around him, even when they are crucial to his happiness. The narrator characterizes Alice as "[listening] to everything" and as "a woman who answered intimately but who utterly didn't chatter." In these terms, Alice seems to be a mere complement to Spencer's heroic musings. Later, he characterizes her in a static, one-dimensional fashion as "you were born to be what you are," "you're a person whom nothing can have altered." Such terms erase Alice's entire life experience and feeling through a gross generalization in contrast to which Spencer fills his own crisis with dramatic depth.

In the end, Spencer learns that life is not a series of oppositions but a vast network of decisions that prevent such easy victory. While opposing the business world has been his primary goal, he realizes in front of his fourth-floor window that the extremes are themselves related. In the end, Spencer's opposition of business and art fails as he is unable to locate a space outside of the economic space. His attempt to maintain private sanctity by holding the publicly commercial at bay is unworkable. Alice sums up the situation well when she remarks that he makes "so good a thing of [his] sky-scraper that, living in luxury on those ill-gotten gains, [he] can afford for a while to be sentimental" in the house on the jolly corner.

The plot's thickening depends on questioning the way Spencer has lived his life. As Spencer stands at the window, he realizes the full force of his isolation. The landscape has changed dramatically since he abandoned the United States and as he looks out from his fourth-floor window near dawn, the homes seem "hard-faced houses" that speak "so little to any need of his spirit." Instead of seeing a vulgar world against which he can elevate himself, he sees a "void." The void lacks any sense of proportion or measure and reflects a deeper crisis in Spencer's perspective on the world. His confusion at the window represents his final inability to separate himself from the world he had believed himself to have transcended.

In perceiving the world as an "incalculable void," Spencer recognizes the emptiness at the heart of his own oppositional thinking. When there is nothing left to reject, who is Spencer? Is his art really separate from business, and if not, what is the relationship of art to business? Instead of a sacred space apart from the money-lust of the public "void," his private sanctuary is merely another "door into a room shuttered and void."

The scene at the window emphasizes the blurred relationship between these oppositions. It is not enough to open or shut the window as it was to open or shut the doors of the house while tracking the apparition. Standing at the window, Spencer's

pretension to have derived a transcendent value erodes as he realizes that he is trapped not by "others" but by his own methods of establishing himself through confrontation and equating truth with the either/or polarity of ultimatum.

Spencer struggles with the scene's "large collective negation" even as dawn breaks. In opening the window, Spencer addresses the terms through which he reads the world. He will do anything to shake up the system. First he tries to make contact with those he watched from his window. In order to circumvent the vacuity of his vision, he looks on to "The empty street . . . the great lamplit vacancy" and decides it "was within call, within touch." He yearns for "some comforting common fact, some vulgar human note, the passage of a scavenger or a thief, some night-bird however base."

The condescending terms ("vulgar human note," "night-bird however base") are echoes of his binary logic and self-assured egotism, echoes resonating even in his most vulnerable moment. The policeman walking his beat, "whom [Spencer] had hitherto only sought to avoid" now desperately becomes his "friend" whom Spencer wants "to get into relation with" or "to hail" from his fourth floor.

But, despite his "choked appeal from his own open window" no "vulgar human note" appears, and Spencer continues to fall deeper into isolation. The story takes on a nearly comic note as Spencer struggles to reinvent his vision, to situate himself with a significant difference in relation to the window. Unable to connect with a human presence in the street, Spencer imagines himself clumsily "astride of the window-sill," flailing an "outstretched leg and arm" to a ladder or scaffolding with which he can descend to the street.

With these pathetically desperate moments, James explodes Spencer's self-inflated heroism of romantic knighthood. Finally, the comedy turns gruesome as Spencer imagines throwing himself out of the window, "uncontrollably insanely fatally [taking] his way to the street."

This turn from physical humor into deep despair demonstrates how radically Spencer needs to shift his thinking. It is not enough that the window is open or shut, instead Spencer must entirely reconsider his method of seeing. In this line of argument, recent critics have looked at the story through different windows asking: What is Alice's window, or Mrs. Muldoon's?

Reading the story, one can glimpse shadows of these different perspectives. In Alice's acceptance of Spencer either as he is or as he might have been, she is able to locate the contradictions of life and not shirk admitting her role in the machinery of economic existence. This is not to say that Alice's window to life is without its limitations—how different might her impression of Spencer's drama be than Mrs. Muldoon's? How might Mrs. Muldoon's window reflect critiques of the economic privilege on which the story stages Alice and Spencer's reunion?

Source: Kendall Johnson, "World View, World Void: Brydon at His Window in 'The Jolly Corner'," for *Short Stories for Students,* The Gale Group, 2000.

Critical Essay #2

While examining James's use of the idea of divided identity in "The Jolly Corner," Hardy also affirms the piece as "James's great love-story" in the following essay.

"The Jolly Corner" was published in 1908, after the stunning achievement of *The Ambassadors, The Wings of the Dove,* and *The Golden Bowl,* all written between 1900 and 1905. "The Jolly Corner" was also written while Henry James was still working on the two unfinished novels, *A Sense of the Past* and *The Ivory Tower*. The subtly packed story is probably his most original and exciting brief narrative, and its many links with other novels and stories show its density, freshness, and some of its sources of power. It relates closely to *A Sense of the Past* in its themes of historical determination and identify as well as its supernatural fantasy. It revises other earlier ghost stories, especially "The Turn of the Screw" and "Owen Wingrave." It is rooted in the bitter symbolist tales of unlived passion, "The Altar of the Dead" and "The Beast in the Jungle," remembering but rejecting their tragic mode. Less conspicuously, but significantly, it qualifies and develops subjects and symbols in the last great novels, especially *The Golden Bowl,* whose flaw it mends, though in the simplicity of fable.

To concentrate first on the story itself. It is a typical product of James's last period in its dominant subjects, distinct but for him inseparable: the power of individual imagination, and the conditional, constructed nature of human identity. James conceives imagination as creative, poetic in the true sense of making something new, capable of radical revision and subversion of the lived life, but at the same time he is clear that the creature which creates is created by its circumstances. He speaks with crystalline lucidity to the imagination of our own period, where we may be historically knowing, aware of the essentialist fallacy, yet paradoxically cling to a sense of creative power. Putting it another way, we know ourselves passive but feel ourselves active. James resolves the contradiction by making us aware that the process of constructing is a tentative and uncertain process, and is itself something constructed.

Nowhere is the active-passive consciousness clearer than in "The Jolly Corner," whose central character, Spencer Brydon, is a James-resembling exile returning home to New York City from somewhat vaguely outlined wanderings in Europe, after thirty years. In his alarmed response to the changed and changing New York at the beginning of the century he is like the James who returned to pay a long visit in 1904 and as a consequence wrote *The American Scene,* but unlike his author, he is not committed to another departure. It is the story of a might-have-been which draws on biographical fact and converts it to fiction. Unlike Brydon, James returned to America to face his might-have-beens, and uneasily accept historical flux, but gladly con- firmed and returned to his European choice and life in Rye and London. Brydon imagines and confronts the might-have-been, that *alter ego* in his haunted family home on a jolly corner in New York. Unlike James, and unlike many of the characters in James's stories, he is not an artist, though actively creative, prolific like his author in devising image and character. James imagines his imagination, conceiving it as a fine instrument for scrutinizing and speculating about the power of social circumstance.

Like so many of the novels and tales, the story begins with a telling title. Brydon's house is physically located on a real corner between two streets, also between demolition and conservation, past and present. It joins the over-developed row where Brydon owns another house, undistinguished between similar neighbours, and like them being converted into a high-rise apartment house, with the unnamed or unnumbered avenue which still retains the buildings and spirit of the past. The developers have their eye on his house on the jolly corner, but Brydon hangs on to it and begins to visit its empty rooms late at night. Like the apparition he meets there, he haunts and walks. The corner site is not only architecturally desirable and different, as corner properties are, but symbolically eloquent. The epithet "jolly" is typically Jamesian in its colloquial lightness, its dissonant irony as a designation of a haunted place, and its final dissolution of irony in unexpected aptness. The corner in the city turns out to have seemed sinister but to have been jolly, after all, in this grim story with a happy ending. So does the corner in the mind, a corner turned by a character in crisis, as Spencer Brydon turns or transforms his consciousness to see the self he might have been, then grasps the nature of his lived identity and dies into a new future where he is able to love. (Though not until he turns another corner, helped to revise and elucidate his experience by Alice Staverton, who is mentor as well as lover, like few women in previous fiction.) The image of the corner figures the arrival of the unexpected, a something unforeseen suddenly rounding a corner. It is an image of cornering, apt for a story where the metaphor of hunting is elaborated and varied as both the uncanny *alter ego,* who has never lived, and the living man, who is committed to history, are cornered in turn. The multifaceted suggestiveness of the corner con- firms the total resonance of place, especially the empty house and all its interior, rooms, hall, staircases, landings, doors and windows. The story is a complete exercise in the psycho-dynamics of place. The empty house is occupied and furnished for Brydon, he declares, by his past, cherished as the family home where he lived and where his parents and siblings died, valued as the place he can afford not to sell because of the other house being developed in the street of skyscrapers. When Alice lightly jokes about the way sentiment is founded on commercial success— "In short you're to make so good a thing of your sky-scraper that, living in luxury on those ill-gotten gains, you can afford for a while to be sentimental here!" —she proffers the same political metonymy as Dickens in *Great Expectations,* where a convict's cash creates a gentleman. The story doesn't dwell on this insight, casually put in with a passing smile, but it is fascinatingly articulated, totally relevant like all this artist's detail, bringing out clearly his politics of anti-essentialism. James knows that the liberal man of culture depends on the *alter ego* he rejects, which is one of several reasons why the ghost has to be seen, and in a way accepted. (James himself started his European travels on American money, and benefited from inherited rents, though unlike Brydon, he earned money too.)

The *alter ego* is the most materialist of ghosts, the American successful early twentieth-century man, builder of skyscrapers, the man of power, the man of violence, even a gangster. As an apparition he is terrifying in many ways, not least because of that power and violence, but also because of his vulnerability, since he has been maimed by violence. Like Charlotte Bronte's Rochester he is wounded in the right arm—actually the hand—and almost blinded, though the sexual suggestion is certainly not that found by some critics in *Jane Eyre*. What this story suggests are the hazards and threats of

potency, not impotence, and the alternative self may endow his weaker rival with his sexual energy, one way or another. He is imagined from the inside, as having interiority, as Brydon feels first his superior power, next imagines a secret sharer, cowering and hunted, then feels a shift in the balance of power, and eventually imagines the powerfully motivated aggressiveness of the violent, inferior, jealous, unlived and unchosen identity. Like his novelist, whom he represents, and does more than represent, since he is not an artist, Brydon is brilliantly attentive to motive and passion. The *alter ego* is terrifying because of his powerful physicality, but also, like many of the best ghosts, because of his inhuman indeterminacy. (It's a quiet grim joke that he is so determined as well as indeterminate.) His immateriality is certainly not incompatible with a grossly materialized physical horror, like that of the unseen but imagined mutilated ghost in W. W. Jacobs's "The Monkey's Paw," also conjured up by passionate desire. Brydon dreads seeing the apparition's face, and its slow exposure shows he is right to fear, though James cleverly avoids crude description, successfully relying on the power of suggestion:

the face was the face of a stranger. It came upon him nearer now, quite as one of those expanding images projected by the magic lantern of childhood; for the stranger, whoever he might be, evil, odious, blatant, vulgar, had advanced as for aggression.

He is a ghost of the mind, but his subjectivity doesn't diminish the terror of the character's and the reader's experience. There is cold comfort in thinking him a projection of the subject, since that subject is clearly established as a source from which idea emerges and grossly expands—James's precise image— into materialization.

The story is dazzlingly reflexive, with many facets: it is a fiction about self-fantasy, a ghost story about making up ghosts, a symbolist story about creating symbols from the hard surfaces of facts. It would be hard to find a more genre-conscious and style-conscious story, but like all great literature it is Janus-headed, facing life as well as art. So it conceives Spencer Brydon—and Alice Staverton, the woman in the story—perhaps as types of the artist, but certainly as imaginatively active in a broadly humane way, in a story about the hard business of loving the whole of a person, accepting the grossness of the shadow-self, accepting historical construction. It is a speculative fable pushing at the boundaries of fable, a realist narrative breaking the bounds of realism. There can be fewer more elastic reflexive narratives.

How is it narrated? Concentrating on the imagination of Spencer Brydon, his typical third-person sensitive register of consciousness, James almost completely effaces his narrator. Almost but not quite. As in *The Ambassadors,* and its great ancestor, Jane Austen's *Emma,* the reader is placed just behind the chief character's awareness, close to the dominating mind but outside it. As that last episode about the apparition's face shows, there is a tiny functional gap between character and reader, bridged by a scrupulously tentative and reticent narrator. In that passage the free indirect style shows Brydon's definition of his other self, but does not commit the story to his moral judgement, leaving room for Alice's final intelligent and compassionate demurral, "he must have been less dreadful to me" and "He has been unhappy. . . ." The chief narrator is conspicuously and consistently provisional, his narrative threaded with "perhapses"

and "possiblys," in which he frames the doubting slow step-by-step speculativeness of Brydon. Conspicuously discreet even in the company of James's restrained tellers, the chief narrator never raises his voice, but it is heard once or twice, well on in the story, addressing the reader and making a point more emphatically, though in an aptly muted tone. On one occasion, for instance, the quiet narrator repeats something he said five sentences earlier, "He had made, as I have said, to create on the premises the baseless sense of a reprieve, three absences." In the next paragraph this first-person narrative affirmation is repeated, to pick up a point made eight sentences before: "There came to him, as I say . . . the acuteness of this certainty. . . ." But this time the repetitiv e reminder is qualified, making the personal appearance stronger, "There came to him, as I say—but determined by an influence beyond my notation! —the acuteness of this certainty. . . ." These are the only three firstperson pronouns, drawing attention to the reticence by this little neighbourly cluster, asserting rarity. The last disclaimer of authority, the topos of inexpressibility, in "beyond my influence," and the restrained cool term "notation," contribute to the functional vagueness and uncertainty that hovers over the whole narrative, making it a wonderfully blurred and opaque medium for the strange happening.

The expansive internal narrator's uncertainty meets and matches that of the reticent outer narrator. It is a presiding uncertainty, since Brydon's is the only dramatized consciousness, Alice's presence being behaviouristically presented, with her interiority done only through Brydon's reading of her behaviour. His own responses are marked from the start by the rhetoric of qualification, doubt and provisionality: we hear on the first page that his return to America has been attended by "rather unattenuated surprises," that everything was "somehow" a surprise, that the surprises "seemed" to have been given a big time-margin for play, and later, that he had "supposed" himself to allow for change, and that uncanny phenomena place him "rather" under their charm.

He is introduced by a direct speech, the complaint that everyone asks him what he thinks of "everything"— "everything" referring to the impression made by New York after an absence of thirty-three years, and we then swerve back into a long retrospective account of his first impressions and take in his visit to the house on the jolly corner, and the first stealthy intimations of its haunting. We then go back to pick up the conversation at the beginning, after ten pages of Edel's edition, "It was a few days after this that . . . he had expressed his impatience. . . ." The retrospect justifies the narrative compression, which lends itself to a useful summary form, with a deliberated lack of particularity. From the start, we are in a twilight zone, or even in the dark, as Brydon is to be on his wanderings through the house, with or without a candle, groping and feeling our way, as Brydon feels his. The marked stylistic feature—not confined to this story, but given particular effect in it—remains that of qualification and uncertainty: "old association seemed to, stray" his new-found business ability "quite" charmed him, "perhaps" charmed Alice "perceptibly" less, and he "imagined" Alice asking him if he has started to prowl round the house. His is an imagining mind, and his "sensitive register" is the only consciousness notated within the third-person narrative.

Alice Staverton's point of view is consistently indicated by limit, presented through the indirections of Brydon's speculative and inferential mode: "things she didn't utter, it was

clear, seemed to come and go in her mind . . ." "whatever her impression might hav e been . . . ,", "She appeared to imply . . . ," "it perhaps produced for her. . . ." The uncertainty is there not only in Brydon's reading of this sensitive and intelligent woman of few words, who doesn't "chatter," but in nearly all his reading of experience. The hesitancy and tentativeness of his sensibility create an idiolect for the guarded observer, who has not chosen to be a man of action, and the perfect register for the imagining of a supernatural apparition and the creation of a ghost from mere potentiality. (He is a ghost even more nebulous than a post-mortem revenant, who has had a mortal existence.) Brydon's confidence at the end, when he confronts his constructed image of alternative construction, is the more marked and startling as it contrasts with his general wariness and doubt.

Until the last meeting, then, his isolated consciousness is made misty, emphasizing both the introspective and subjective experience and the traditional mistiness of apparitions, though this one is to be grossly solidified. This is a story about the invocation of a ghost, by imagination. As in *Hamlet* we begin with a question then quickly move on to another; after "Everyone asks me what I 'think' of everything," Brydon explains that he is not interested in everything, only wonderingly absorbed in one question: "What would it have made of me, what would it have made of me? I keep forever wondering . . . as if I could possibly know!" His wondering determines the action on the jolly corner. Like Kafka's K before the castle and Alice before the looking-glass, Brydon initiates the ghost and the ghost-story. The haunting by a self-styled *alter ego is initiated by his curiosity and desire, his creative fiat*. In Kafka, Carroll and James the fantastic story originates in a character's urging fantasy, presented in a third-person narrative, through a subtle, free, indirect style, just right for the introspective mode and for the narrative lack of disclosure. The characters are not artists but their weird stories are thoroughly motivated: K, Alice and Brydon create their own story, urged by passionate desire for knowledge. In each case something is imagined in advance, then turns out to be authenticated by experience, with a chilling and grotesque sense of sinister but comprehensible coincidence. K says he is the land-surveyor, and after an apparent hitch, is con- firmed in his imagined appointment. Alice imagines going through the looking-glass, then does. James is clearly recalling Lewis Carroll in the eerie traffic through the painting in *The Sense of the Past* and here too Ralph Pendrel imagines that his *alter ego* will show his face and he does. Brydon thinks of a ghost, and sees one.

These two entries are in the old tradition of magic: ghosts, fairies and devils have to be invoked and invited over the human threshold, as scrupulously recalled in Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* and Yeats's *Land of Heart's Desire,* but not in "The Turn of the Screw," the subjectivity of whose ghosts has been extensively debated, and, I think, understandably mistaken, ever since Edmund Wilson proposed his Freudian reading. "The Jolly Corner" makes it clear that Brydon's ghost begins in the mind. The earlier story made its ghosts external, but Wilson and the critics who followed his reading seem to have been compelled by the very proper rational belief in the subjectivity of ghosts, so rewrote them, though with sexist implications, as projections of the governess's neurotic repression. "The Jolly Corner" may be read as a revision of "The Turn of the Screw," in its insistence that ghosts are—or begin—inside the psyche of the ghost-seer. In this

story, and in "Owen Wingrave," James's ghosts and ghost-seeing are grounded in rationality.

The repressions of the hero in "The Jolly Corner," unlike those of the governess and Owen Wingrave, are cured. He is horrified by his vision, which is like the vastation experienced by James's father and his brother, William, but turns out to be the opposite of vastation, an affirmative and reconstructive vision. What it resembles, as Leon Edel points out, is a famous dream Henry James recorded, in which he was in the Galerie d'Apollon of the Louvre threatened and terrified by a "creature or presence," then turning the tables, "surpassing him for straight aggression and dire intention," hunting and routing the haunter. The "visitant" is displaced as the cause of the dreamer's fear and turns into the terrified victim. The dreamer becomes hero of the nightmare, in an unconscious allegory of creativity's conversion of dread to power.

It is fascinating that James's dream, and "The Jolly Corner," use a vastation, an experience of fear, horror, and physical loathing, in order to overcome and assimilate fear and horror, and imagine its benign visionary opposite. James also overcame his two male seniors, his father and his elder brother, in the two fantasies of the real dream and the dreaming fiction.

To do this he imagined a powerful woman, a more positive version of Maria Gostrey in *The Ambassadors,* and the women characters in the earlier great tragic stories, "The Altar of the Dead" (1895) and, closest of all, May Bartram of "The Beast in the Jungle" (1903). The central symbol of this story is significantly revised in the image-rich "Jolly Corner": "the hunted thing" and "the fanged or the antlered animal brought at last to bay," "an awful beast; whom I brought, too horribly, to bay." Reading "The Jolly Corner" with "The Beast in the Jungle" in mind brings out the relation between Brydon's confrontation with power and virility and his final embrace of Alice. The beast in the earlier story was not awful or destructive, and neither is the apparent beast in this story, though Brydon thinks he is, and needs Alice to put him right.

This is perhaps the clearest and most satisfying act of Jamesian self-revision. It is also James's most affirmative imagining of a woman character's creativity, power and fulfilment, admittedly within the compressed scope and permitted simplification of fable. ("The Jolly Corner" is James's last great story, though of the five written after it, "Crapy Cornelia," "The Bench of Desolation," and "A Round of Visits," are all thematically related and worthy companions.) Alice Staverton succeeds where May Bartram, who closely resembles her, failed. Brydon catches his beast in the jungle in the nick of time, unlike John Marcher. John Marcher shows an advance, in his turn, on the more easily defeated and destroyed George Stransom in "The Altar of the Dead." Both Stransom and Marcher go into the making of Spencer Brydon. His story is affirmative in its accomplishment of a vision of love and—in spite of love's middle age—sexual fulfilment. Brydon tells Alice he longs to know what he would have been like had he stayed in the family house on the jolly corner of New York City, and because this is a love-story as well as a story about imagination, Brydon, unlike K and Alice in Wonderland, is supported by love, or imagination. His Alice fully understands his wonder, and wonders with him, as good lovers do, attending to the wholeness of the beloved.

So it is appropriate that though the initiation is his, it is a collaborative act which transforms metaphor into reality. Alice feels his desire and responds to his simile for the *alter ego*, said to resemble "the full-blown flower . . . in the small tight bud," though pointing out that she thinks the flower would be "quite splendid, quite huge and monstrous," disagreeing with his sense of it as "quite hideous and offensive," in preparation for her revisions at the story's end. She says interestingly that he would "have had power," and to his amazement, that she must have liked him "that way," 'How should I not have liked you?' She also says she has seen the apparition, long before he does, in two dreams, and at the end says she has seen him at the moment of Brydon's dawn vision. The coincidence is acceptable both because she gives no description, pressing on our credulity with the lightest possible touch, because it completes the fable, and because—like *Jane Eyre*, where love is also redemptively telepathic— she is as obsessed as he is with what he might have been: 'my mind, my imagination, had worked so over what you might, what you mightn't have been—to show you, you see, how I've thought of you. . . .'

It is important that Alice is attracted to the powerful alternative capitalist Brydon, and that she repels his sense of the ghost as a "black stranger," repulsive and alien. It is important to attach the final embrace, and his completed declaration, echoing but changing Amerigo's "I see only you" in "I have you," to the fabulous ghost story. It is as if Brydon's dying—as he insists on calling it—fully establishes a transition from partial to whole identity. He has to recognize and accept the "black stranger," as something within his range of possible identity, his shadow self or id. The fable works in Freudian and Jungian terms, as well as being a politically lucid fable of the constructed self by social circumstance. There is no need to see it in terms of any of the traditional systems: it is a recognition of potentiality, in unromantic and tough imagery. It is a fable of the divided self, like Conrad's *Secret Sharer* and unlike Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, in acknowledging the kinship of each half of a divided self. And however we systematize it, the fable is more than a fable because of its emotional trajectory: it is a particularized and dynamic love story of self-analysing passion and power. It analyses as it feels the nature of loving another self.

At the beginning the lovers seem to be on the brink, making love telepathically but on tiptoe as only James's characters can. Brydon asks Alice, 'don't you see how, without my exile, I shouldn't have been waiting till now—?,' leaving the sentence and declaration wittily unfinished on that "now," to be answered by her responsive incomplete and ambiguous sentence, 'It hasn't spoiled your speaking—.' He has to wait a little longer, until he sees the self in all its potentiality and potency, and until she has proved how she "has thought" of him, and suffered the vision with him. Then he can speak and Alice can accept.

It is the subtle Jamesian structure of reversibility, found in *The Golden Bowl,* with its sub-text of Adam Verver giving Maggie what she is seen as giving him—protective action, silence, and cunning. "The Jolly Corner" is even more complex in its sub-texts because we feel that the *alter ego* and Alice each has a point of view from which the story might be told. It was not for nothing that James had pondered and experimented with shifting sensitive registers of consciousness from the beginning of his career. His

shifts in voice are as interesting, if less mannered and conspicuous, as those of James Joyce. Joyce liked to show the shifts of viewpoint—Stephen, Bloom, Gerty, the Citizen, Molly, and the rest—as James had done with the Prince and the Princess in *The Golden Bowl*. One of James's most subtle formal achievements is this Escher-like reversibility or exchange, in which we feel the pressure of sub-textual potentiality stir beneath the main text. It is of course the appropriate form for a story of an *alter ego*, but it is also a good pattern for the love story.

As it is enacted, the story is Brydon's creation. It begins like *Hamlet* by moving from generality and neutrality to particularity. Brydon feels a bell ring—as the crude language of cliché would say— when Alice says to him that he would have invented the skyscraper in his alternative American existence: "He was to remember these words while the weeks elapsed, for the small silver ring they had sounded over his own lately most disguised and most muffled vibrations." The use of tense is brilliant: the avoidance of the present and slide into the future makes narrative evasive. This sentence of generalized forecast is followed by another timeshift, into a generalized past: "It had begun to be present . . . ." What had begun was the haunting. It started with the vagueness of that image of responsive deep vibration—another evasion there as the image circles round the unspoken object sending out vibrations—and moves on to the image of an "odd echo" when he laughs at Alice and the superstitious Mrs Muldoon. These suggestions and avoidances of indication work like the avoidance of personal pronouns in "this thing" and "it" at the beginning of that dialogue about the ghost in the first scene of *Hamlet*, noticed by the sharp-eyed Coleridge as preparation for the growth of an unde- fined something into shocking materialization. James had created the extraordinary image of ineffable suspicion when Maggie circled the pagoda and knocked on its doorless surface to hear an echo of her knock, and now recycles the method for the purposes of fantasy. There is no more subtly psychologized ghost-story, and the subtlety links James's fantasy with his realism. His ghost stories are familiarized by psychic truths, his self-analysing psychological novels make imagination strange.

The story also shows James's stylistic and structural habit of scattering innocent-seeming images over the surface, images which turn out not to be superficial but profoundly relevant, pointing the way to conclusion with the utmost delicacy, like the early adjectives of illness in *The Wings of the Dove*. Here they are imagistic suggestions of the uncanny, more or less unobtrusive on first reading: "queernesses," "ugly," "monstrosities," "compartment of the mind never yet penetrated," play their part in what James called, in the Preface to *The Tragic Muse,* the novelist's, as well as the dramatist's "art of preparations." But associations cluster rapidly after that small silver bell's vibration:

It had begun to be present to him after the first fortnight, it had broken out with the oddest abruptness, this particular wanton wonderment: it met him there—and this was the image under which he himself judged the matter, or at least, not a little, thrilled and flushed with it—very much as he might have been met by some strange figure, some unexpected occupant, at a turn of one of the dim passages of an empty house.

This speaks for itself. Earlier steps in the building of his fantasy are described less definitely but in suggestive images which accumulate suggestion: "begun to be present," "broken out," "oddest," "wanton," "quaint," "hauntingly." Such images prepare for the apparition innocently and perhaps subliminally.

The process, and our awareness of process, are stepped up, and the paragraph goes on to anticipate not only haunting and oddness but the future events of opened doors, empty rooms, passages, presence, dusk, and shock:

when he didn't indeed rather improve on it by a still intenser form: that of his opening a door behind which he would have made sure of finding nothing, a door into a room shuttered and void, and yet so coming, with a great suppressed start, on some quite erect confronting presence, something planted in the middle of the place and facing him through the dusk.

This is a summary of what is to come, with small variations. But it is an oblique summary, since it does strike us as metaphor—which it is—so the clue is buried. A little later the collaborative process is taken up, in the detail of imagery, but after Mrs Muldoon's fear of "craping" round the upper rooms in the "ayvil" hours after dark has introduced real superstition. Agreeing that he has no reason for hanging on to the family house, Brydon says in relaxed colloquial image that he hasn't "the ghost" of a reason, only to have Alice press the dead metaphor into appropriate life, 'Are you very sure the "ghost" of one doesn't, much rather, serve—?' One of the story's several important unfinished sentences makes the shift from rhetoric to reality (fiction's reality) even clearer, before Brydon replies, with the proleptic and transformative expression, "between a glare and a grin," with a proleptic and transformative admission, 'Oh ghosts —of course the place must swarm with them! I should be ashamed of it if it didn't.'

After this the ghost must walk, pressed into a "lively stir"—another anticipatory half-dead image— by speculation and curiosity and desire. In other words, James, who described himself in *Notes of a Son and Brother* as "a man of imagination," makes the hero of his story a man of imagination too.

Thus metaphor becomes reality, though of course a reality in a fiction. Brydon does what artists do, and the story is about itself. But it moves as an excellent ghost-story too. James knows as well as Shakespeare (especially in *Hamlet* but in *Macbeth* too) that a ghost should enter stealthily and startlingly. The expectation of seeing Brydon's *alter ego,* or Hamlet's father's ghost, in no way weakens the shock of the appearance. James does something else like Shakespeare in *Hamlet:* he deflects our attention after putting us on the *qui vive*. Brydon, the ghost-seer to whose mind we are so close, thinks he has got free of the haunting. He flees downstairs from the room where he supposes the ghost to be, the room whose closed door makes him (and the reader) feel the apparition as an objective presence, outside the mind, to the presence waiting in the vestibule to shock him out of consciousness. He faints and falls on the great black and white marble floor—which first made him conscious of style, a characteristic example of fine small nuance, a bonus for the care James demands and rewards. Brydon's other self is terrifying and pitiable, though Brydon himself feels only the terror, and Alice is

needed for pity. Perhaps it is easier to be afraid of oneself than to pity it, since self-pity has been so unfortunately disapproved, and Alice's tenderly imagined presence demonstrates the need we all have to be loved, and the way love's pity can be gladly received.

I used to think this story's achievement was its amazing imagining of the politics of identity through psychic division, and so it is; but I have come to believe that it is also James's great love-story. Love makes the divided self whole in understanding not only the existential self but also the whole potential. Love is another word for imagination, here demonstrated in Alice's ability to be present when Brydon's bruised ego wakes to wholeness, and to complete his knowledge of the stranger whose closeness is repugnant. Alice's dream of the flower in the bud is the dream of love, what Keats called Adam's dream, brilliantly imagined by James as a dream hard to dream. The lovers wake to find the dream true, but the woman has to dream for the man, as Penelope has to do the dreaming for Odysseus. Homer and James make the stay-at-home woman a type of negative capability and wise passiveness. Both emphasize intelligence so we should not mistake the location of creativity in the woman as patronizing. Homer calls Penelope the clever one, and shows her not only as the dreamer but as the analyst of dreams, false and true. Similarly, James shows Alice always a step ahead of Brydon's intelligence, rather as Maria Gostrey knows what is in store for Strether in Paris and Woollett. James's emphasis at the beginning on Alice's integrity, her ability to stay whole in the changing and self-destroying but creative New York, makes her a type of the passionate intellect which can put up the maximum resistance to conditioning. This is why her expertise is so valuable for her lover. She has maintained her quiet but ridden the streetcars. It seems likely at the beginning that he wants to be her lover, and at the end it is certain that he is:

"He has a million a year . . . but he hasn't you.""And he isn't—no—he isn't *you* !" she murmured as he drew her to his breast.

A happy ending for Jamesian lovers is rare, though his first novel, *Watch and Ward,* imagined precisely this, but much less passionately and much less intelligently. The beauty of these middle-aged happy lovers is that they are old enough to know as well as still young enough to do. In *The Ambassadors* Strether was not able to marry his mentor Maria, and though James imagined him renouncing her, it is significant that he did not imagine Strether actually loving any of the three women—Mrs Newsome, Maria, and Marie de Vionnet—who seem to solicit his love. Strether is James's earlier demonstration of a man who, like Brydon, comes to acknowledge his constructed self, to re-imagine himself as a creature of history, but the novel's sense of reality chooses to enlighten him but not to reward or establish him either in the rich lax habitat of Paris or the moral materialist habitat of Woollett, Massachusetts. Strether is torn between two social constructions, seeing both and choosing neither. Brydon is Strether more tenderly imagined, and rewarded. The story is also a revision of the happy ending ambiguously offered at the end of *The Golden Bowl,* and it is satisfying to find that in "The Jolly Corner" James re-imagines that novel's key symbol, and restores its wholeness, The revisionary process is oblique, and I don't suggest that there is a very close resemblance between the two, only that the link shows that James wrote his 1908 story

with the earlier symbol somewhere in his mind. The bowl in "The Jolly Corner" is a simile for the haunting, but it is neither gilded nor cracked, and is touched to music:

feeling the place once more in the likeness of some great glass bowl, all precious concave crystal, set delicately humming by the play of a moist finger round its edge. The concave crystal held, as it were, this mystical other world, and the indescribably fine murmur of its rim was the sigh there . . . of all the old baffled possibilities.

It is dangerous, perhaps impossible, to hold love in a golden bowl, as Blake's Book of Thel instructed James, but James wonderfully shows that it can be held in crystal. (The New York *alter ego*, not Brydon, is the billionaire.) The purely metaphorical bowl of "The Jolly Corner," like Keats's urn, is fragile but as yet unbroken. It is ungilded, without duplicity, crystalline in lucidity, a medium for light and music, a good omen. It is touch-and-go whether Brydon can accept the old baffled possibilities, after they have more humanly and horribly materialized, but the crystal bowl suggests something of the sanctity of a grail, to counteract the hideousness perceived by Brydon in the encountered stranger. Without this image the encounter with that other self would be simpler and harsher, and Alice's love for the potential more startlingly strange and artistically willed.

It is appropriate that James re-imagined the crystal bowl of his last great novel, since the image of the ghost in his repulsive aspect also began in *The Golden Bowl*. Maggie images the treachery suddenly perceived on her hearth, "evil seated . . . where she had only dreamed of good" as a surprise meeting, not round a corner but in a corridor: "it had met her like some bad-faced stranger surprised in one of the thick-carpeted corridors of a house of quiet." There is an arcane relation between the two works, as there so often is in sibling works of art: *Richard III* is intimately recalled in *Macbeth,* "Mr Gilfil's Love Story" in *Daniel Deronda*. So if we compare the happy endings of love, it is clear that "The Jolly Corner" has the simple, benign and unambiguous ending, not undermined like *The Golden Bowl* by the destructiveness and complacency of Maggie's powerful victory over a powerful sister— destructive and complacent like many victories — nor by her unattractive and patronizing articulation of the novel's truth that Charlotte has been necessary in order to build her marriage. The "black stranger" is necessary for Brydon's fulfilment, but the interpretation is left to the reader's intelligence. In any case he is not (the fiction of) a human being with equal rights, only (the fiction of) a piteous might-have-been like Charles Lamb's dream children and the sentimental J. M. Barrie's unborn daughter in *Dear Brutus*. He is also politically significant as these little apparitions are not. Like them, he is endowed with affective life. Unlike them, he is not sad, but angered—Brydon supposes—by being haunted and hunted, and perhaps also, we may suppose, by meeting his rival's existence. (This is where the *scriptable* story's reversibility gets into play, stirring the reader into activity.) But he is invoked in order to be understood, pitied, perhaps admired, even loved.

It is a story, like *The Golden Bowl* and *The Wings of the Dove*, about sexual power and desire. Alice tells Brydon clearly, at the beginning of their conversation about his *alter ego*, that the man he is so curious about, the man he would have been had he not stayed cultivating his perceptions in Europe— like so many of James's characters, and

perhaps just a little like James himself—would have had power. Perhaps one implication of Brydon's fear, and acceptance, of his other self, the black stranger, is his fear and acceptance of his own virility. It is also why dreaming Alice is so drawn to him, not simply for the nobler reason that she loves the whole man, potential as well as actualized. Perhaps this is why Brydon can't complete his declaration of love, leaving it as an unfinished sentence— 'I shouldn't have been waiting till now—'until he has encountered his grosser self, and died, like St Paul, Martin Chuzzlewit, and other heroes of *lysis*, or sudden conversion, in order to be resurrected.

It is also why he insists, after waking into full self-consciousness from a long unconsciousness, that he has died. He is in a coma for many hours, through "a long dark day." This interval in consciousness is one of the tantalizing gaps in James, famous for constructing *lacunae* and absences in his *scriptable* stories. When Brydon calls the coma a death, the gap becomes more interesting, and when he asks, 'in my strange darkness—where was it, what was it?' more interesting still. James remembers and suggestively reverses Hamlet's image of the bourn from which no traveller returns: "He had come back from further away than any man but himself had ever travelled." The emphasis is first on return, then fleetingly, on the journey: "it was strange how with this sense what he had come back *to* seemed really the great thing, and as if his prodigious journey had been all for the sake of it." The feeling and imagery of the fantasy "The Great Good Place" (1900) feed into this solemn mood of recovery and homecoming. Brydon and the story come to rest, and the mystery of where he has been is not solved by narration, only designated in the traditional metaphor of journey, with its suggestive but secret epithet "prodigious", colloquial and technical. As so often in James, the colloquial register lightens or quietens solemnity, while permitting it. (You never catch James rhapsodizing, like Thackeray, Dickens and George Eliot.) But there is a sense of prodigies, a rite of unspecified passage. The return emphasizes the relaxation after trauma, and after vision: "It had brought him to knowledge." It is satisfying that he returns to knowledge as well as love, like Cymbeline.

There is a sense of healing and convalescence after the strains, terrors and the vision of the ravaged life. This gives a particular tone to a traditional ritual of dying into resurrection. To describe the experience in these Christian terms seems too abstract, not quite right, though Brydon does ask Alice how she managed to turn up, and bring him "literally to life" "in the name of all the benedictions" and feels "beatitude" after she replies by kissing him. The particulars of the return to love are human, not religious, in spite of this language. So too are the particulars of the return to knowledge. And it is interesting that James doesn't end the story with the rapture of knowing or the holy calm of *nostos* but, after introducing these high points, takes the lovers through a humanly particularized retrospect and discussion, and ends with their declaration and embrace. It is not exactly understatement but it is a choice of the ordinary, rather than the extraordinary, aspect of the whole experience. James chose not to end with noumenal imagery of death and resurrection and prodigious journey but firmly returns us to the phenomenal world.

The noumenal imagery is socially grounded. Perhaps one would die after a full lucid sight of historical possibility, which in this case includes a full lucid sight of the self,

potential and actual. In a simpler, but not dissimilar, fable of conditioning and attempted freedom, the more pessimistic ghoststory "Owen Wingrave" (1892), the hero does die after confronting the unequivocal aggression of his militant ancestor and *alter ego*: James is revising this fable after a long interval. In *The Sense of the Past,* and the scenario-notes for its continuation, James is especially interested in the psychic strain of time-travel, and perhaps one reason for his failure to finish the novel is the sheer difficulty of sustaining the narrative of such an experience at length. Confronting an historical alternative is an experience more easily dealt with in a short story.

It is an experience from which only fictional characters can recover, and only fictional characters can experience. James imagined it, and must have come pretty close to it, as the story suggests. And not only the story. The imagining of a might-havebeen in "The Jolly Corner" is backed up by the sort of thing James said to friends about his choice of the single life, where he is evidently considering unacted possibilities. For instance, he told Grace Norton that he felt happier and more powerful after he made up his mind not to marry. Not that this would be the only glance back at unlived choices. The return journey in 1904, articulated in *The American Scene,* also stirred speculative retrospect. James's sharpened experience of life-choices obviously lies behind the astonishing ghost-story, informing and forming his imaginative grasp of historical construction. He is the great anti-essentialist to emerge out of Victorian fiction into the twentieth century.

Source: Barbara Hardy, "The Jolly Corner," in *Henry James—The Shorter Fiction: Reassessments,*edited by N. H. Reeve, St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1997, pp. 190-208.

Critical Essay #3

In his historicist reading of "The Jolly Corner," Reising sees the story "not as a mirror of a stable and coherent moment in history but as a text that represents, through its own flux and contradictions, an arena of social and cultural change."

Critical Essay #4

At the conclusion of "The Jolly Corner" Spencer Brydon recovers consciousness (after swooning at the sight of his double) in the lap of his friend, Alice Staverton. In sharp contrast to the complex and sometimes violent imagery of Brydon's experience throughout the extraordinary middle section of the tale, the mood of the brief, concluding section is mild and conciliatory. Significantly, it is Alice Staverton, not Brydon, who dominates that final scene, both physically and verbally. The barely conscious Brydon is aware, as he comes to, of his head "pillowed in extraordinary softness and faintly refreshing fragrance . . . and he finally knew that Alice Staverton had made her lap an ample and perfect cushion to him." Throughout this section Brydon and Staverton engage in a remarkably conventional and sentimental dialogue. Brydon, for example, remarks,

'Yes—I can only have died. You brought me literally to life. Only,' he wondered, his eyes rising to her, 'only, in the name of all benedictions, how?'It took her but an instant to bend her face and kiss him, and something in the manner of it, and in the way her hands clasped and locked his head while he felt the cool charity and virtue of her lips, something in all this beatitude somehow answered everything. 'And now I keep you,' she said.'Oh keep me, keep me!' he pleaded while her face still hung over him: in response to which it dropped again and stayed close, clingingly close.

The tale ends with an embrace, projecting this emotionally lush and intimate final scene into an implicitly romantic future. Too sentimental? Perhaps. Staverton's clasping and locking Brydon's head as she stays clingingly close, however, jars with the cloying tone of these final lines and much of the concluding of the tale.

"The Jolly Corner" has been regarded solely and obviously as an examination of Spencer Brydon's character and crisis, and James criticism has marginalized Brydon's friend, Alice Staverton, viewing her as an appendage to the "hero" of the tale. Critics offer hope that Spencer Brydon will achieve a sense of psychic wholeness "through [this] woman's unselfish, all comprehending love," or view Staverton as Brydon's conscience, as "the integrating spirit, the principle of divine love which makes selfhood possible in the fullest sense," as a "prize" for Brydon, as an "all-forgiving, all accepting mother figure," embodying the "redemptive power of love," as an "example for the reader of the tale" (by virtue of her understanding the complex figurative reality of Brydon's vision), and as a "frame character," whose "most important function is to be sensitively aware of those muffled vibrations" of Brydon's. Such readings share the view that the tale valorizes Brydon's priorities, while Staverton is valuable primarily insofar as she validates his identity. Such readings do not take as problematic either the uncharacteristic sentimentality of the final scene or the appropriative implications of Staverton's locking and keeping Brydon.

Nonetheless, while viewing Staverton as typical of many women in James's tales—more a passive sounding-board for a man's ideas than an active participant in the narrative action—may be normative, it is not, I feel, correct and should not go unexamined. In

fact, Alice Staverton's role in "The Jolly Corner," like so much of that tale, is an anomaly in James's canonical short fiction. Staverton, no less than Brydon, is situated in a complex historical and political world that, in her case, defines and constrains her options, priorities, and rhetorical strategies as a woman in turn-of-the-century United States. The historical frame of James's tale encompasses the later half of the nineteenth century (Brydon leaves the United States as a young man at about the time of the Civil War and returns just after the turn of the century), and James's representation of Staverton draws extensively on representations of women from early to late nineteenth-century Anglo- American discourses. I will also be drawing on texts even earlier than this explicit chronology (but, for the most part, coherent with the characters' plausible pre-narrative biographies) in order better to suggest popular representations of women and women's political status that would constitute the discourse of women's power informing the histori cal reference of James's text. Such a focus reveals James's tale not as a mirror of a stable and coherent moment in history but as a text that represents, through its own flux and contradictions, an arena of social and cultural change.

This new perspective on Staverton's role in "The Jolly Corner" can productively follow the methodological revisions called for by feminist historians and literary critics. For example, Judith Fetterley argues that "the first act of the feminist critic [explicitly of American culture, but implicitly of all cultures] must be to become a residing rather than an assenting reader" of all texts that have become sedimented with masculinist critical priorities. The historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg defines her own revisionist project by arguing that the major limitation of traditional historiography inheres in its viewing women as only acting roles in a male script.

It fails to look for evidence of women's reaction, of the ways women manipulated men and events to create new fields of power or to assert female autonomy. . . . [Women's historians] see history as an ongoing struggle between women and men actors for control of the script, a struggle that ultimately transforms the play, the players—even the theater itself. But if we reject the view of women as passive victims, we face the need to identify the sources of power women used to act within a world determined to limit their power, to ignore their talents, to belittle or condemn their actions.

To draw on Smith-Rosenberg's metaphor, Alice Staverton is more than a supporting actress in this tale; she is fully Brydon's cultural, if not his social and financial, equal. In three senses in particular— her actions, her imaginative boldness, and her rhetoric—she signals the complex historical dialectic marking the emergence of a new political strategy for American women. Historicizing Staverton's role throughout the tale, and particularly in the final section, helps us not only to grasp her place in the social world of the tale, but also to account for the bizarre shift in James's tone and to avoid the masculine priorities that characterize much criticism of this tale.

Critical Essay #5

It is important to note that Staverton is remarkably like Brydon in many ways. Both characters represent a troubled response to modernity and its economic and cultural upheavals, to the shock of the new. Upon his return to New York after a thirtythree- year sojourn in Europe, Brydon stands repelled by the altered face of modern urban life and defines both himself and Staverton in opposition to modern life. He finds solace amidst modern disorder in two places: in his family home—the "jolly corner" of the title—and in Alice Staverton's flat, which he values as "a small still scene where items and shades, all delicate things, kept the sharpness of the notes of a high voice perfectly trained, and where economy hung about life like the scent of a garden." Similarly, Alice Staverton's quarters in Irving Place, roughly like the jolly corner in their seclusion and in its associations, are *her* haven from New York life. As Brydon defines her, "His old friend lived with one maid and herself dusted her relics and trimmed her lamps and polished her silver; she stood off, in the awful modern crush, when she could, but she sallied forth and did battle when the challenge was really to 'spirit,' the spirit she after all confessed to, proudly and a little shyly, as to that of the better time, that of*their* common, their quite faraway and antediluvian social period and order." Like Brydon's, Staverton's world seems a regressive one, opposing the "awful modern crush" at every crucial point. Her solitude, her quaintly anachronistic dusting of relics and trimming of lamps, and the arcane knowledge she shares with Brydon of their "ante-diluvian" past all suggest that Alice Staverton, like Brydon, is a genteel warrior against modernity.

Throughout "The Jolly Corner" the two properties Brydon owns—his high-rise apartment house and his family home—represent two conflicting sets of values in American culture, an aggressive commercial life versus one of high ideality and culture, and serve as two poles around which many of the other oppositions in the tale cluster. Brydon's two structures, that is, make concrete the essential contrast in "The Jolly Corner" between sentiment and traditional values, on the one hand, and industrialization and modernization in general on the other. George Santayana associated this split in American culture with what he termed the "genteel tradition" and he offers an architectural trope strikingly appropriate for "The Jolly Corner": "This division [industry versus culture] may be found symbolized in American architecture: a neat reproduction of the colonial mansion—with some modern comforts introduced surreptitiously—stands beside the skyscraper. The American Will inhabits the skyscraper; the American Intellect inhabits the colonial mansion. The one is the sphere of the American man; the other, at least predominantly, of the American woman. The one is all aggressive enterprise; the other is all genteel tradition." Santayana's image (roughly contemporary with James's tale) neatly coincides with the representation in the tale of modern New York as a world split between social transformation and aggressive enterprise on the one hand, and a realm of cultural and spiritual values on the other. Brydon's high-rise parallels Santayana's skyscraper, the jolly corner his colonial mansion.

A new constellation for the family emerged along with this perceived split in American culture. Many of the terms and contradictions associated with this domestic milieu inform the terms and contradictions represented in Alice Staverton's role in "The Jolly

Corner." The American family responded to the emerging urban, industrial order by more systematically defining itself as a humane and consoling alternative to the world of ruthless and mechanized enterprise. This localized split, however, played off society at large in two contradictory ways—assuming an arguably new identity as what Christopher Lasch refers to as a "haven in a heartless world," while at the same time mirroring the split in American culture with its own stereotyped division of labor. The Reverend Charles Burroughs articulated a version of this ideology in *An Address on Female Education, Delivered in Portsmouth, N. H., Oct. 26, 1827,* in which he communicated this vision to young women in his audience: "It is at home, where man . . . seeks a refuge from the vexations and embarrassments of business, an enchanting repose from exertion, a relaxation from care by the interchange of affection: where some of his finest sympathies, tastes, and moral and religious feelings are formed and nourished; —where is the treasury of pure disinterested love, such as is seldom found in . . . a selfish and calculating world." The emotional response to the putative hostility of this "selfish and calculating world" was the glorifi- cation of private life and of the family, which "represented the other side of the bourgeois perception of society as something alien, impersonal, remote, and abstract—a world from which pity and tenderness had fled in horror."

The woman's place in this domestic matrix was complicated by her being designated as the guardian— often the virtual embodiment—of the values associated with home and the family. The genderized terms of this ideological milieu permeate even technical and economic discourses of Victorian Anglo-American culture. According to the industrialist Peter Gaskell, "the moral influence of woman upon man's character and domestic happiness, is mainly attributable to her natural and instinctive habits. Her love, her tenderness, her affectionate solicitude for his comfort and enjoyment, her devotedness, her unwearying care, her maternal fondness, her conjugal attractions, exercise a most ennobling impression upon his nature, and do more towards making a good husband, a good father, and a useful citizen, than all the dogmas of political economy." Gaskell's explicit contrast of the domestic and maternal role played by women with "all the dogmas of political economy" provides a powerful analogue to James's vision of the ideological work of gender in late Victorian America; both imagine the realms of public and private life in tenuous opposition. According to Eli Zaretsky, in the nineteenth century, "the housewife emerged, alongside the proletarian—the two characteristic labourers of developed capitalistic society. Her tasks extended beyond the material labour of the family to include responsibility for the 'human values' which the family was thought to preserve: love, personal happiness, domestic felicity. . . . The split in society between 'personal feelings' and 'economic production' was integrated with the sexual division of labor. Women were identified with emotional life, men with the struggle for existence." Of course, "The Jolly Corner" is about neither housewives nor proletarians, but Gaskell's and Zaretsky's remarks nevertheless illuminate Alice Staverton's status in the world of "The Jolly Corner." Alice Staverton's role as guardian of human values takes the form of her quaint domesticity, her trimming of candles and polishing of lamps. It also appears in her urging Brydon to humanize the jolly corner by living in it and in her pillowing and cushioning him at the conclusion of the tale. Her role as emotional guardian is reinforced by her nearly clairvoyant reading of Brydon's feelings. She has

dreams in which Brydon's alter ego appears to her, suggesting the profundity of her capacity to understand and accept.

The imagery associated with Staverton (and with the jolly corner) also situates her within the context of genteel and sacred Victorian womanhood. Harriet Beecher Stowe, for example, articulated the sanctification of the American housewife in *The Minister's Wooing* (1859): "priestess, wife, and mother, there she ministers daily in holy works of peace, and by faith and prayer and love redeems from grossness and earthliness the common toils and wants of life." Magazine articles and other popular literary genres throughout the nineteenth century voiced related sentiments. As early as 1840, the *Ladies' Magazine* issued a typical panegyric on the virtues of the model woman: "See, she sits, she walks, she speaks, she looks—unutterable things! Inspiration springs up in her very paths—it follows her footsteps. A halo of glory envelops her, and illumines her whole orbit. With her, man not only feels safe but is actually renovated. For he approaches her with an awe, in reverence, and an affection which before he knew not he possessed." As Ann Douglas comments, the woman was "of value because she [was] able to work a religious transformation in man; she represents nothing finally but a state of susceptibility to very imprecisely conceived spiritual values." In a similar vein, Lasch argues that late-century husbands and wives escaped the dehumanizing "world of commerce and industry" by finding "solace and spiritual renewal in each other's company. The woman in particular would serve, in a well-worn nineteenth-century phrase, as an . . . angel of consolation." Of course, poetic work such as Coventry Patmore's *The Angel in the House* and Tennyson's *The Princess* provide literary representations of the sexual division of labor characteristic of mid and late nineteenthcentury Anglo-American culture as well as of the sacred aura imposed on women by male ideologues. As Carol Christ comments on these poems, "woman possesses a purity, a self-sufficiency, a wholeness, but man, for Tennyson as for Patmore, is disjointed, never at peace."

Such religious associations, in fact, characterize Alice Staverton's role throughout the tale. Brydon himself asserts her redemptive powers when, upon waking up in her lap, he refers to the "mystifying grace of her appearance" and when he asserts, "Yes—I can only have died. You brought me literally to life. . . . only, in the name of all benedictions, how?" Brydon's other spiritualized terms for Staverton's agency—virtue, charity, and beatitude— only confirm the divine role she plays for him.

At this point one might conclude that Staverton's role in "The Jolly Corner" is normative—that she represents trivialized genteel femininity and that the jolly corner and a "woman's sphere" are roughly synonymous zones. Staverton could be seen, then, as the angel of the jolly corner (a divine and consoling alternative to the beastly specter that confronts Brydon), as an agent of the love implicitly absent from the "chilled adolescence" of Brydon's childhood, or as a successful May Bartram who triumphs where her predecessor had failed. These interpretive options correspond roughly to the prevailing critical assessments of Staverton's role in the tale as a divine center of love, as an image of maternal care and affection, or as a sensitive auditor for Brydon's privileged anguish. But if critics of "The Jolly Corner" have responded to these significant narrative details, they have tended to abstract and/or mythicize them rather

than to situate them historically, and consequently they have simplified the very attitudes they attempt to elucidate.

Critical Essay #6

While Staverton does embody a suggestive array of traits definitive of the trivialized bourgeois matron, she also strains against those conventions in a manner that marks an important departure from an earlier mode and signals the emergence of a new strategy of feminine politics. It is important to note that the narrative moments situating her within the so-called cult of domesticity tend to be either remarks made by Brydon or perspectives mirroring *his* priorities—they are not remarks made by Staverton nor are they perspectives consistent with how we see her independently of Brydon's commentary. We can, then, profitably shift our focus to Staverton's own words and actions in order to fashion our understanding of her role in the tale.

Staverton is not simply a feminine version of the male protagonist in the tale—her differences from Brydon are many and significant. In one important respect, Staverton's status as a single woman in the turn-of-the-century United States distinguishes her, though such unmarried women tended to be regarded more as problems for a male economy than as successes as New Women. According to Lasch, a rising divorce rate and a falling birth rate among "better sorts" in late nineteenthcentury American cities constituted a national problem. While Theodore Roosevelt addressed the "prob lem" of sluggish birthrates among middle-class white women, medical science was tending to represent the unmarried woman as a significant health risk. According to Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg, "the maiden lady, many physicians argued, was fated to a greater incidence of both physical and emotional disease than her married sisters and to a shorter life-span. Her nervous system was placed under constant pressure, and her unfulfilled reproductive organs—especially at menopause— were prone to cancer and other degenerative ills." Apparently, single men were a hardier breed and immune to such internal disorders. We need, of course, to read such warnings as ideological prescription rather than "scientific" description; however, we can situate the supposed dangers Alice Staverton and other women like her were risking as a powerful challenge to Brydon's imagining himself in danger on a "big-game" hunt (a veiled allusion to Roosevelt's own "vigorous" pursuits?). Indicating that single women were perceived as a "problem" on the other side of the Atlantic, the manufacturer W. R. Greg complained of "an enormous and increasing number of single women in the nation, a number quite disproportionate and quite abnormal . . . who, not having the natural duties and labours of wives and mothers, have to carve out artificial and painfully sought occupations for themselves; who, in place of completing, sweetening, and embellishing the existence of others, are compelled to lead an independent and incomplete existence of their own." To this extent, women were, paradoxically, blamed for a perceived decline in birthrates and crisis in family (and, in England, class) stability even while they were pitied as victims of recent economic and industrial transformations. Staverton's ability to weather such ideological assaults on the viability of single womanhood is at least a partial indication of her ability to withstand potentially hostile trends in public opinion while adhering to her own image of her life. Staverton's apparent physical health in the midst of traumatic urban change is even noted by Brydon when he remarks that her physical appearance "de- fied you to say if she were a

fair young woman who looked older through trouble, or a fine smooth older one who looked young through successful indifference."

Staverton's strengths and inner resources as well as her adaptability to cultural and social transformation are represented directly in a variety of other ways. While distinctly "genteel" and refined (though, perhaps, embattled), she nonetheless operates actively within modern New York on its own terms. For example, she stands off from the modern crush when possible, but "she sallied forth and did battle when the challenge was really to 'spirit,'" and she rides the street cars and confronts "all the public concussions and ordeals." She admires both Brydon's skill in debating a construction company representative and the knowledge of building techniques he exhibits. Staverton again demonstrates a greater imaginative response to New York and to Brydon's potential when she suggests to Brydon that, had he only remained in New York, "he would have anticipated the inventor of the sky-scraper," words that eventually precipitate Brydon's search for the Other self he might have become. Staverton, we realize, is capable of articulating an alternative history for Brydon, one in which she understands the kind of aggressive enterprise, invention, and complicity in a new economic and urban order that Brydon feels is only monstrous and ugly.

She also demonstrates a bolder imagination by envisioning in her dreams the grizzled self Brydon might have become had he stayed in New York. Brydon, we recall, faints away at the hideous sight of this alter ego and rejects the possibility of that Other holding any significance for his life. As Staverton attempts to reeducate Brydon concerning the identity of his Other in the final moments of the tale, her question as to why she should not have liked the "black stranger"

brought Spencer Brydon to his feet. 'You "like" that horror—?"I *could* have liked him. And to me,' she said, 'he was no horror. I had accepted him.'"'Accepted"—?' Brydon oddly sounded.'Before, for the interest of his difference—yes. And as I did n't disown him, as I knew him—which you at last, confronted with him in his difference, so cruelly did n't, my dear—well, he must have been, you see, less dreadful to me.'

The important difference in this and other similar exchanges is that where Brydon polarizes his identity from that of his Other (and the jolly corner from his skyscraper), Staverton attempts to undo the imagined opposition between Brydon and the self he might have become. Both Staverton's recurring dreams of this grizzled figure and her explicit remarks about accepting him, then, suggest the extent to which she has confronted the competitive and potentially disarming forces of cultural and social transformation. Whereas Brydon rejects this vision, Staverton integrates it.

We can return to the architectural trope for Brydon's real estate for a final illustration of this point. Brydon, we remember, imagines an absolute split between the jolly corner and his soon-to-begentrified high rise. Staverton, however, challenges Brydon's distinction between the two worlds of the tale when she remarks to Brydon, as he is badgered by others to commercialize the jolly corner in addition to his apartments, "In short you're to make so good a thing out of your sky-scraper, living in luxury on *those* ill-gotten gains you can afford for a while to be sentimental here!" Staverton understands

that one needs to be able to *afford* to be sentimental. Rather than representing antithetical worlds, Brydon's two properties, in Staverton's vision, are mutually constitutive of a new urban formation in which the interrelationship of culture and economics is no longer veiled or deniable but made manifest. Whereas Brydon's vision is one of unresolved and antagonistic polarities, Staverton grasps and argues for the interpenetration of the two worlds of the tale. Any self-respecting "angel of the house" would almost certainly fear to tread this path toward a new urban, industrial order.

In *Disorderly Conduct,* Smith-Rosenberg provides a useful historical paradigm for Staverton's divergences from an earlier domestic model. During the 1870s and 1880s, Smith-Rosenberg notes, "a new bourgeois woman had emerged. Confident and independent, a self-created urban expert, she spearheaded bourgeois efforts to respond creatively to the new city and the new economy. In the process of working for herself and other women, she had begun to demand equality in education, in employment, and in wages. Certain of her own abilities, she began again to demand the vote, so as to implement her new social visions more effectively. In short, she had politicized gender." I do not intend to suggest that Alice Staverton fully embodies the traits Smith-Rosenberg attributes to this new female crusader or that she represents an unambiguous and stable image of women in turn-of-the-century United States. Staverton is in some respects too patient (she waits thirty some years for Brydon's return) and too passive (it is possible she imagines a union with Brydon as the fulfillment of her life). She does, nonetheless, represent in her actions as well as in her response to a new economic and social order some of the traits Smith-Rosenberg cites as definitive markers of this New Woman. Staverton also represents some of the historically specific options made available to women following the power and labor shortages brought on by the Civil War. Women entering public activity following the war acquired experience in techniques of industrial organization and political mobilization, and by so doing recognized not only their independence but their ability to effect social change as well.

This instrumental role is most significantly represented in Staverton's speech. Staverton's apparent lack of a decisive (or at least an unambiguous) voice may be the result of her being subordinated in a position so manifestly dictated by the male hegemony over mass culture. That we see her more than we hear her in the tale may suggest that Staverton counters the dominance both of men and of voice represented in "The Jolly Corner" with an array of tactics meant to preempt Brydon's own attempt to control the world through his own economic and political practice. Her problem is that Brydon simply does not comprehend any of her statements, even those of assurance, support, or acceptance, because they are articulated from a position alien to his own social, economic, and gendered perspective. However, while Staverton's direct role is limited to parts one and three of the tale, where she exists primarily as a discursive presence that confounds Brydon as much as her physical presence consoles him, she might also be understood as the precipitating agency in the narrative, motivating even the protracted and stylistically demanding account of Brydon's search for his Other in part two of "The Jolly Corner." For example, after she broaches the topic of what Brydon might have become had he only stayed at home, his growing obsession with his potential alter ego produces in him a defensiveness that makes him bristle and interpret

her assurances as challenges. Moreover, after she intimates that, though "quite huge and monstrous," Brydon's other self would not have been entirely contemptible, Brydon asks, "You'd have liked me that way?" to which his friend gently responds, "How should I not have liked you?" Entirely missing the implied reconciliation as well as the imaginative strength in Staverton's answer, Brydon wrongly concludes, "I see. You'd have liked me, have preferred me, a billionaire!" Staverton immediately counters—"How should I not have liked you?" but the point is lost on Brydon. He is incapable of comprehending the discourse of a feminine other.

"The Jolly Corner" concludes, however, with an embrace sealing Staverton's and Brydon's apparently shared understanding of Brydon's relationship with his Other, not with a further exacerbation of their linguistic difficulties:

Then, 'He has a million a year,' he lucidly added. 'But he hasn't you.''And he isn't— no, he isn't— *you* !' she murmured as he drew her to his breast.

Staverton's hesitation in this final sentence, along with her many remarks earlier in the tale suggesting that Brydon's identity is not so simply separated from that of his Other, points to the likelihood that, in these final lines, she may well be lying, agreeing with Brydon not because she actually shares his perception (we know, in fact, that she does not), but because she realizes that by corroborating Brydon's interpretation she accomplishes a significant transformation of his priorities and future.

Critical Essay #7

How do we account for what appears to be a lie, however, in the context of the representation in "The Jolly Corner" of genderized political struggle? We might refer to Marlow's lie to Kurtz's intended—a lie Marlow justifies as a strategy to protect the woman from a truth too dark for her to comprehend or bear. Staverton's prevarication would reverse the gender roles—here a woman protects an aging man from a truth too horrible for him to bear—but it also secures an emotional (and perhaps financial and political) victory for her. We might also turn to another late James work for significant intertextual resonance. Alice Staverton's subtle, yet authoritative and successful, verbal ministrations can be read as a later examination of what Maggie Verver accomplishes in *The Golden Bowl*. While very different in age, both Verver and Staverton operate in linguistically subtle and strategic ways to achieve and protect their vision of their lives and futures. Both do so by lying.

Elizabeth Allen's *A Woman's Place in the Novels of Henry James* is so synthetic and so compatible with my argument that I will briefly summarize her position on Maggie Verver in order to establish Verver's relationship with her successor, Alice Staverton. Central to James's representation of women is the struggle between their existing as *signs* for male interpretation and consumption and as *selves* capable either of themselves becoming interpreters of others or of mystifying (and thereby manipulating) the process whereby men transform women into grist for their masculinist interpretive mills. A woman's function in *The Golden Bowl,* according to Allen, is "to mediate experience for those [men] in control; to order either by representation, or by arranging existing appearances and making sense of them." Maggie Verver succeeds largely by virtue of her mastering the linguistic channels through which social (and domestic) reality is mediated and through her mastery over linguistic signs and the arrangements they are meant to signify, triumphing in controlling the delicate and, for women, potentially destructive dynamics of social *and* sexual intercourse. As Allen argues,

if Maggie is to preserve social form and take her place within it . . . she has to function in recognisable forms, speak understandable language. The fact that this involves lying and deceit reminds us of the selfassertion that is simultaneous within this process of repair and conservation. Maggie pretends to be a fool, she pretends to be an unchallenged and unchallenging wife. . . . Her selfhood is asserted through concealment, her signification is that of opacity and mystery and she gains, if not the intimacy of being, for another, herself, at least the attention of the Prince.

Allen's description of Maggie Verver's triumphant rearrangement of the domestic relations at the conclusion of *The Golden Bowl* touches on what I regard as Alice Staverton's similarly successful transformation of Brydon at the conclusion of "The Jolly Corner" in a number of ways. Both Maggie and Alice confront threats to their futures, and, after coming to understandings of these crises, both privately formulate strategies for combating them. Both deploy subtle verbal manipulations of the realities they share with the other characters—they articulate and promote versions of the past and present that insure that the future unfolds according to their terms. Finally, the strategies and

successes of both Maggie Verver and of Alice Staverton remain unknown to the men whose realities they were designed to disrupt. Completed just a few years after the publication of *The Golden Bowl,* "The Jolly Corner" can be read as James's projection of the verbal and genderized dynamics of his late novelistic work, replete with overt sexual and economic issues, into the work of his late tales, in which the characters' older ages and barely examined social and financial statuses seem to mystify, if not to suppress, explicit questions of sexual and financial power.

In addition to furthering James's analysis into discursive strategies available to women, Staverton's oblique approach to cornering Brydon has analogues in the political discourses of disenfranchised women in the nineteenth century. Speaking of the paradoxical position of middle-class women in nineteenth- century America, Ann Douglas notes that a woman's future quite literally depended "on the willingness and ability of her male peers, increasingly absorbed in the tasks of settlement and compe tition, to recognize the values which their activity apparently denied." Although women played active roles in political and social undertakings such as anti-war pacifism and temperance movements, Douglas reminds us that "women were more likely . . . to evince their concern by less direct and conspicuous means." For example, Harriet Farley, one of the editors of the *Lowell Offering,* advocated "picniques" over strikes as an appropriate vehicle for feminine protest against factory conditions. By way of rationalizing so delicate and arguably ineffective a strategy, Farley explained, "To convince people, we must gain access to them: to do this we cannot assault them with opinions contrary to their own. We cannot harm them by revealing the deprivation which could suggest our rage and their danger. We must sugarcoat the proverbial pill. . . . we must 'do good by stealth.'" Alice Staverton succeeds at winning Brydon to her point of view by precisely such nonconfrontational means.

If we read (as critics have tended to read) Alice Staverton's circumvention of direct confrontation ahistorically, her goals might appear simply regressive and domestic, and her apparent complicity in enabling Brydon to reject the significance of his Other could be read as a lie that caters to Brydon's vision. However, by historicizing the complex representation of social and sexual struggle in the tale, we can also discern within this moment Alice Staverton's own deployment of the subtle political action that Farley advocates, suggested in the "way her hands clasped and locked his head," in her face staying "clingingly close" to Brydon's, in her assertion "And now I keep you," and, finally, in the likelihood that she has transformed Brydon, has "won" him to her vision of his past and their future. Alice Staverton gently, though effectively, closes off Brydon's private search for his true self and opens him up to her ministrations, which, in sharp contrast to those of an "angel in the house," will escape domestic containment and extend into the realm of social and political organization. And, like Maggie Verver's "lies" in *The Golden Bowl*, Staverton's "lie" (as well as her clasping and locking Brydon's head) can also be regarded as thoroughly conscious, an exercise of women's historically specific political praxis calculated to generate a new social arrangement.

Ann Douglas argues that the mission of the heroine in women's historical novels in the nineteenth century "is to free the hero from history: she rescues him paradoxically from the historical novel, which she transmutes into a domestic tale." "The Jolly Corner"

begins in a complex historical world filled with the material facts of newly modernized and internally divided America and with Spencer Brydon's struggle to grasp his place in so contradictory a world. The tale ends with Staverton and Brydon falling into each others' arms, repudiating (or at least tabling) the potentially disruptive social significance of Brydon's Other, while possibly ushering in a newly feminized social order. Brydon's willingly accepting her agency in his life offers a fitting conclusion to the tale—Staverton has Brydon cornered, as it were, in the jolly corner.

This political struggle also registers in the generic flux of the tale. Section one of "The Jolly Corner" reads nearly like Howellsian realism, replete with amply documented urban landscapes, homely architectural detail, and an account of the characters' lives amidst a volatile urban scene. Section three, on the other hand, reads more like domestic romance, but romance with a political difference. Whatever emotional energies the final pages represent are framed within Staverton's subtly politicized operations within modern New York. It is not, then, completely accurate to argue that Staverton rescues Brydon from the historical narrative (as Douglas's model might suggest). More to the point, Staverton's words and actions initiate Brydon into a different historical experience, one that generates the generic transformations within James's tale. In this respect, Staverton's "lie" is not a sacrifice of the "truth" of Brydon's condition as much as it is a recasting of the very grounds of truth in an emerging urban order in which women are no longer subordinate figures.

Critical Essay #8

How does one account for the contradictions characterizing Staverton's role in "The Jolly Corner"? One might recall that the tropes situating her as the angel of the jolly corner are Brydon's, or at least come from a narrative voice representing Brydon's perspective, and that another view of Staverton emerges once we focus on *her* words and actions expressed in relatively uncontaminated narrative commentary. I have argued that the array of differences in James's text can be approached from the perspective of gender analysis and sexual politics. However, we might also note that Brydon's perspective corresponds not only to a male definition of a woman's role but to an earlier historical era as well, dating roughly from the time of his leaving the United States for Europe, even before that. Staverton's "disorderly conduct" happens to corre spond more closely with an image of women's power and priorities roughly coincidental with the narrative present of the tale. Brydon represents his friend, then, in largely anachronistic terms. Staverton, despite some arguably arcane habits, presents herself in a grammar (of actions and words) both more contemporary and more complex. In terms of James's narrative, this difference points to the important implications of Brydon's and Staverton's respective histories. Brydon, absent from the United States for over thirty years, returns with outdated notions of cultural and social forces, of the urban landscape as well as of women's place. Like Julian West in Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward,* Brydon confronts the present with the vocabulary of the past. Staverton, presumably as a result of her remaining in New York, embodies a variety of progressive skills and strategies. Like many a character in Howells or Dreiser, indeed, like many a realist author, Staverton is energized by the pulse of an active and changing American urban reality. In other words, James's text lies on the margins of the genre of naturalism, suggesting a close and crucial connection between one's material and historical conditions and one's ideological assumptions and conduct.

To shift briefly to a different vocabulary, Brydon's perspective corresponds roughly to what Raymond Williams terms "residual," while Staverton represents Williams's notion of "emergent" cultural forces. For Williams, any dominant cultural formation is characterized by "internal dynamic relations" and contains elements both residual of earlier forms and emergent of transformations to come. The "residual" means, in Williams's lexicon, practices and structures of feeling formed in the past but "still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present." The emergent, on the other hand, marks "new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship [that] are continually being created," usually in "relation to the emergence and growing strength of a class." The differences inscribed within "The Jolly Corner" between Brydon and Staverton as well as between Brydon's view of Staverton and her own serf-presentation suggest a dynamic of cultural and genderized struggle analogous to that which Williams argues characterizes any cultural moment.

Two recent feminist perspectives corroborate Williams's vision. Amidst the fluidity of late nineteenth- century America, Elizabeth Allen notes, "one might expect to find change, even progress, in the role and status of women. What one does find is a confusing mix

of old and new ideology, of women as somehow more than anything the example of the new nation with new freedoms, and yet at the same time more than anything the constant amidst flux, the paragon of perennial domesticity and, again, social relations." Mary Poovey offers a compatible reading of such "uneven developments" when she argues that the ideological formation of mid-Victorian England "was uneven both in the sense of being experienced differently by individuals who were positioned differently within the social formation (by sex, class, or race, for example) and in the sense of being articulated differently by the different institutions, discourses, and practices that it both constituted and was constituted by." Poovey's work also provides important insight into the difficulty of identifying the roles that women played in the emergence of feminist politics when she addresses the likelihood that women working out of the public view and "behind the scenes," as it were, were often as important as more public spokeswomen for women's rights Such is, in fact, the cultural fluidity and historical stutter represented by Alice Staverton's role.

Alice Staverton's differences from earlier historical and literary representations of women's ideas and practices, then, can be read as marking the emergence of a new set of strategies and options for women. That those options are not yet consolidated in James's text but exist in solution with an earlier, anachronistic view of Staverton suggests the troubled history of any new area of political practice. In fact, "The Jolly Corner" reinscribes similar fissures of these modern social and historical upheavals within the contradictory social, material, and architectural tropes. Nothing exists simply or selfidentically in the world of "The Jolly Corner."

It is not my intent to define James as either an incipient proletarian or feminist novelist, only to suggest that his relationship to matters of social change and to women's issues are, at least in his fiction, more complicated than many critics grant. Consider Terry Eagleton in a definition of James's reactionary political significance. James's work, Eagleton asserts, "represents a desperate, devoted attempt to salvage organic significance wholly in the sealed realm of conciousness— to vanquish, by the power of such 'beautiful,' multiple yet harmoniously unifying awareness, certain real conflicts and divisions." I would comment only briefly that "The Jolly Corner." represents nothing if not the omnipresence of conflicts, divisions, and contradictions.

Patricia Stubbs offers the following view on James's attitude toward women in his fiction: "In James we meet pure ideology and an anti-feminism so subtle and fused so completely with the form and texture of the novels that it can be overlooked altogether. His hostility operates at such a sophisticated level, and enters so closely into the fabric of his thought that it becomes all pervasive yet invisible." Stubbs also defines three general points about women in James's fiction: (1) that they are put in impossible situations, (2) that they invariably fail, and (3) that they are "scared of sex" and that they "tie themselves into knots of inhibition and selfconsciousness at anything resembling a sexual encounter." At least in her winning some kind of victory and in her aggressive sexual overtures at the end of the story, Alice Staverton reverses each of these general truths.

Aside from a new perspective on one woman's role within one late tale, a historicized approach to "The Jolly Corner." offers a challenge to these and other critical commonplaces about James and perhaps about other writers too quickly perceived as "reactionary," "sexist," or aloof from immediate social/cultural concerns. This is not to say, of course, that no such reactionary or sexist writers exist. However, I would suggest that, in literary texts, the difference between the uncritical expression or endorsement of a prevailing ideology and an immanent critique of such positions may be more vexed than we often grant.

Source: Russell J. Reising, "'Doing Good by Stealth': Alice Staverton and Women's Politics in 'The Jolly Corner,'" in *The Henry James Review,* Vol. 13, No. 1, Winter, 1992, pp. 50-66.

Critical Essay #9

In the following essay, Bier shows how Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe provided a model and an "anti-model," respectively, for "The Jolly Corner."

We know how much James admired and identified himself with Hawthorne. He not only wrote the first extended critical study of Hawthorne but manifestly used him as a model for his own work: the general moral orientation, including Hawthorne's concept of the Unpardonable Sin of human manipulation; the cool cerebral style and distancing technique; the careful effects of subtlety and ambiguity; and the famous disenchantment, exemplary and then strategic for James, with the impoverished and sometimes repelling American scene.

But if James's conscious literary and psychological model was Hawthorne, he had also an antimodel or alter ego, and that was Hawthorne's opposite number, Poe. It was Poe, that is, in all his intensity and intermittent power, but whose qualities were always purchased at the cost of sensationalism and no little vulgarity, his allegories more personal and neurotic than universal, his very style a constant first-person extortion of emotion, and his chief effects not simply unelevated but meretricious. Nonetheless, in the following generation one could not practice the Gothic mode, the ghost story in particular, without having Poe in the back of one's mind—without forcefully remembering the crass and, as it were, more native American performance, the overt and even potboiling alternative to Hawthorne.

The very outline of "The Jolly Corner" suggests James's striving for a delicate amalgam of his two predecessors. At fifty-six years of age, Spencer Brydon, after living abroad as a dilettante for thirtythree years, returns to New York City. He picks up his American life in two ways, entreprenurially as an apartment-house builder on one of his two city properties and romantically as friend and platonic lover of Alice Staverton. In the course of his return, he senses and eventually confronts a ghost in the unreconstructed property, his family mansion. This presence is his horrific American alter ego, the money-minded, power-driven, ravaged doer and builder that the intervening years would have made dominant had he stayed home. Their mutual confrontation, together with Spencer Brydon's open love affair with Alice Staverton at the end, and his attempted reintegration of personalities form the substance and climactic action of the story.

One of the two principal sites to which the patently autobiographic hero periodically returns is Miss Staverton's house on Irving Place: the one sure and sedate resting place in New York and America's landscape, named pointedly after our first renowned tale-teller. Aside from James's literary imagery when locating the address for us—on New York's "vast ledger-page, overgrown, fantastic, or ruled and criss-crossed lines"—the refuge is an "antediluvian" harbor from the "public concus sions and ordeals" of New York and America: it is a place indeed which Rip Van Winkle, himself an early psycho-allegorical exile and prototype, would have appreciated and sought out. For the rest of the story, after this generic signal, James adumbrates Hawthorne and Poe as his

immediate models as he also shifts contextually to an architectural motif, using literature's sister art for his purpose of a continuous underlying fable.

If he had but stayed at home he would have anticipated the inventor of the sky-scraper. If he had but stayed at home he would have discovered his genius in time to really start some new variety of awful architectural hare and run it till it burrowed in a gold mine. He was to remember these words while the weeks elapsed. . . .

Certain correspondences of "The Jolly Corner" to James's own career and psychology are quite recognizable. Like his protagonist, James also had left his country for over twenty years. And indeed his return home is memorialized by "The Jolly Corner," drafted just after and possibly even during his American sojourn. The tale itself is rife with autobiographic correlations—

He found all things come back to the question of what he personally might have been, how he might have led his life and "turned out," if he had not so, at the outset, given it up." . . . a strange *alter ego* deep down somewhere within me . . . blighted . . . for once and for ever."

—including sallies that come as close as they can to explicit familial and personal wishes and fears, revealing his innermost life:

. . . since his parents and his favourite sister, to say nothing of other kin, in numbers, had run their course and met their end there.. . . And confessing for the first time to the intensity within him of this absurd speculation [of how he would have "turned out"] . . . he affirmed the impotence there of any other source of interest, any other native appeal.

If we keep in mind James's deep-seated problems of sex and potency, without necessarily even going as far as orthodox Freudian views, then his full resemblance to a hero fighting for a passionate as well as esthetical reintegration of himself is strong.

The one undeniable virtue of Poe that James wished to incorporate in himself was, in fact, his alter ego's potent force. And nowhere else does he succeed better in power and immediacy, neither in the celebrated "The Beast in the Jungle" nor in "The Turn of the Screw."

. . . the stranger, whoever he might be, evil, odious, blatant, vulgar, had advanced as for aggression, and he knew himself give ground. Then harder pressed still, sick with the force of his shock, and falling back as under the hot breath and the roused passion of a life larger than his own, a rage of personality before which his own collapsed, he felt the whole vision turn to darkness and his very feet give way.

Yet the Poe-like side of the author-hero capable at last of such impact was nonetheless derived from a real and vulgar Poe. Is it not this Poe—reciting "The Raven" constantly at social gatherings, a progressively corrupted and lionized model—who is stigmatized as having lost his two right-hand writing fingers, "which were reduced to stumps." This was the man mutilated by vulgar American sensationalism and self-exploitation, spending too much of himself for even his qualified success or notoriety.

It seems to me that at the penultimate moment of Spencer Brydon's full view of the alter ego, James resorts to the most obvious Poetics possible in order to give us an incontrovertible sign.

He saw, in its great grey glimmering margin, the central vagueness diminish. . . . It gloomed, it loomed, it was something, it was somebody, the prodigy of a personal presence.

This is alliterative and assonantal signaling worthy of, and plucked from, Poe himself.

But the mediating ego, the chosen self and conscious artistic model, remained Hawthorne. Probably Hawthorne's most useful distinction from Poe was the combination of style and third person point of view that provided James both the distance and control he wanted. For such effect he went on taking the risks of overqualification and spun-out syntax:

. . . if he had formed, for his consolation, that habit, it was really not a little because of the charm of his having encountered and recognised, in the vast wilderness of the wholesale, breaking through the mere gross generalisation of wealth and force and success, a small still scene where items and shades, all delicate things, kept the sharpness of the notes of a high voice perfectly trained, and where economy hung about like the scent of a garden.

The highly wrought and frequently inactive expression especially suited James's subject in "The Jolly Corner." It also matched his protagonist up until the very conclusion, according perfectly with a hypersophisticated Europeanized involuteness, as rendered in prepositional hesitancy:

He nursed that sentiment, as the question stood, a little in vain, and even—at the end of he scarce knew, once more, how long—found it, as by the action on his mind of the failure of response of the outer world, sinking back to vague anguish.

The devitalized effete, a reproduction of so many Hawthornean exempla of negativity and waste, might think or at least feel very much like this. Furthermore, beyond syntactical effects of a style for once not so purely dysfunctional, James sought greater distance by using abrupt and somewhat surprising narrative obtrusions.

There came to him, as I say—but determined by an influence beyond my notation! —the acuteness of this certainty. . . .When I say he "jumped" at it I feel the consonance of this term with the fact that—at the end indeed of I know not how long—he did move again, he crossed straight to the door.

Such instances represent forced Hawthornean perspective—ironically the "I" of Poe converted to cool third person intervention and auctorial control. It is a technique designed to save James from egotistic display, from that temptation of spending the private self in the intimate vulgar paroxysm of hysteria that Poe committed with regular and helpless abandon.

Might not James hold to his conscious model while he moved closer than ever to his alter ego, having the best of both in one venturesome Gothic tale and supreme psychoesthetic experiment? For one thing, he might forego the woodenness of Hawthornean allegory for the more direct symbolic imbroglio of Poe. But if power enhances subtlety, the reverse is also true, a fine subtlety of artistic complication restrains power; in the resolution of "The Jolly Corner" surrogate Hawthorne is vindicant over doppelgänger Poe. Indeed the superlative central effect of the story is the responsive terror experienced by the alter ego in confronting the protagonist!

It made him feel, this acquired faculty, like some monstrous stealthy cat; he wondered if he would have glared at these moments with large shining yellow eyes, and what it mightn't verily be, for the poor hardpressed *alter ego,* to be confronted with such a type.

The extra subtlety of this brilliant complication is that the quality that the power-driven American alter ego would fear most (as *his* unknown, or as *his* missed life) would be, precisely, the unpuritanic dilettantism and spectatorship that the distancing and repudiative hero, more alien, therefore, than exile, would represent.

In any event, such a conjunction of artistic forces could happily produce both power and subtlety, directness married to complexity. Some years ago Martha Banta glimpsed the possibilities of "a new Gothicism" available to James in this literary fusion, although she left particularization to later investigators. But, indeed, for "The Jolly Corner" as for its closest analogue in our literature, Melville's "Bartleby," there is something even more compelling than this technical fusion of a new Gothicism or the cunning substratum of a writer's fable, something lower layered yet and more profound and generalizable.

What James's title, "The Jolly *Corner,*" tells us is that the protagonist seeks an ideal intersection of possibilities that are otherwise running to different directions. At a certain nexus might one not join high sensibility to an equal and opposite potency? Familiar name symbolism in James is helpful in this regard. The hero, Spencer Brydon, has spent himself but, as Bride-on, he hopes for an assumption of force, with its sexual component, at last; and Miss Staverton will provide his support.

In another sense, James's chief task is to differentiate between vulgarity and power on the one side, as he will also between effeteness and genuine sensibility on the other. He seeks a certain stasis, or means between extremes. To this end, the spectral American is portrayed, first and foremost, as the crass extremist, the success-ridden, money-oriented self, quite opposed to the conscious ego:

. . . my perversity, . . . my refusal to agree to a "deal"—is just in the total absence of a reason. Don't you see that if I had a reason about the matter at all it would *have* to be the other way; and would then be inevitably a reason of dollars? There are no reasons here *but* of dollars. Let us therefore have none whatever— not the ghost of one.

The alter ego is the gross American type responsible for native architecture in all its dark threatening grandeur and nihilism: "Great builded voids . . . in the heart of cities . . . this large collective negation. . . ." Still, even it the entrepreneurial sordid alter ego is at

last a figure of ravagement and repulsion— "evil, odious, blatant, vulgar"—he has also been active, potently engaged—with a "roused passion of a life larger than . . . [Brydon's] own, a rage of personality before which his own collapsed." He therefore represents the positivity, the sexual and social force, and even identity that might yet be separated out and seized from a congeries of materialistic, meaningless, and destructful values implicit in the whole vulgar nightmare of American life.

On the other side is the complex of effete hedonism and true sensibility from which the right set of saving qualities must also be struck, as the hero comes into his own. His climactic self-possession is linked especially to love and, before everything else, it is the quality of that love which must develop in some pronounced way. As things stand most of the time in "The Jolly Corner," the unspoken love between Brydon and Miss Staverton is not only undeclared but is perilously close to unacknowledged. Their conversation shows a fastidious and faltering delicacy, a sort of highly mannered flirtatious inexpression; its indirections signal real retreats and cancellations:

" . . . these thirty years, a selfish frivolous scandalous life. And you see what it has made of me."She just waited, smiling at him. "You see what it has made of *me*.""Oh you're a person whom nothing can have altered. . . ." But he pulled up for the strange pang."The great thing to see," she presently said, "seems to me to be that it has spoiled nothing. It hasn't spoiled your being here at last. It hasn't spoiled this. It hasn't spoiled your speaking—" She also however faltered.He wondered at everything her controlled emotion might mean.and:Their eyes met for a minute while he guessed from something in hers that she divined his strange sense. But neither of them otherwise expressed it. . . . What she said however was unexpected. "Well, *I've* seen him.""You—?""I've seen him in a dream.""Oh a 'dream'—!" It let him down."But twice over," she continued. "I saw him as I see you now.""You've dreamed the same dream—?""Twice over," she repeated. "The very same."This did somehow a little speak to him, as it also gratified him. "You. dream about me at that rate?""Ah about *him*!"she smiled.

Mainly, of course, it is Brydon who continues so self-absorbed that he hardly knows there is any kind of love to be acknowledged, much less spoken. Alice Staverton cannot help her own breach of all etiquette at one point when she declares: "Oh . . . you don't care for anything but yourself."

Actually, the career Brydon admits to having led during his expatriate mid-life, a "selfish" and "scandalous" life, was in reality only a miniscandal of self-pampering. We glimpse a long jejune career of self-involved pleasure, profoundly frivolous in its onanistic containments. It is no wonder, then, that the climax of present circumstances represents a crisis both of love and true action for Brydon, who is returning home from a long past of protracted and virtually total psychic impotence.

Oh to have this consciousness was to *think*—and to think, Brydon knew, as he stood there, was, with the lapsing moments, not to have acted!

His shame, his "deep abjection," has been his escapism not only there in the corner house but throughout his life. His meeting the alter ego therefore becomes an act of

such suspenseful self-transcendence and transformation that it renders the ghost story per se the least tense element of the plot.

What the Hawthornean protagonist must do is acknowledge and overcome the practiced dispassionateness that has become lovelessness, the putative hedonism that has degenerated to inertness, the effete refinement that has become reflexive cowardice. At the same time this surrogate hero must salvage what remains worthwhile in the duplicitous ego, like the residual sensibility that makes Brydon and James recoil from American ugliness and voids. The newly discovered virtue that allows him this reconstructive and salvaging process and that authorizes vital manhood now is, finally, raw courage. It may even be the hunter's courage that is crucial. Indeed, toward the very end of "The Jolly Corner" Brydon, the same man who has been a quondam expatriate sportsman but never a real hunter, cries aptly, "There's somebody—an awful beast, whom I brought, too horribly, to bay." In doing so, he finally loses his own worst attributes and lays courageous claim to his integrated psyche— and woman.

And so, in its furthest recesses, the story is a profound psychological romance. It is a tale of death and love, in that order, since the hero must somehow die before coming to new life and emotion. "Yes," Brydon himself says, "I can only have died—" although he attributes too much of his revival to Alice Staverton's presence when he comes to, as if she had actively brought him back rather than simply presided at his rebirth: "You brought me literally to life."

In actuality the whole story has been a cominginto- being and, in the process, a recapitulation of the hero's past. Therefore the recapitulatory effects of children's games throughout: the "playing at hideand- seek" with the ghostly alter ego through all the rooms and corridors of the old family house, the marble floor squares of past hopscotch games fast becoming the ground of a more deadly present game, etc.

But the recapitulatory process is pushed back further yet. At Brydon's coming to, after his swooning confrontation with the ghost, James makes much of the scenic tableau—an infantile Brydon lying in Alice Staverton's "ample" lap, her madonna's face "bending . . . directly over him"—a necessary psychic as well as artistic or religious image. Stretched on the morguelike stairs of cold "blackand- white slabs," Spencer Brydon dies to a missed adult life but revives in this place "of his youth"; in his "rich return of consciousness" he experiences significantly "the most wonderful hour he had ever known," in a quick obvious resumption of birth and a deliciously "abysmally passive" infancy. The psyche has undergone the fullest regression before the man can truly claim himself. At this time, of course, undeclared romance finally becomes acknowledged, active love— "It took but an instant to bend her face and kiss him"—coincident with Brydon's courageous self-confrontation. Our only objection is, indeed, to the sentimental prolonging of the scene with which the story ends just before Brydon symbolically gets to his feet. During the extended tableau and interview the infantile and maternal motifs are a trifle too exquisite and embarrassing for modern taste:

"Oh keep me, keep me!" he pleaded while her face still hung over him. . . .

But Brydon does progressively rise in physical and symbolic self-accomplishment.

At this Brydon raised himself . . . sat up, steadying himself beside her there. . . ."Ah I've come to myself now. . . ."

It is still hard for him to appreciate all that has happened. But Alice Staverton does not fail him at the end.

" . . . So why," she strangely smiled, "shouldn't I like him?"It brought Spencer Brydon to his feet. "You 'like' that horror—?""I *could* have liked him. And to me," she said, "he was no horror. I had accepted him."

Led to welcome and accept his own vitality, he enters upon a new personal integration of alter ego and ego. In a manly synthesis of complementary qualities left over from the wrong extremes in himself, he achieves love between lust and discretion. Appropriately, it is Brydon and not Alice Staverton who has not exactly the last word but the last gesture.

"And he isn't—no, he isn't—*you*!" she murmured as he drew her to his breast.

James's deepest wish was, on the one side, for power without vulgarity and, on the other, delicacy without death. He wanted profoundly to match force and form; to blend potency, rightfully gained after an expended courage, with subtlety and sensibility. His hero now begins to reconstruct his life as he will remodel the family house, without extreme idealizations one way or the other but maintaining his esthetic sense. Thus, Spencer Brydon wakes up to several blisses, but the primary one is "the beauty of his state."

The trouble is that the Hawthornean side remains dominant, quite overbalancing the other. The hero is, penultimately at least, too prostrated by his experience to convince us of synthesis. That is because, in my opinion, James *was* afraid of the psychological value as well as artistic power of Poe. The alter ego is not truly, finally integrated with the ego. We are certainly meant to infer so symbolically and structurally, but it is not, strictly speaking, accomplished for us. In fact there is still, after all, a kind of repudiation at the end; the alter ego has been faced and even recognized, but not absorbed:

" . . . he isn't—no, he isn't—*you*!"

Still, wasn't the attempt singularly worth it? I believe so. And for these lower layered themes James's predecessors, Hawthorne and Poe, provided the exact model and anti-model. They gave him, in particular, the means that would mute and yet reveal the deeper psychodrama he wished to suggest even more compellingly than the writer's fable with which he started.

Source: Jesse Bier, "Henry James's 'The Jolly Corner': The Writer's Fable and the Deeper Matter," in *Arizona Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 1979, pp. 321-34.

Adaptations

The Jolly Corner was made into a short movie in 1977. It was directed by Arthur Barron and starred Salome Jens as Spencer Brydon. The video is distributed by Monterry Home Video.

Topics for Further Study

Spencer Brydon's explorations of his childhood home are characterized by their ritual nature: he hires Mrs. Muldoon to come at an appointed hour in order to keep the house clean for his nightly visit, and he maintains a supply of candles in a drawer so that he can light his way at night. Until he faints, he is careful to cover his tracks by shutting the window shutters and returning to the hotel at a decent hour. Why all the secrecy? What do Spencer's preparations mean? What is he hiding?

Alice Staverton is an enigmatic figure in the story. Consider Alice's behavior. Do her comments to Spencer have more than one meaning? As a reader, what additional information is needed about Alice's character? Does she adhere to the normal expectations of a woman in 1908?

Describing his midnight walks, Spencer uses metaphors that cast him as a big game hunter and a knight holding his sword aloft. Why does Spencer choose these metaphors? What does this say about his state of mind?

Compare and Contrast

1908 Between the years 1860 and 1914 New York's population increases from 850,000 to more than four million people. In 1910, the population of New York City is 4,766,9000; the population of Manhattan is reported as 2,331,000 people.

Today: According to the United States Census Bureau, the population of New York City is 7.3 million. The 1990 census reported a population for Manhattan of 1,487,500.

1910 Women comprise 21% of the workforce. Approximately 25% of working women are married.

Today: Women make up approximately 45% of the workforce; almost 60% of working women are married.

1910 Only 8% of households have electric service.

Today: Nearly all homes have electric service.

1900 Life expectancy for women is 48.3 years. For men, the figure is estimated at 46.3 years.

Today: Approximate average life expectancy for women is 78 years of age and men 74 years.

What Do I Read Next?

Published in 1887, *The American* is James's third novel. The protagonist, Christopher Newman, is a brash, young American businessman. He travels in Europe, learning about art and European culture. Newman and Spencer offer a fascinating contrast.

James's "In the Cage" is a short story published in 1898. It chronicles the life of an English, working-class woman who works in a telegraph booth. She reads the messages of her upper-class clientele, obsessed by their correspondence and personal intrigues.

The novels *The House of Mirth* (1905) and *The Age of Innocence* (1921), written by Edith Wharton, focus on the lives of upper-class American families in the Gilded Age.

The Souls of Black Folk, a collection of essays by W. E. B. Dubois, cuts to the heart of social conflict in the early twentieth century. Published in 1904, the essays record his impressions of living in the North and in the South as an African-American.

Published in 1910, *Twenty Years at Hull-House* by Jane Addams documents the poverty and exploitation of immigrants settling in the major cities of the United States.

Further Study

Edel, Leon, ed. *Henry James: Selected Correspondence,* Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987, 446 p.

These letters provide insight into James's philosophies and concerns.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Short Stories for Students (SSfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, SSfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of SSfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of SSfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in SSfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by SSfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

SSfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Short Stories for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Short Stories for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Short Stories for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from SSfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from SSfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Short Stories for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Short Stories for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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