

Framing the Supernatural: Henry James and F. Marion Crawford

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INTRODUCTION

Although Francis Marion Crawford (1854–1909) has not been a prominent figure in recent American literary history, in his own time he was considered a strong rival of Henry James.¹ Actually, as a writer, Crawford surpassed James in terms of sales and popularity.² Both James and Crawford devoted significant attention to two genres of fiction—tales with “international” settings and stories of the “supernatural.”

Between them, the two authors created various kinds of ghost stories. They addressed similar themes and motifs, such as revenge, vampirism, ghostly encounters, and the uncertainty of the being of the ghosts, but they treated such subjects in different ways. Curiously, both authors often used the frame device. While the frame device is surely employed in other ghostly stories,³ the frequency of the device in these two authors’ works makes one wonder why they repeatedly used such a device and what it represents. This paper will, then, consider the function and meaning of this device by comparing these two authors’ major supernatural stories. Two pairs of stories with different themes will be discussed. One pair, “The Friends of the Friends” (James) and “For the Blood is the Life” (Crawford), deals with supernatural love—the love between a vampire

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and a human being. The other pair, “The Turn of the Screw” (James) and “The Upper Berth” (Crawford), depicts visitations by ghosts.

These stories subtly raise diverse gender-related issues, such as female sexuality, female subjectivity, and masculinity. As the narrative structure of each of these stories is inextricably intertwined with its contents, my textual analysis will focus on gender as well as on the frame device. Within the vast Jamesian scholarship, studies comparing him with popular authors certainly exist. Nevertheless, only a few scholars have studied the relations between James and Crawford.⁴ Such a comparison can be expected to shed new light—not only on the reading of classic supernatural texts, but also on a dusky corner of American literary scholarship.

I SUPERNATURAL LOVE

The vampire is one of most important elements in the gothic tradition. Both James and Crawford use vampires in their works. However, while Crawford takes advantage of the conventional vampire image in “For the Blood is the Life,” James invents an original version of “psychic vampirism”⁵ in “The Friends of the Friends.” Both stories delineate a love between a female vampire and a human man, love being defined here as the emotional urge to seek compassion and understanding, which often appears as eros. Its mode is not limited to “normal” heterosexuality with reproduction as its main purpose. The stories take the form of a framed narrative; the frame introduces the inside story, while the inset offers the love episode.

“The Friends of the Friends” (1896)⁶ therefore consists of two parts: the frame and the inside story, which takes the form of a lady’s unpublished journal. In the frame story, the male narrator introduces the existence of a fascinating but unpublizable journal. The lady’s journal is then presented as is, without any interference from the male narrator/frame. The lady’s diary reveals her traumatic experience of losing her fiancé to a female friend. The extraordinary dimension of her experience is that her fiancé and her friend (all the characters are nameless) share a unique ability: both can communicate with the dead. The friend is widowed and dies in the middle of the story, but she then appears to the fiancé, as a psychic vampire. This leads to the cancellation of the couple’s engagement and eventually the man’s premature death.

In his “For the Blood is the Life” (1905) Crawford presents two characters—a nameless first-person narrator and his painter friend, Holger—in the introductory frame. They chat about a mysterious grave observable from the top of a historic tower in southern Italy. After Holger’s actual visit to the grave, the narrator tells him an anecdote about the grave’s history, smoothly shifting to the inside story. This inset tells how a young man, Angelo, becomes possessed by a dead gypsy girl, Cristina, who comes back to life as a vampire. After the exorcism scene, the narrative moves back to the frame, in which the narrator and Holger muse over the fate of the vampire.

Both stories thus treat supernatural phenomena. The credibility of each depends heavily on the narration. As T. J. Lustig suggests, the introductory frame device is usually employed to make the main narrative ambiguous “by drawing attention to its unverifiability.”⁷ This is certainly true of “The Friends of the Friends.” The male narrator tells his friend that he hesitates to publish the journal because the action might be judged “indiscreet” by the world.⁸ Besides, even though the frame suggests the lady’s original intention to publicize her account (considering the anonymity of those involved), the subjective nature of the document (a private diary) itself calls into question the reliability of the narrative.

Furthermore, a careful reading of the inside text makes its real-world readers wonder if the female narrator suffers from paranoia, being so very jealous of the possible union of the two friends with a similar “peculiar power” (361). This is reinforced by the fiancé’s rejection of her suspicion that he is unfaithful to her as groundless. He even considers this fear “a mystery of [her] producing” and “a puzzle of [her] consciousness, not of his” (358). There is no third person to confirm the lady’s account, either. With such a doubtful inside narration, then, the frame doubly works to undercut the reliability of the account of the supernatural.

On the other hand, the function of the frame in “For the Blood is the Life” seems to be to support the vampiric legend, though it does indeed make the inside story ambiguous. The first frame introduces a character who repeats the uncanny experience of Crawford’s nameless narrator. Like the narrator, Holger also notices “the outline of the body” on top of the grave so long as any moonlight shines upon it.⁹ When he visits the grave, he finds nothing, but still he is convinced that something is behind him. Then, the owl-like cry of the “Thing” is heard. This experience

mirrors the narrator's earlier experience. Furthermore, in the text, the narrator's description of Holger as a painter with keen eyesight attests that what the narrator has seen is not an illusion.

In the mid-frame, an interlude that marks a slight difference from James' story, Crawford describes an exchange between the two men, but he adds a touch of the supernatural to the realistic mode of narrative. That is, Crawford has the narrator mention the "Thing" in the light of the high moon—"the outline of the Thing on the mound was clearer to our eyes than before" (176–77).

In the last frame, Holger suggestively asks: "And that poor thing's body is there still, I suppose . . . Is it quite dead yet, I wonder?" (189) The narrator himself wonders, as well, but he concludes that he "should hardly care to see it, even in broad daylight," and is unsure whether it is dead or alive (189). Here, one can observe that even the narrator, who is supposed to be "a man of sense" (166), fears something supernatural. Interestingly, the story's circular structure does not necessarily guarantee the narrative return to the world in its natural order; rather, it pushes the tale toward the supernatural.

While James' frame makes the inside story ambiguous, Crawford's seems to create a neutral ground, which functions to establish the supernatural world. It seems, then, that the frame has a purpose other than merely to make the inside story ambiguous. Namely, what the frame questions is not just the existence of supernatural beings (such as vampires) per se; it suggests something else. The frame suspends judgement on the possibility of a vampire, which surely is an uncertain being, something which is not supposed to be talked of openly. What, then, does the vampire symbolize? What is the unnameable or the cause of horror?

It is well-known that vampires are associated with female sexuality and with sexual appetite, as one is reminded by the word "vamp."¹⁰ In both stories discussed here, the vampires implicitly represent excessive female eros. It is worth noting that they are clearly not male but "female" vampires from the beginning. In standard vampiric narratives, as Douglas Robillard suggests, the women characters turn into vampires after the assault of male vampires.¹¹ (The most famous case is *Dracula*.) In both of these stories, however, it is male characters who are victims. Despite their gender, the female vampires are not subordinate; instead, they dominate the narrative situation and the hapless men.

"The Friends of the Friends" delineates how the fiancé is distracted by the dead widow. According to the female narrator, after the widow's

visitation, he is psychologically affected by the vampire; the narrator notices changes such as “every drop” in his voice and “every absence” in his eyes (363). She even asserts: “You love her as you’ve *never* loved, and, passion for passion, she gives it straight back! She rules you, she holds you, she has you all!” (363) The early death of the fiancé shows the monstrous power of a psychic vampirism. The narrator explains it as “the result of . . . an unquenchable desire” and “a response to an irresistible call” (364).

What needs to be remembered is that the widow decides to go and see the fiancé herself, especially when she is dead, because he can communicate with the dead. Judging from her keen interest in the fiancé’s photo, she is attracted to him. The vampiric transformation she uses to satisfy her desire is convenient for her, because she can ignore the social conventions; a lady can go out neither late at night nor to a bachelor’s house by herself, but a deceased one can ignore such rules. She does both. Ironically the narrator is used as a medium for the bodily contact that kindles their erotic desire; by kissing the same spot of the narrator’s face, they exchange their kiss. Except for this kiss and an exchange of glances at the man’s house, there is no other contact between the widow and the man; no transfusion of blood between the vampire and the victim occurs. Vampirism here is completely psychic but its effects are as overpowering as the regular bloody vampirism. The widow physically and emotionally controls the seduced man, taking over the position of his betrothed. Considering her unconventionality, independence, and sexually liberated manner, the vampire is closer to a “New Woman” than a Victorian lady. Her assertiveness and voluptuousness must have appeared threatening to the men within the established system.

In “For the Blood is the Life,” a male victim, Angelo, similarly comes under vampiric possession. The gypsy Cristina, who in life adored him from afar, continues in her passion after death. As a vampire, she has “him fast now and he [can] not escape her” (183). It is Cristina who approaches broken-hearted, penniless Angelo. He eventually responds to her love, out of the loneliness and sexual frustration caused by his cancelled engagement with a rich girl. Her attitude toward the man is at first timid, but she grows bold enough to wind her arm around him and kiss his throat. To the original readers of the story, her sexual initiative probably makes her more masculine than the passive, weak Angelo.

Furthermore, Crawford describes in realistic detail a blood-sucking scene that suggests love-making and shows the reversal of gender roles

as they were socially accepted at the time; in love relationships particularly, men were supposed to take the initiative, while women were expected to be passive. When Cristina sucks blood from Angelo's throat, Crawford writes:

He could not tell whether her breath was as hot as fire or as cold as ice. He could not tell whether her red lips burned his or froze them, or whether her five fingers on his wrists seared scorching scars or bit his flesh like frost. He could not tell whether he was awake or asleep, . . . but he knew that she loved him. . . .

When the moon rose high that night the shadow of that Thing was not alone down there upon the mound (179–80).

Here, Cristina's position is above Angelo, suggesting her masculine aggressiveness. Without resisting, Angelo remains submissive, all suggesting his feminization. The scene even arouses the image of vampiric rape. Angelo pays nightly visits to Cristina, and despite his moral and religious revulsion in the morning, when he regrets his intercourse with the heathen gypsy, he finds ecstasy in the "terror and delight" (181) of his unearthly union.

With her aggressiveness and avidity, Cristina stands as a powerful sexual subject. Searching in vain for a doctor for Angelo's dying father, she encounters the thieves hiding a treasure stolen from Angelo's house. They kill the girl to silence her forever. Her unappeasable desire for life/love brings her back to this world and gives her immortality as a vampire. As for this point, Robillard writes that Cristina's "desires . . . are transformed . . . into an implacable sexual urge beyond the simple human scope."¹² Yet, her thirst—emotional and physical—is never satisfied; as she drinks the blood, she needs more, for the blood is the life, as its title suggests. This implies the bottomless sexual desire of a female vampire as well as the inescapable destiny of a male victim; his vitality (blood) and his virility (semen) will be absorbed forever. Therefore, Cristina is a tremendous threat to normal manhood.

Although for both James and Crawford "love" between female vampires and their male victims certainly exists, the relationship appears abhorrent both to them and to other characters. This is because the male characters are practicing love outside the norm. That is, normal love was meant only for reproduction by way of phallic penetration into the vagina; the norm was strongly tied to the Victorian domestic ideology so as to strengthen patriarchal system. Other modes of love such as homo-

sexuality were publicly prohibited and detested. Copulation with a vampire belongs to such an anomalous category of eros. It is not surprising, then, that the jealous female narrator in “The Friends of the Friends” curses the situation and says: “How *can* you hide it . . . when you’re sick almost to death with the joy of what she gives you?” (363) Here she refers to something “awfully private” (362) between the man and the dead woman, hinting at a sexual relationship. After this remark, the narrator gives up vying for the man with her supernatural rival.

Antonio, the narrator’s attendant in “For the Blood is the Life,” similarly calls Angelo and Cristina’s intercourse “an evil thing” (184). Noticeably, only Cristina’s vampiric, hungry image is stressed in the exorcist’s eyes; he never thinks of her “love” for Angelo:

The flickering light of the lantern played upon another face that looked up from the feast upon two deep, dead eyes that saw in spite of death, parted lips redder than life itself and two gleaming teeth on which glistened a rosy drop (186–87).

Cristina’s end follows the convention of vampiric narratives; she is killed by having a stake driven through her heart and is buried. The narrative leaves open the possibility that she may live on.

Besides being a vampire, Cristina’s evilness is enhanced by her gypsy attributes. To the nineteenth-century European/American readers, being a gypsy generally connoted the exoticism associated with the East, a licentious alluring sexuality like that of “Carmen,” created originally by Prosper Merimée, and a non-Christian heathen status. (Such conventional images of the gypsy were also circulated in literature of the period by other writers like the Brontës and George Eliot.) Accordingly, located literally far from Western civilization, she is “other” to its system. Her promiscuity and her devilish nature exhibit both her vampirism and her gypsy blood. Furthermore, her sex is another factor to dread. For human beings, the transfusion of blood by a vampire is a particular source of horror. In Cristina’s case, her becoming pregnant—giving Angelo a hybrid child—must be the unspoken but the most feared possibility. By exchanging blood/semen, Angelo is taken in by her otherness. In other words, the border between the system’s inside and outside can be fused by this new type of miscegenation. Such chaos must be prevented. Thus two patriarchal protectors, a religious authority (priest) and a physically strong man (miner), combat the evil female sexuality and succeed in restoring the social/religious/moral order.

Sexuality is usually repressed in most Victorian fiction. The analysis of these stories, however, paradoxically illustrates its weight. Yet, stressing female sexuality is dangerous, for it means the subversion of gender balance and the collapse of patriarchy. The message of the insets therefore is that supernatural love especially with the strong female sexual autonomy is forbidden and unthinkable. The fiancé dies in “The Friends of the Friends,” while Angelo of “For the Blood is the Life” wastes away and is only saved by priestly intervention. As these examples show, the strong female sexuality incarnated in the vampire, who literally consumes masculinity and vitality, is something to be dreaded. Such a cause of horror needs to be controlled and contained. James’ frame literally serves this purpose. By using a male narrator, James in the frame questions the credibility of the inside story. He succeeds in invalidating the female narrator’s version and in rejecting the possibility of such a horror. Suggestively, Lustig refers to this point, writing that “the formal, masculine framing of the female voice provides insights into James’s attempts to restrict the explosive force of the ghostly.”¹³

Crawford, on the other hand, seems to avoid giving a clear opinion in the frame; by taking an ambivalent stance toward the inset, he shows his reluctance to declare what normative female sexuality should be. The narrator’s final words—that he hardly cares to think about the vampire—illustrate Crawford’s evasive attitude toward female sexuality itself. This seems to suggest his strong fear of female sexual power as well as his deep misogyny. Still, by setting a less restrictive frame than James, Crawford himself brings to light the unappeasable force of female sexuality.

II A VISITATION BY GHOSTS

In ghost stories, representations of the ghosts vary. Some are vague and silent; some are invisible; others make a sound—talking or even screaming. In the following cases, James and Crawford portray ghosts who dare to challenge human beings. In other words, from their own point of view, the human characters experience the horror of being not only visited but also attacked by unearthly existences. James presents human-like ghosts—that of a valet and a governess—in “The Turn of the Screw” (1898). These ghosts aim to take the children Miles and Flora away to where they themselves reside. To protect her pupils, the newly-hired young governess is obliged to confront the ghosts. In “The Upper

Berth" (1885), Crawford's ghost—probably a male passenger drowned at sea—is very different from James' visionary beings, as one can touch and smell it; it has physicality, and it even fights back against these characters who try to disturb the ghost. Like the vampire stories, though, these stories are framed in a similar way. The frames introduce the narrators and their audiences, who anticipate hearing the ghost stories; the insets offer the details of the ghostly visitations.

"The Upper Berth" has the structure of a story within a story. This time, however, Crawford does not return to the frame at the end, as he does in "For the Blood is the Life." In this frame, a nameless narrator introduces five bored club members gathered together. One of them, Brisbane, begins to tell a story of seeing a ghost, which instantly awakes the others. The original narrator is thus replaced by Brisbane, and the frame naturally ends. The inset begins as Brisbane recalls, in the first-person, his trans-Atlantic voyage on the *Kamtchatka*. He tells of his encounter with a ghost in his cabin and his actual fight with the specter, which escapes by hurting him. The inside story ends with the narrator's wrap-up—the room is blocked up and Brisbane expresses a strong wish never again to sail on the *Kamtchatka*.

The structure of "The Turn of the Screw" is very similar to James' earlier "The Friends of the Friends." Actually, as Leon Edel points out, the latter story "foreshadows" "The Turn of the Screw."¹⁴ This famous ghost story has a complicated frame where two male narrators appear; one of them, Douglas, begins to unfold a ghost story for the first time in forty years. It is told to several guests, who gather round the fire in an old house on Christmas Eve.

There is a little narrative procrastination devoted to obtaining a document containing the ghost story, which is itself kept in the distance. Twenty years ago, Douglas was entrusted with the manuscript by the writer, a governess, before her death. Before his talk, he first provides a "prologue" in an attempt to help his audience better to understand the situation of the story—the "general uncanny ugliness and horror and pain."¹⁵ Then, the other first-person narrator, nameless, makes it clear that the subsequent narrative is "an exact transcript of [his] own made much later," for Douglas entrusted the document to his good friend before his death (638). The narrative, thus, has been passed on to the present through the hands of three different people.

Then, like the lady's journal in "The Friends of the Friends," the governess' account is presented as it is, as the inside story. In it, the nameless

governess, about thirty years old, recalls her experience at Bly at the age of twenty. The story closes with the end of the governess' narrative.

Here, the frame story again functions to undermine the credibility of the woman's narrative. Unlike the case of "The Friends of the Friends," however, the nameless narrator in the frame does not directly question the governess' account. Yet, as the other guests obviously hint, Douglas' infatuation with the woman lessens his credentials for describing the governess objectively: he calls her "awfully clever and nice" and "worthy of any [position] whatever" (637). His apparent attempt to vouch for the truth of the governess' account serves, ironically, to cast doubt on its veracity.¹⁶ The "acute" main narrator also refrains from evaluating Douglas' comments, again guaranteeing nothing (637). Overall, then, the frame works to question the validity of the ghostly narrative.

The frame story of "The Upper Berth" does not have the same effect as that of "The Turn of the Screw." At first glance, its aim seems to be to present Brisbane as a reliable narrator. As the other characters refer to "a man of his intelligence"¹⁷ and can hardly believe that he claims to have seen a ghost, Brisbane is characterized as a reasonable man. Also, the frame shows that, with his many voyages, Brisbane is qualified to tell of his nautical experience; he would not have been deluded by any event on a ship. Having taken such introductory steps, Crawford moves on to the inside story of the otherworldly. The inset itself reveals a succession of uncanny events, which have beset this "reliable" narrator. This is supported by the concrete evidence of Brisbane's broken arm after a fight. The ghostly story, then, sounds convincing. Nonetheless, the narrator finishes his narrative in an open-ended manner, refraining from giving any final judgement on his experience. Such a noncommittal attitude shakes the validity of his narrative. In other words, the frame, seemingly set up to prove the narrator's qualifications, on the contrary contributes to making the inside story ambiguous at the end.

As has been seen, the frames play a significant role in creating the "ambiguity" of the two stories. The frames seem to represent the voice of reason, or that of society, in nullifying the irrational occurrences. What, then, is rejected by the frame? Is it the ghost itself?

In "The Turn of the Screw," the ghosts are harmful to human beings. The ghosts gradually affect the mental condition of the governess. Although she is high-spirited when she comes to Bly, she becomes nervous and excitable after encountering the two apparitions. They do not physically attack the governess, as in the case of Brisbane, but they over-

whelm her with their unflinching glances and their very presence. Peter Quint, the valet, stares at her unreservedly. In their first encounter outside the house, “he never [takes] his eyes” from her until he disappears (654). Thereafter, inside the house as well, Quint fixes her with his eyes. James writes that they “[face] each other in [their] common intensity” (683). With some kind of dignity, Miss Jessel also stuns her successor; her indifferent, detached manner makes the governess feel that *she* is “the intruder” (705).

The ghosts also have “evil” effects on the pupils. Flora begins to use “horrible” language (727), while Miles’ conduct at school and home becomes ungentlemanly. Mrs. Grose, the housekeeper, informs the governess that Quint and Miles were “perpetually together” and that Flora “was with the woman” (677–78). The governess thinks the pair of Quint and Miss Jessel put “the evil” into her pupils (693), initiating them into wrongdoing. Furthermore, the children continue to have secret communion with the ghosts, as they steal out on various occasions. Wherever the governess finds the missing pupils, she also finds one of the apparitions.

As for Crawford’s story, his ghost does not hesitate to attack human beings. In the first meeting, responding to Brisbane’s pull, it “[springs] violently forward against [him], a clammy, oozy mass,” which seems to him “heavy and wet, yet endowed with a sort of supernatural strength” (213–14). It dashes out of his sight. On the next occasion, Brisbane’s grappling scene, the narrator reports:

I wrestled with the dead thing; it thrust itself upon me and forced me back and nearly broke my arms; it wound its corpse’s arms about my neck, the living death, and overpowered me, so that I, at last, cried aloud and fell, and left my hold (226–27).

Crawford thus shows the literally destroying strength and violent physicality of the ghost.

Overall, the human beings lose to the ghosts. The governess fails to prevent the spectral evil influence; Flora grows to shun her and Miles’ heart stops in her arms; Brisbane is hurt in body and soul. Both stories seem to suggest the overwhelming, destructive power of the supernatural. That is what “common sense” cannot acknowledge, so the authors need to utilize the frame’s ambiguous nature. Simultaneously, it can be said that James and Crawford wish to express, in the shape of ghosts, some kind of monstrosity in the human mind—that is, the sexual drive

and its persistence in a homosocial world. James' ghosts even suggest the homoerotic possibility in the story.

"The Turn of the Screw" seems to be filled with diverse examples of sexuality. The most fearful must be the female subjectivity exerting sexual command. In the repressed and prudish Victorian social environment, it was considered unthinkable that women had sexual desires. To express such desires openly must be nothing but deviant. Still, one can assume that "The Turn of the Screw" treats the governess' desire. As many critics have said, following Edmund Wilson, the ghosts can be interpreted as the product of the female narrator's imagination.¹⁸ The young woman's sexual frustration in a lonely country house produces her hallucination of Peter Quint; the double of her adored but unreachable employer. She is also jealous of Miss Jessel, because her youth and good looks attracted the master's attention. In addition, Miss Jessel's affair with Quint, a pseudo-master, must stir her jealousy.

In a sense, the ghost of Miss Jessel can be the governess' self-projection, as Millicent Bell suggests¹⁹; she is another wretched, middle-class, single woman, possibly like the governess wishing to marry her glamorous Harley Street master. Miss Jessel's ghost foreshadows the governess' difficult situation at Bly. It is worth noting that Quint's features are distinct, while Miss Jessel is vaguely portrayed²⁰; the governess' fear of facing her alter ego—her own reality—seems to create the vision of a faceless ghost. The fact that only the governess actually sees the ghosts in the story also supports the hallucination thesis; Mrs. Grose, who lacks imaginative power and who stands for the rational viewpoint, sees no ghosts at all.

One can also argue that James writes about a further, more threatening sexuality in "The Turn of the Screw."²¹ One example is the governess' immoderate attachment to her male pupil.²² Interestingly, in the child-sized suits tailored in the same style as his uncle's, Miles looks and behaves like the master, a possible surrogate lover. After a certain point, the conversation between the governess and the pupil grows to take on a tint of that between lovers. The discussion of Miles' returning to school even sounds like a grown-up gentleman deserting his girlfriend, wanting to "see more life" and "[his] own sort" (701–02). He calls his governess "my dear" with familiarity (700); he suggestively says something disturbing for the governess—that he is leaving Bly because he may not "love" her (702). The governess' imagining a honeymoon scene with Miles is the climax of her wild fancies:

We continued silent while the maid was with us—as silent, it whimsically occurred to me, as some young couple who, on their wedding-journey, at the inn, feel shy in the presence of the waiter. He turned round only when the waiter had left us. ‘Well—so we’re alone!’ (732)

Also, the love between Quint and Miss Jessel belongs to the forbidden category, because the lady not only crosses the limits of class with a man of lower rank, but breaks social convention by having premarital intercourse. No wonder the implicit consequence is her death in childbirth, a traditional punishment in fiction. The relationships, between Quint and Miles and that between Miss Jessel and Flora, are also dubious. Bell acutely suggests this point by writing that sexual “love between adult and child is a violation of taboo even more outrageous than love between the classes,”²³ as it could be pedophilic or homosexual. Similarly, considering Miles’ dismissal from school on the grounds that he said problematic things to his peers, it is possible that he is under Quint’s homosexual influence. These literally deviating states of love are obviously taboo in the genteel tradition; they must, therefore, be contained. In the Victorian period, transatlantically, the social code and the law sought to regulate and even prohibit such anomalies, as the Wilde trial suggests. Here in the story, the frame contains them within the inside narrative.

Compared to “The Turn of the Screw,” “The Upper Berth” appears to lack such sexual dimensions. One can read it as a simple story of a mad passenger missing from the upper berth, whom other ship members consider to have drowned himself. Crawford delineates the specter’s strong attachment to life by his repeated return to the upper berth and by his expelling the passengers from his position. By so doing, he seems to seek a liaison with the living world.

Curiously, the entire narrative suggests that the male homosocial environment is truly desirable for men. There, no female character appears. “For the Blood is the Life” at least presents some woman villagers besides Cristina, yet “The Upper Berth” delineates a totally homosocial world. In the frame story, Brisbane, his companions, and the butler are all men. They create a men’s club atmosphere, filled with smoke, liquor, and ennui. Their ability to relax and be comfortable with the attentive butler suggests that the members like to linger there. Besides, as the ghostly topic instantly dispels the listless atmosphere, these men are strongly interested in the subject. Such a change suggests their nostalgia for the boyhood adventure; there, they enjoyed the same kind of thrill

and excitement as the ghost stories, which girls never shared. In other words, the frame subtly exposes these grown-ups' unconscious yearning for boys' exclusive solidarity.

Although the inset depicts a passenger ship's voyage, on which one would expect at least some female passengers, again a homosocial world is presented. All the characters are men—Brisbane, the captain, a surgeon, stewards, officers, and a ship's carpenter. That is, Crawford presents a macho world of seamen, one that should satisfy the cult of manhood. As a passenger, the ghost elects this place, not its home, to come back to. By excluding women, the men on ship can be themselves and wholly enjoy their bonding.

From the living passengers' viewpoint, the above-mentioned bodily encounter with the male ghost evokes shudders in two senses. Firstly, they shake with fear for the possible deaths brought by the specter. Secondly, they shiver with a new sensation at being touched by the ghost in a violent manner. This contact could arouse masochism or kindle same-sex desire. Brisbane is vaguely aware of these prohibited possibilities, for he later comes to avoid confronting the ghost, like other seamen who hesitate to face it. Therefore, the story shows how ship members vacillate between an inclination for homosocial comfort and a repressed fear of the homoerotic.

Thus, in "The Upper Berth," Crawford tacitly writes about the hidden masculine desire to seek and fear a homosocial world by depicting a ghost who refuses to give up its continuity with such a world. The seemingly asexual story suggests the decadence peculiar to the late nineteenth century. The taboo subject here proposed by Crawford again must be blocked up, just like the cabin with the "upper berth." The frame well serves for this purpose, though it surely gives an eerie impression to the readers along with its open ending.

CONCLUSION

In the framed ghost stories, both James and Crawford write about something that goes beyond what is fictionally permissible—something that breaks the ethical code of fiction of their time. The frames are necessary not only to regulate but also to explore such subjects; as has been discussed, though, the real horrors of the stories are never explicitly identified. The ambiguity of the ghostly existence matches the two authors' unmentionable suggestions regarding gender/sexuality. Still, the narra-

tive vagueness produced by the frame stories has the effect of engendering fear of what is told in the inset—not merely ghosts but what human beings seek at the subliminal level. At the same time, it is the frame that at least partially nullifies the inside message. In other words, without the frame device, these authors could neither experiment with the supernatural genre nor possibly explore deeper, prohibited issues related to gender and sexuality.

Considering gender, it must be mentioned that male narrators dominate all the examined frame stories. That is, the frames questioning the validity of the insets are equivalent to the masculine voice. This naturally makes clear who makes the various social standards that influence the sales of fiction as well as women's social position. Both James and Crawford seem to be keenly aware of the patriarchal power to strictly control sexuality in the Victorian society. Besides, both the authors themselves belong to the dominant gender, which explains the masculine dynamism working in their narratives. Comparing James and Crawford, however, the latter seems to show a more misogynistic tendency, as he does not give voice to any female characters at all. Cristina never speaks a word in "For the Blood is the Life," while no woman even appears in "The Upper Berth." On the contrary, in both "The Friends of the Friends" and "The Turn of the Screw," James has the female characters narrate in their own voice via their writings. In both the James' stories, the female narrators are free to express anything, even untouchable subjects. Such a difference may stem from James' concern about his own sexuality; that concern may have led him to take a more sympathetic attitude toward women,²⁴ but this is such a large topic that another occasion will be necessary to discuss it wholly.

Ghost stories must have been considered a safe product, for they often appeared in the Christmas issues of Victorian periodicals. They must have been entertaining and appropriate at the hearth at Christmas time. In this connection, it is worth recalling that the opening scene of "The Turn of the Screw" is set on Christmas Eve. As professional writers, James and Crawford never forgot this feature of the genre; they both wished to write marketable stories.²⁵

In this sense, it is interesting to observe that the germs of uncanny tales lie in worldly emotions. For instance, "jealousy" drives the Jamesian narrative in "The Friends of the Friends" and "The Turn of the Screw." A pathetic yearning for love unites the lovers in "For the Blood is the Life." Unspoken wishes to escape from wives and children, in the

manner of Rip van Winkle, guide the characters in “The Upper Berth.” The authors also utilize other staples of Victorian tabloid fiction, such as broken engagements, secret love affairs, and love crossing social ranks. These topics are, needless to say, closely related to the issues of gender/sexuality. Due to their unmentionable nature in society generally, they must have been intriguing for Victorian readers. Especially in the guise of a vampire/ghost, at least subconsciously James and Crawford seem to have appealed to their genteel readers’ curiosity about sexuality. The contents of the inset emerge as frightful and absorbing. It can be said, then, that the framed stories are meant to seem harmless entertainment, based on the popular themes. Regarding sexual issues, no matter how much code-breaking is done in the inset, the frame device can make it socially and culturally acceptable. Hence, the most striking horror of the uncanny stories by James and Crawford is that the ingenious authors subtly hide the explosive in the popular form of a Christmas gift, thus escaping notice.

NOTES

Since all textual citations are based on the same editions, full publication data is given only when first cited, thereafter, only the page number will be indicated (in parentheses).

¹ Recent literary histories reflecting the revision of the American literary canon do not include F. Marion Crawford. See Nina Baym, ed., *Norton Anthology of American Literature: vol. C 1865–1914*, 6th ed. (New York: Norton, 2003) and Emory Elliott, ed., *Columbia Literary History of the United States* (New York: Columbia UP, 1988). Early in the twentieth century, though, Crawford was placed side by side with James in the “international” context or “realist” tradition. For example, Fred Lewis Patee, *A History of American Literature Since 1870* (1915; New York: Cooper Square, 1968) and Carl Van Doren, *The American Novel* (New York: Macmillan, 1921). Contemporary anonymous critics for magazines compared James and Crawford in reviewing the two: “A Rival of Mr. James,” *Life*, 26 April 1883, 197; and “James, Crawford, and Howells,” *Atlantic Monthly* 57 June 1886, 850–57.

² Fred Kaplan, *Henry James: The Imagination of Genius: A Biography* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1992) 186, 440.

³ The framed ghostly stories are discussed by Julia Briggs, *Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story* (London: Faber, 1977) (Chapter 1 especially); T. J. Lustig, *Henry James and the Ghostly* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 1994) 94.

⁴ The first full-fledged comparative study of James and Crawford is the following dissertation: Taeko Kitahara, “Light and Shadow: A Comparative Study of Henry James and F. Marion Crawford” (University of Tokyo, 2003). Other critics, however, briefly mention these two authors together. See Adeline R. Tintner’s *The Pop World of Henry James: From Fairy Tales to Science Fiction* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1989); Marcia Jacobson refers to the two authors’ fiction-making theories in *Henry James and the Mass Market* (Alabama: U of Alabama P, 1989); Thomas Henry Wayne discusses Crawford’s auto-

biographical romance, *The Three Fates*, in comparison with Crane, James, and Howells in “Canon Fodder: The Fictional Strategy of Francis Marion Crawford” (Ph.D. diss., University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1993).

⁵ Martha Banta defines a “psychic vampire” as “the vampire-like creature that takes possession of the soul of the living person and, by drawing forth its force, causes the victim to waste away.” See *Henry James and the Occult: The Great Extension* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1972) 89.

⁶ The story’s original title was “The Way It Came,” but in this paper, I will use the better-known, revised title used in the New York Edition.

⁷ Lustig 94.

⁸ Henry James, *The Novels and Tales of Henry James*, New York Edition, vol.17 (New York: Scribner’s, 1907–1917) 323.

⁹ F. Marion Crawford, “*For the Blood is the Life*” and Other Stories (1911; Clarkston, Georgia: White Wolf Publishing, 1996) 164.

¹⁰ On this topic, Fred Botting devotes a section in his *Gothic* (1996; London: Routledge, 2004) 144–154.

¹¹ Douglas Robillard, “The Wandering Ghosts of F. Marion Crawford,” *American Supernatural Fiction, From Edith Wharton to the Weird Tales Writers*, ed. Douglas Robillard (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996) 50.

¹² Ibid., 50.

¹³ Lustig 95.

¹⁴ Leon Edel, *Henry James: Stories of the Supernatural*, ed. Leon Edel (New York: Taplinger, 1970) 396. Other critics compare the two stories; see Pamela J. Shelden, “‘The Friends of the Friends’: Another Twist to ‘The Turn of The Screw,’” *Wascana Review* 2, no.1 (1976): 3–14; Sidney E. Lind, “‘The Turn of the Screw’: The Torment of Critics,” *Centennial Review* 14 (1970): 234–240.

¹⁵ Henry James, “The Turn of the Screw,” *Complete Stories: 1892–1898*, 5 vols. (New York: Library of America, 1996) 636.

¹⁶ David McWhirter makes the same point: “In the ‘Other House’ of Fiction: Writing, Authority, and Femininity in *The Turn of the Screw*,” *New Essays on Daisy Miller and The Turn of the Screw*, ed. Vivian R. Pollak (Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 1993), 121.

¹⁷ Crawford, “The Upper Berth,” *For the Blood is the Life*” and Other Stories, 194.

¹⁸ The interpretations of “The Turn of the Screw” roughly fall into three types: 1) the ghostly existences are “real,” 2) the ghosts are hallucinations seen only by the governess, and 3) the nature of the ghosts is—and is designed to be—ambiguous. Edmund Wilson’s essay opened the door for the second interpretation. See “The Ambiguity of Henry James,” *Hound & Horn* 7 (1934): 385–406.

¹⁹ Millicent Bell, “Class, Sex, and the Victorian Governess: James’s *The Turn of the Screw*,” *New Essays on Daisy Miller and The Turn of the Screw*, 114.

²⁰ For further analysis of the vague description of the female ghost, see Kitahara 305–6.

²¹ Bell’s discussion is typical: “Class, Sex, and the Victorian Governess,” 91–119. See also Millicent Bell, *Meaning in Henry James* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1991) 225–26, 234–35.

²² Leonard Heldreth explicitly writes about “the erotic tension”; see “The Ghost and the Self: The Supernatural Fiction of Henry James,” *The Celebration of the Fantastic*, eds. Donald E. Morse, et al. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood P, 1992) 138.

²³ Bell, “Class, Sex, and the Victorian Governess,” 107.

²⁴ Leonora M. Ballinger elaborates on this aspect in her dissertation, “Apparitions and Night-Fears: Psychosexual Tensions in the Ghostly Tales of Henry James,” (New York University, 1996).

²⁵ Martha Banta, “Henry James and ‘The Others,’” *New England Quarterly* 37, no.2 (1964): 177. Crawford himself calls novels marketable “commodities” in *The Novel: What It Is* (1893; Upper Saddle River, N. J.: Literature House, 1970), 12.