

Why I Dislike The Turn of the Screw

That I should feel strongly about any short story is unusual indeed. Of most stories I read only the first and the last five pages and rely on my imagination to fill the gap, but Henry James' story I read completely. After I had finished it, I lay awake for a long time. It was a restless night, as though sleep itself were unable to turn my indignation from a man whom I had begun to hate only a few minutes after I had become acquainted with his writings.

After two weeks of pondering my dislike for Henry James I have concluded that disappointment is its major cause, ~~dis~~-appointment that in The Turn of the Screw I found none of the longing to create something ethically valuable, that I feel to be so vital not only in literature but in all phases of life and that I had hoped so much to find.

I expected neither the Psalm of Life nor the Beatitudes from Henry James. I did expect some moral striving, some trace of that which Albert Schweitzer calls "Reverence for Life". I was looking for an awareness that "man is NOT the measure of all things". Instead I found a "return to nature", a renaissance of the perverted sexuality from which six-thousand years of civilization have tried to emancipate mankind. I saw a mentally deranged woman portrayed in all her depravity, depravity from which not once Henry James provided relief. He gave me not a

only according
to Wilson

and in all civility,
remember -
no I don't

matter in all
this time
disen
Kommunen
werd die ich
nicht. - Flip
war nicht
nicht.

single breath of beauty, of striving idealism to displace
the filth and the soot of his psychological experimentation
from my hands. I felt that her ugliness was leaving a scar
upon my life. I wanted to banish her from my existence. I
wanted to forget her, and I wished that I had never read about
the governess. I cringed to think that my own thought might
ever be infected with that ugliness. Instead of being forced
into a realm of sensuous primitivity, I wanted to remain in
the world of Bach and of Milton, of Beethoven and of Goethe,
a world of the Mass in E minor and Paradise Lost, of Fidelio
and Werther and Faust.

Henry James' monstrous governess offended me. I like
to think of myself as an idealist. When I opened Five Kinds
of Writing, I had, in effect, asked him for an idea, a phrase,
perhaps only a word which like a building block I might incor-
porate into my own life. Henry James had turned his back on
me and abandoned me into an atmosphere of sexual perversion.

The German poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, once wrote:

"We build Thee, Lord, with trembling hands.

We set each stone upon stone."

Instead of giving me another of the stones that I need^d for my
conception of God, Henry James trampled rudely on what I had
laboriously and lovingly placed together. I shall never forgive
him.

I wouldn't be too hard on James, without having
taken yourself (your inhibitions, fears, and
frustrations) and Edmund Wilson fully to task

B +

just not
true

This might
be the key
to the whole
phenomenon
"and then
desert"

ineffective
verb here.

define!
Henry
James did!