

that same name, Ned Rosier in *Portrait*, Hyacinth Robinson in *The Princess Casamassima*, Nick Dormer in *The Tragic Muse*, Merton Densher in *The Wings of the Dove*, and Prince Amerigo in *The Golden Bowl*, whose freedom to marry and thus whose quality of life are controlled by economics.

In sum, gender in James's fiction is less of a determinant than is health upon a character's outcome, although two refinements should be added to this generalization so that it accurately takes into account the developmental changes in James's canon. Throughout James's fiction, wealthy men and women enter the public contract of marriage powerfully, as buyers. However, when they are without capital, both men and women must accept the subordinate position of seller in marriage. Correspondingly, within the realm of James's domestic relations, gender does mark behavioral distinctions: while males are no more successful in negotiating with this exchange economy, they are more aggressive, quicker to anger, and less able to see their own faults than are their female counterparts. In "The Methodological Implications of Women's History," Joan Kelly argues that, within the public domain, wealth is a more powerful determinant upon character than is gender while in the private domain gender becomes more powerful in affecting character (20-26). But I suggest that the concept of a marriage market obscures the distinction between public and private realms by obtruding the commercial into the domestic. In a sense the initial marriage contract is both public and commercial, while subsequent marital relations are confined to the private, domestic domain. James's fictions, then, like Kelly's historical study of relations between the sexes, demonstrate that wealth is a more powerful determinant upon an individual than gender.

Ultimately, however, a protagonist's position in James's canon is more important than either wealth or gender. This developmental pattern among James's protagonists parallels his own psychological development: just as he acknowledges the pressure of the marketplace in his own life, so also his protagonists become more aware of the exchange system dominating social interaction in their lives. To wit, in the second chapter of this study, I examine the differences between James's use of male and female protagonists in the early phase fictions *The American* and *The Portrait of a Lady*. Chapters 3 and 4 on *The Tragic Muse* and *The Awkward Age* demonstrate that exchange economics determine the course of every character's life regardless of gender. And in chapter 5, I study Maggie's unique role among Jamesian protagonists in relation to the major phase's distinctive use of economic language to advertise human desire. At the same time that James wrote these novels, he underwent personal changes which are reflected in his works. Between

1876 and 1881, the publication years of *The American* and *The Portrait of a Lady*, he enjoyed a steady increase in readership and critical acclaim. But from 1882 until 1900, he endured profound personal and professional setbacks: the deaths of his mother, father, younger brother, and sister as well as the critical and public failure of three novels—*The Bostonians*, *The Princess Casamassima*, and *The Tragic Muse*—and his plays, particularly *Guy Domville* (Edel, James). He coped with these terrible crises by retiring from London and the continent to his country home at Rye. This therapeutic means of ameliorating his suffering contributes not just to the general stylistic change long noted by James's readers but specifically to the increase in density and complexity of his economic language after 1895; in specific, the more that money determined his life, the more this is true in his characters' lives as well. After 1900, a renewed sense of self-possession is evident in James's return to London, to Europe, and finally to America. James's notebooks and nonfiction, in particular *The American Scene*, directly record his renewed optimism and eagerness to take on new challenges. His return to America in 1904 after an absence of twenty-three years is an explicit record of his ability to face his own ghosts, to explore his own version of Spencer Brydon's ("The Jolly Corner") and John Marcher's ("The Beast in the Jungle") unlivable lives. This self-possession is evidenced in James's fiction in the protagonists' increasing discernment about themselves and their relationships to the exchange system. Both men and women in the earlier fiction are victimized, and both sexes resist social forces more successfully in the later works. If James's females sometimes appear to be better readers of society as text, they are no more successful survivors than men of the codes which society imposes upon them. Hence, both men and women must run the gauntlet of this economic exchange system. Overall, women appear more often to be at its mercy, but as my examination of James's canon demonstrates, James's imagination for disaster was attuned to the ways in which both sexes are betrayed by this system's reification and the repression which is its consequence.

through their efforts to alter their relationship to this society, they discover the fixed rules which perpetuate it. These rules are less like those of a game and more those of a business enterprise, since the primary need for playing a game is the exercise of imagination, whereas a ruling class needs by its definition to preserve and reproduce itself profitably. The reciprocity between these two realms, wherein the business of play and the play of business appear parallel, emerges most clearly in the conversation of the drawing room which has become the linguistic market place.

More specifically within this general model, the protagonists of the early phase discover these sociolinguistic rules very late and have no recourse from the role of victim, as in *Roderick Hudson*, *The American*, *An International Episode*, and *Portrait*.² Inevitably, the later this discovery is made in the novel, the more complete is the protagonist's victimization. Increasingly, however, James's central figures are able to recognize and resist this expectation as in the middle phase novels wherein recognition of society's economy occurs somewhat earlier; as a result, the protagonist frequently rejects his or her community's values, the consequence of which is marginalization from the community. As Ferruccio Rossi-Landi describes the risk of nonparticipation for any member of a linguistic community, "He will lose his life for want of language" (198). This marginalization represents a linguistic if not an actual death and is explainable on a phylogenetic level in that an individual's need which remains unsatisfied will either die out or be adapted to the existing modes of social production. Consider as middle and late middle phase examples of this marginalization *The Bostonians*, *The Princess Casamassima*, *The Tragic Muse*, "The Pupil," "Owen Wingrave," *The Spoils of Poynton*, *What Maisie Knew*, and *The Awkward Age*. In each story, two characters united against the prevailing order strive to establish an alternative community. But from the point of view of the exchange society, its members have exiled any speakers who resist the bonds of their economic discourse. The self-willed deaths of Hyacinth Robinson and Morgan Moreen exemplify "the expense of spirit wasted" in resisting this social bondage. Their stories suggest that there can be no return to a preconscious relationship with this milieu; thus, the Jamesian protagonist's fall into history is not the *felix culpa* that R. W. B. Lewis asserts is the fervent belief of Henry James Senior in his history of James Senior and Junior in *The American Adam* (54).

This developing pattern of the protagonist's increased ability to recognize and resist his or her society's economic attitudes continues in the major phase. In addition, the increasing stylistic complexity marking James's work after 1895 affects his use of economic imagery as well. The

ways in which these later protagonists learn to resist the linguistic as well as economic bonds of their societies is comparable to the "process of dialectic between conventionalized signs and emergent (code-violating) signs" by which Chomsky defines conversation (37). Chomsky argues that in the dialogue between protagonists and society, "systematic equilibrium" is alternated with "systematic disruption" to form a process by which the communicative system remains dynamic through the regulated incursion of new interpretants or signs. Through "dissociation," two opposed terms are defined purely as equivalent. The "act of defining . . . produces . . . contradiction [or argument]" (74-77). Distinctions of meaning—provisional theories—are structurally dependent on an interactive process which leads to a compromise of meaning, a restoration of equilibrium to a system of signifiers now changed by the incursion and assimilation of the previously alien meaning. So also, James's major phase protagonists affect the societies they enter in a dissociative manner: resisting, dissenting, arguing, and redefining the existing modes of discourse, most especially the economic lexicon. Lambert Strether in *The Ambassadors*, Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove*, and Maggie Verver in *The Golden Bowl* choose alternatives to the victimization or marginalization forced upon the early and middle phase figures and so recognize their complicity in and responsibility for the world they discover around them. As a consequence, these three characters demonstrate the greatest understanding of the exchange economics so ubiquitous in their societies.³

Of all James's protagonists, Maggie Verver is most complicit in and most successfully negotiates with this economy and its modes of linguistic production. She neither renounces her prize, Amerigo, nor is marginalized by her antagonist, Charlotte, once she recognizes how they have manipulated her. In turn, she manipulates both Amerigo's and Charlotte's positions as commodities, whose value Maggie alters when she assumes the role of director or "author" (454) of their dilemma.

It is intriguing to consider how Maggie's singular success in recognizing and rearticulating the economic codes which structure human relationships is related to her gender. Certainly, James is sensitive to the plight of women caught in a marriage market society, but he also sees that males are victimized by the power-brokering in these exchange systems. There are many women, such as Isabel Archer in *Portrait of a Lady*, Claire de Cintré in *The American*, Nanda Brookham in *The Awkward Age*, Fleda Vetch in *The Spoils of Poynton*, Marie de Vionnet in *The Ambassadors*, and Charlotte Stant in *The Golden Bowl*, whose lives are irrevocably damaged by the insistence that they marry to place themselves in society. But there are also Roderick Hudson in the novel of

mutations in its operation which reflect James's responses to events in his career. Third, after 1895, James uses financial imagery in an increasingly complex way which functions as therapy for a series of crises in his life. Finally, as a consequence of recognizing the parallels between these structural and stylistic features and events in James's life, this study provides a more complete exploration of the powerful significance economic imagery held for him.

In realistic fictions, James's novels depict recognizably, even aggressively, capitalist societies. Characters (of varying degrees of wealth and talent) respond to this setting as if it were an exchange economy in which they survive and hope to prosper by practicing whatever form of commodities transaction they can afford. They do so by displaying their human assets as cultural commodities valuable only when made public or exchanged in social interaction. Society immediately sets prices upon characters' merchandizable assets such as physical attractiveness, mental acuity, culture, title, or money itself. Hence, James's characters *do* work, not at conventional jobs, but upon their appearances or social personae. As Jean-Christophe Agnew, in "The Consuming Vision of Henry James," suggests, "The only things Jamesian characters produce are effects. A person's effects are always contrivable, alienable, acquirable in James's fictive world. The product of individuals' efforts to appropriate and be appropriate in society congeals into 'character,' which is in turn internalized as a possession, as something to be displayed or interrelated" like other cultural commodities (84). In other words, aspects of character are judged according to their social prestige, and characters display what they believe are their most valuable social characteristics in order to prosper in this exchange economy.

But if a character's "character" is the product of human labor, then certainly his or her language is a cultural commodity as well (Rossi and 173-202). And James's characters perform their best work in talking and then analyzing one another's social communication. Like material products, verbal and behavioral messages assume both use and exchange values. Thus, it is possible for characters like the nearly mute and therefore inept husbands Bob Assingham in *The Golden Bowl* and Mr. Brookham in *The Awkward Age* to use words for direct consumption but not know how these words function as commodities. However, for most Jamesian characters, talking is a capitalist enterprise aimed at profit. These are the members of a linguistic ruling class who control the emission and circulation of the rules of discourse which govern a given community. Just as a ruling class requires a ruled class, so also, Roberta Kevelson argues, in the assimilation of statutory to common law

in nineteenth-century England, "two kinds of 'knowing' [can] be distinguished: ordinary language users who know how to use a language system, [and] linguists [who] 'know' how to specify rules of competent use for a language system" (8). These linguists create "rules" which then "become prescriptive" and which they use as "tactical communicative conventions. In other words, a well-defined subsystem" of language becomes "the Law" for all future patterns of speech. In James, most often these linguistic lawmakers are women who arrange sexual and economic transactions within and outside of the marriage market. Every James novel has female characters (like Serena Merle in *Portrait*, Kate Croy in *Wings of the Dove*, Marie de Vionnet in *The Ambassadors*, and Charlotte Stant in *The Golden Bowl*) whose social discourse is empowered by males content to let women speak their wealth for them. These women's verbal skills are honed razor-sharp by repeated battles waged in the drawing room. Such characters consistently describe human relationships in metaphors directly or implicitly from the counting house. Paradigmatic of this attitude is Serena Merle's claim not to "know *what* people are *meant for*" but rather only what she can "*do* with them" (emphasis mine; 1, 345). Her expression is symptomatic of the advanced stage of a capitalist economy in which the only use human beings have for one another is as commodities. In this case, the specific value Merle alludes to is Isabel's role as a rich wife for Osmond who will place him, Pansy, and, vicariously, Merle higher in society.

But Isabel, like so many Jamesian protagonists, does not comprehend the privileged status that this subsystem of economic imagery has in the lexicon of the society she has entered. Just as she archetypally falls into a corrupt European history, James's protagonists initially appear ahistorical, unsocialized, and, in the ability to use language as a tool of this exchange system, prelinguistic. Isabel, for example, utterly fails to grasp the economic consequences of her entry as a wealthy heiress into Europe's *beau monde* because of her romantic, Emersonian assumption that an individual's ideas ought to prevail over social forms.

However, not all of James's protagonists are as vulnerable to victimization by this exchange system as Isabel. An examination of his early, middle, and major phase fiction demonstrates a general pattern in which protagonists recognize or discover an untraversable moral gulf between themselves and their communities when they become aware that they use the same terms but nonetheless do not speak the language of money which surrounds them. Once they discover that this abuse of economic metaphor signifies an equally abusive relation to money and society, the protagonists experience the inevitable alienation that results from discovering their reified positions in this economy. Further,

Tracing the Pattern: James's Use of Economic Language

While money was always vital to James as a medium of exchange *and* as a motif in his verbal exchange, at certain points in his life money became much more significant to him psychologically. Tracing the changing importance money played in James's life and its parallel changing emphasis in his fiction is the subject of this study. While metaphors far outnumber literal discussions about dollars and cents, both are so pervasive in James's writing that this economic language acquires a privileged status among his linguistic codes. For just as money is a universal equivalent into which all other commodities must be translated to establish their value, so also James uses economic language as the dominant code to fix the value of characters and ideas in his writing. In the last twenty years James's economic language has not been entirely unnoticed; most notably, four studies—by Laurence Holland, Jan Dietrichson, Donald Mull, and Daniel Schneider—demonstrated unquestionably the quantity and difficulty of these terms. More recently, Carolyn Porter, Jean-Christophe Agnew, and Mimi Kairschner have focused Marxist critical lenses upon James's business rhetoric. Critics agree, then, that James portrays a gilded world of seductively available commodities and, in addition, that this imagery reveals a quantifying mentality among his characters and their authors.¹ In my study, I concentrate on the psychological and cultural meanings of this economic imagery as it develops into a distinct pattern over James's thirty-year writing career. Thus, my work constitutes a third phase of critical investigation into this economic motif. The first phase, formalist readings, singled out this motif among James's many image patterns. Marxist critics then began to discuss the cultural context in which James uses these economic terms. In my study, there are four new elements: first, recognition that *all* Jamesian fictions operate as exchange economies. Second, while this law of exchange economics remains constant in the structure of his fictions, my study documents