



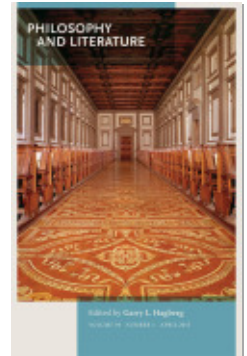
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## Love's Negative Dialectic in Henry James's *The Golden Bowl*

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LOVE'S NEGATIVE DIALECTIC IN HENRY  
JAMES'S *THE GOLDEN BOWL*

**Abstract.** In literary romance love operates as a narrative point of access, suspension, and ending: every element works toward its ultimate consummation. However, in the novels of Henry James, including *The Golden Bowl*, love is not fulfilled because it is intrinsically flawed. Here, I examine the broken nature of Jamesian love through two key philosophers, Jean-Luc Nancy and Martha Nussbaum, who assist in providing a rich theoretical dimension to the question of love's representation. Ultimately, I address how love's negative dialectic is elemental to narrative, thinking, and subjectivity.

SINCE PLATO'S *SYMPOSIUM*, ROMANTIC, sexual love has been characterized as a movement in desire that seeks wholeness and identity since it is, at heart, broken.<sup>1</sup> The yearning for sexual consummation is predicated upon the idea that love completes the self. Copulation provides lovers with a moment of rapture, relief, and oneness, but once satisfied it is again wanting in reawakening the desire to pledge and to make love again. Love operates much like a promise whose constant and insistent offerings seek to recover again and again its inherent brokenness. The promise of love and the many promises of love are divided further by the dual possibility of being fulfilled or unfulfilled, sincere or insincere, true or false. Installed within the oft-repeated, perhaps even banal phrase "I love you" is the possibility of its insincerity. Love's many promises, desires, and appointments are shadowed by, and are structurally contingent upon, its disappointment.

Jean-Luc Nancy's essay "Shattered Love" likens love to a "missed rendezvous" in the sense that its appointments are not always kept.<sup>2</sup> The grandness of love as a romantic ideal, narrative goal, or moral aspiration is shattered many times over in James's novels, including *The Golden Bowl*, even though it has been touted as a rare instance where love is avowed.<sup>3</sup> James's fictions are singular in that they disobey a romantic tradition of affirming sexual love. Even in *The Golden Bowl*, where two marriages survive infidelity, their preservation is based on the sacrifice of romantic, erotic love.

Of particular interest is Nancy's argument that thinking and love are intertwined, which is evocative of *The Golden Bowl's* cognitive and psychological drama. As he writes, there is an "intimate connivance between love and thinking" as the very "word 'philosophy' betrays it. Whatever its legendary inventor might have meant by it, 'philosophy,' in spite of everything—and perhaps in spite of all philosophies—means this: love of thinking, since thinking is love" ("SL," p. 84). Nancy rallies against a Western tradition of opposing love to reason in asserting that love "receives and deploys the experience of thinking" ("SL," p. 85). In *Uphavals of Thought*, Martha Nussbaum also suggests "emotions fuel the psychological mechanism of a reasoning creature" and that "they are the parts, highly complex and messy parts, of this creature's reasoning itself."<sup>4</sup>

In *The Golden Bowl*, his last completed novel, James channels his narrative point of view through the consciousness of two lovers and in so doing, dramatizes the interlocking of thinking and emotion. Protagonists are given psychological depth because their thinking is entangled in their loving. Characters who can reason through love's difficulty, such as Maggie Verver, wield the most power. In *Love's Knowledge*, Nussbaum's close analysis of *The Golden Bowl* provides a fascinating perspective on love, and in particular Maggie's moral struggle to reconcile her love for her father and her husband. Of significance as well is Nancy's observation that in literature, love operates as a dialectical force in creating and resolving conflict.

However, this narrative pattern is disrupted in *The Golden Bowl* (or for that matter in any novel by James) in that there is no final resolution. Instead, love's dialectic is indefinitely suspended within an ambivalent middle that contributes to an overwhelming sense of uncertainty and anxiety. There are perhaps innumerable, unfathomable reasons romantic love is repeatedly unfulfilled in James. One of those could have something to do with James's own smothered sexuality. Heterosexual

romantic love, if it exists at all in James's fictions, is put into conflict with social and fiscal gain, and as a consequence is sacrificed for financial and social success.

Five sections structuring this essay address key elements that lead to love's negative dialectic. The first examines its disappointment, the second its betrayal, the third addresses its capacity to sacrifice and be sacrificed, the fourth considers love's duality, and the final its ambivalence. There are of course many other faces and facets to love that this piece of writing cannot cover, but what it does examine is love's ability to incite and rupture thinking, narrative, and consciousness.

## I

Love's disappointment in *The Golden Bowl* ignites a train of thinking that enables James's novel to develop into an intense psychological drama. By directing the first volume through the point of view of a cash-strapped Italian prince, a mercenary attitude toward love and marriage is established early on. The novel's opening pages introduce the prince as he exults in his successful capture of a future rich wife. As James writes: "He had been pursuing for six months as never in his life before . . . the young lady on whose behalf, and on whose father's, the London lawyers had reached an inspired harmony with his own man of business."<sup>5</sup>

By directing the novel's first volume through Prince Amerigo's consciousness, the character is foregrounded, as is his relationship to others. Significantly, his thought processes concerning his ex-lover Charlotte Stant convey the erotic nature of their past bond:

Charlotte Stant now affected him; items in a full list, items recognized . . . "stored"—wrapped up, numbered, put away in a cabinet . . . He saw again that her thick hair . . . was a shade of tawny autumn leaf . . . —a color indescribable . . . something that gave her at moments the sylvan head of a huntress. He saw the sleeves of her jacket drawn to her wrists . . . He knew her narrow hands, he knew her long fingers and the shape and color of her finger-nails, he knew her special beauty of movement and line when she turned her back . . . He knew above all the extraordinary fineness of her flexible waist . . . (*GB*, pp. 72–73)

Memory and desire interlock in Amerigo's remembrance and renewed appreciation of Charlotte's "tawny autumn leaf" hair, "narrow hands," "long fingers," and extraordinarily "flexible waist." The "perfect working

of all her main attachments” moves his thinking into the carnal sphere of sexual longing; he admires Charlotte as a wonderfully “finished instrument” for all to see and adore (*GB*, p. 73). Eroticism and logic combine in his mental list of Charlotte’s attractions. The repetition of the phrase “he knew” punctuates the passage. James’s emphasis on the verb “to know” reinforces the carnal nature of Amerigo’s knowledge. However, his gaze finally rests upon her “long loose silk purse” that holds an abundance of gold coins and yet is also described as “empty” after being passed through a “finger-ring” (*GB*, p. 73). Charlotte’s purse compares unfavorably to the abundant wealth of her friend Maggie Verver.

In the second volume, Maggie operates as the vessel of consciousness through which the narrative point of view is developed. Through this technique, Maggie’s character comes to enact Nancy’s claim that “thinking, most properly speaking, is love” (“SL,” p. 84), since Maggie’s every waking moment is driven by what she describes as the most abysmal and unutterable love she bears for her husband. Importantly, only when Maggie discovers that her husband is having an affair with her best friend Charlotte does her love become most imperative and visible (*GB*, p. 506). The pain and suffering of Maggie’s discovery ruptures her identity enough to cause a revolution in her consciousness. Nancy’s notion of a fragmented love whose many shards break into and disrupt identity is enacted through Maggie’s characterization.

The intensity of Maggie’s consternation throughout the second half of the novel propels its later action and brings her character into sharp relief. Her shock, disappointment, and resultant suffering awakens an urgency in her thinking that is entwined within the strength of her love. As she confides to her friend Fanny Assingham concerning her knowledge of Amerigo and Charlotte’s affair: “Only—you know it’s my nature—I *think*” while “they on their side thought of everything *but* that. They thought of everything but that I might think” (*GB*, p. 555). Maggie’s anguished thinking transforms her once comfortable married life into a sphere of contention, battle, and anxiety.

Doubt and suffering ignite a process of thought that undoes the pattern of arrangements and appointments that enabled her husband to rekindle his passion for Charlotte. Maggie’s love becomes a form of labor as she painstakingly disrupts the social order that up until the novel’s second volume fostered her husband’s affair. It is perhaps worthwhile to note that in *I Love to You: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History*, Luce Irigaray makes the point that Hegel is “the only Western philosopher to have approached the question of love as labour.”<sup>6</sup> This idea of

love as labor is also related to the social and religious emphasis placed upon the role of sexual reproduction. Irigaray suggests that the pleasure of sex and indeed the possibilities of feminine desire are limited by the idea that for a woman, love is work.

In considering the labor-intensive nature of Maggie's love, Nussbaum writes, "love is not a structure in the heart waiting to be discovered" but "is embodied" in the experience of suffering.<sup>7</sup> Nussbaum's acknowledgment that suffering is intrinsic to the experience of loving is important here. In *The Golden Bowl* Maggie's love is made all the more visible and palpable through her suffering. The hesitations and deliberations of James's late style also parallel the immense control that Maggie exerts over herself in concealing her knowledge from Charlotte and the wider society. Maggie's character is given emotional fullness through James's representation of her suffering, as he writes: "Maggie came on with her heart in her hands; she came on with the definite prevision, throbbing like the tick of a watch, of a doom impossibly sharp and hard, but to which, after looking at it with her eyes open, she had none the less bowed her head" (*GB*, p. 492).

## II

The narrative of *The Golden Bowl* is not based upon love's redemption, or on the recovery of its betrayal, but is conceived on the grounds of its treachery. Maggie's character is enlivened and reinvented by her husband's disloyalty. Her efforts to reclaim her marriage become a rite of passage into the world of adult life and society. As Maggie's thought processes are revealed:

She had never doubted the force of feeling that bound her to her husband . . . it had begun to vibrate with a violence . . . It had come to the Princess . . . that her faculties hadn't for a good while been concomitantly used . . . She would go to balls again—that seemed, freely, even crudely, stated, the remedy; she would take out of the deep receptacles in which she had laid them away the various ornaments congruous with the greater occasions and of which her store, she liked to think, was none of the smallest. (*GB*, p. 330)

Through Maggie, James dramatizes the social and psychological dimension of love as it negotiates social rituals and public occasions. In order for Maggie's love to triumph over Charlotte's, Maggie must take control of social sphere that, up until the second half of the novel, provides

her friend with a public venue in which she can enrapture Maggie's husband. Maggie's retaliation thus involves taking part in public dances as well as adorning herself from the "deep receptacles" with the "various ornaments" that were put away after her marriage. In a world of great occasions and spectacles, affection is also an affectation. Arguably, Charlotte's love for Prince Amerigo never really has a chance in a world of pageantry and ritual, since it lives in secret. In a milieu where appearances mean everything, the public and legal bond of marriage provides Maggie with the moral high ground on which she can repossess her husband.

Nussbaum makes the point that Maggie's love "must live on cunning and treachery; it requires the breaking of moral rules and a departure from the comfortable garden" of her father's domain (*LK*, p. 134). By staying too long in the secure sphere of her father, Maggie leaves open a gap that Charlotte is able to fill. Charlotte's re-entrance into Amerigo's emotional life is made possible by her marriage to Maggie's father, whose immense wealth guarantees her social position as well as proximity to her son-in-law. Charlotte's reentry into Amerigo's heart and high society is dramatized by her theatrical descent of a "monumental staircase," a scene where she is described as being crowned with melting colors, lights, and sounds (*GB*, p. 214).

What is fascinating about *The Golden Bowl* is that its two most emotionally powerful love relationships flourish both within and beyond the gaze of society. The first involves Prince Amerigo and Charlotte Stant, who reunite as lovers under the spectatorship of many, including the Assinghams, after each is married to one of the wealthy Ververs. The second love bond exists between father and daughter, Adam and Maggie Verver, which arguably is the most enduring relationship of all, since it is further validated by Amerigo and Charlotte's deceit.

Nussbaum provides a close reading of Maggie's childhood relationship to her father, making the important point that in order for Maggie to become an adult woman, she must own her place as Amerigo's wife. Nussbaum also makes the interesting argument that Maggie's moral life is predicated upon an ideal of perfection that is expressed through her close relationship to Adam, which remains intact even after she marries the prince. She asserts that Maggie's safe world of untested love is based on "never doing a wrong, never breaking a rule, never hurting" (*LK*, p. 126).

James's couplings between young women and older men—whether they be fathers and daughters or mature bachelors and youthful

single women—carry the scent of incestuousness. For example, Nanda Brookenham in *The Awkward Age* is a particularly poignant character who goes through a difficult transition from childhood to womanhood. Mr. Longdon, a much older man, takes a special interest in her when he realizes that she bears an uncanny resemblance to her grandmother, who was his one great love. Although there is no dramatization of a sexual bond between the two, this does not mean that there is no sexual tension.<sup>8</sup>

Surprisingly, Nussbaum does not consider the implication of incest between Adam and Maggie—even on a purely psychological level—but instead focuses on Maggie’s “moral aspiration” to be unblemished by sin or error and to live in a world untouched by evil (*LK*, p. 126). The ostensible Eden-like innocence of Maggie’s bond to her father is flawed at the outset, enabling its later unraveling in that it is fostered through the accumulated wealth of his ruthless business transactions. The Ververs’ capitalism supports the fiction of a love and a bowl without a crack. Adam’s extraordinary fortune certainly allows his daughter to enjoy all of the material comforts associated with the perfect life, except that his shrewd industrialism undercuts her desire to live faultlessly.

The calculating spheres of business and high society compromise the ideals of innocence and perfection, as well as romantic love. James’s world is indeed fallen, but its descent occurs well before Charlotte and Amerigo’s affair—and Maggie’s eventual knowledge of it—since it is wedded to James’s all-knowing narrative point of view. Furthermore, wealth and power are the overarching mechanisms that compel marriages and run societies. Neither the innocence of children or adults, nor the passions of lovers, can control, overcome, or transcend the material desire for wealth. Even the English class system is rearranged to adapt to the will of capitalism: European princes marry into rich American families and middle-aged American business tycoons marry sophisticated Englishwomen. The lure of money may cohere with the English class system, but in James’s novels it conflicts with eroticism in disabling unequivocal fulfillment.

Prince Amerigo ultimately renounces his erotic bond to Charlotte in preserving his comfortable position as Adam Verver’s son-in-law. The passionate love affair between Charlotte and the prince is therefore sacrificed twice over: first when he leaves her to pursue a wealthy spouse, and second when he reaffirms his position as Maggie’s husband.



## III

Sacrifice is integral to love's power and very existence in *The Golden Bowl*. Maggie's awakening to her husband's infidelity is also about gaining wisdom that requires she give up her best friend Charlotte in order to win back Amerigo. But perhaps more painful, she also has to force a separation between herself and her father in order to keep her husband and stepmother forever apart. In fulfilling this plan, she suggests to Adam that he return to "American City" with his wife Charlotte (*GB*, p. 512). In keeping her husband, Maggie loses her father. This sacrifice is arguably her most painful, for unlike the "beyond everything" love she harbors for Amerigo, her love for Adam is diffuse, intermingled in everything she owns, values, and knows: precious objects; childhood; America; her very blood. Maggie's victory is therefore a pyrrhic one (*GB*, p. 506). She may have adjusted the love relationships between her stepmother and husband, and herself and her father, but her success is undercut by an overwhelming sense of pain and foreboding. There is, then, no unblemished triumph in *The Golden Bowl*—it is sullied by so much sacrificial blood.

Because James directs *The Golden Bowl's* second volume through Maggie's consciousness, Charlotte's interiority is concealed. However, her suffering is not hidden, as it is made evident through Maggie's perception of her as an "object marked by . . . blackness" (*GB*, p. 512). By keeping Charlotte's internal life secret, James conveys her extreme vulnerability to a family who can buy and sell at a whim. The omission of her point of view also makes evident that she not only functions as a beautifully "finished instrument" for Amerigo's pleasure, but also for the rich Ververs (*GB*, p. 73). J. Hillis Miller's *Literature as Conduct: Speech Acts in Henry James* describes the Ververs' capitalism as "chilling" in their acquisition of Amerigo and Charlotte: "In the last, chilling exchange between Adam and Maggie, Adam says, 'Le compte y est. [The amount is there.] You've got some good things.'"<sup>9</sup> Maggie and Adam may have been morally wronged and duped by Charlotte and Amerigo, but the latter have no control over their lives because they are beholden to the Ververs' wealth. They are also the crowning glories of the Ververs' vast empire of possessions.

Charlotte is shipped off to American City as a live export of English style and glamour. Maggie also punishes her psychologically by keeping her uncertain about her knowledge of the affair. Prince Amerigo also is not exempt from Maggie's wrath, as he is kept from knowing whether

Adam knows. In fact, even the reader is kept from knowing if Adam is aware of the affair. James's point of view is unyielding in keeping this secret. Miller's analysis of *The Golden Bowl* examines this question of knowledge and how Charlotte's speech acts reveal her awareness that "none of them will ever know how much Adam Verver knows" (*LC*, p. 257). Gore Vidal also aptly observes that "from Maggie's viewpoint, Charlotte does not know for certain" that she "knows all," which is a "real twist to the knife . . . in a James drama [for] *not* to know is to be the sacrificial lamb."<sup>10</sup> Maggie perjures herself to Charlotte when she denies that she has done her wrong, while all the time knowing that Charlotte has slept with her husband.

In James's calculating social landscapes, passionate, erotic love cannot survive because it cannot be translated into a shared, public idiom. The public sphere of manners and conversations is really the only realm in which ideas, feelings, passions, thoughts, and relationships are given life and credence. One could argue, then, that love is conversational; or rather, it provides an invisible ground through which the art of the conversation is brought into being. Once disappointed, Maggie's love underpins and drives her every thought, act, and conversation. Her love, once described as "unutterable," provides a reason for utterance (*GB*, p. 491).

Susan Winnett's *Terrible Sociality* examines the power of social discourse in the construction and development of *The Golden Bowl*. She identifies Maggie's public battle with Charlotte as a prime example in which the world of appearances changes the nature of one's private relations, because "whoever controls the surface controls the depths."<sup>11</sup> This means that Maggie's love and furious knowledge of her friend's betrayal must never be spoken of. What remains protected throughout the course of their "high fight" is the fact of her knowledge (*GB*, p. 424).

#### IV

In James's novels generally, love never reaches a point of narrative reconciliation or conclusion because it is suspended within a difficult middle of conflict and irresolution. Certainly love is instrumental to James's storytelling, but it does not enable his narratives or characters to achieve completion or fulfillment. This lack of realization is well illustrated in *The Awkward Age*, where Nanda Brookenham's love for Vanderbank is concealed throughout the novel, and is only indirectly conveyed through her sustained resistance to revealing her depth of

feeling. Even when she breaks down at the end of the novel, the exact nature of her passion is never named. What her outburst reveals is an unfathomable interiority. As it turns out, the man she loves rejects her. However, neither Nanda nor the reader are given the opportunity to know the reason or reasons for Vanderbank's desertion—it is implied that he cannot commit because he may be gay, or too corrupted by Nanda's mother's society.<sup>12</sup> These possibilities remain possibilities.

*The Turn of the Screw* provides another instance where the question of love is introduced, but never answered. Readers are told that the Governess's story would never have been told had she not been in love. Who or even what the Governess was in love with is never revealed, which again forecloses love's dialectical potential and narrative fulfillment.<sup>13</sup> *The Wings of the Dove* offers another example where love is neither redemptive nor transcendent. The central lovers, Kate Croy and Merton Densher, scheme to obtain the inheritance of a wealthy and terminally ill young American woman. Although they succeed in acquiring Milly Theale's money, they ultimately break up because of it. Milly's inheritance brings to light moral disparities and values that separate the couple. Kate's famous last line in the novel seals her and Densher's fate as estranged lovers: "We shall never be again as we were!"<sup>14</sup> In many if not all of James's fictions, love is not triumphant or reconciliatory, but inherently flawed and divisive.

In light of this tendency, let us consider Jean-Luc Nancy's ambitious claim that throughout the history of Western narrative, love is repeatedly characterized as a restless, dialectical force in search of identity and place. He asserts that love's desire for fulfillment is encapsulated in the phrase: "Love is the extreme movement, beyond the self, of a being reaching completion" ("SL," p. 86). Such a statement, Nancy argues, contains at least seven variations on the meaning of love and its narrative movement that all revolve around its relationship to the subject.

The first variation has to do with thinking of love as a desirable narrative endpoint; the second as a narrative access point; the third involves thinking about the person in love as a subject made incomplete by it and so is "led by love toward a completion" ("SL," p. 86). The fourth understanding involves the suppression of love's internal division in its completion of the subject—leading to variation five, where the order is reversed and it is love that contains the internally divided subject. This leads to variations six and seven, where the "self of love" and the "self in love" are disentangled in order to reach "beyond the self," only to find identity in "this 'beyond'" that is in fact a disguised version of "the

place of the same" ("SL," pp. 86–87). The dialectic concludes with the reconciliation of love and the subject as each finds fulfillment in the other and through the otherness of the other ("SL," p. 87).

In all of these formulations, love is presented as "double and contradictory, even though it also contains the infinite resolution of its own contradiction" ("SL," p. 87). In this way, love is dual in both underpinning and exceeding the subject, contradictory in exposing and completing the subject, and reconciliatory in healing and fulfilling the subject. In all of these instances, the "subject" is substitutable with either "narrative" or "thought," in that love functions as both a vehicle and source of action. Thus love operates as a mystical foundation in its ability to complete, disrupt, and also exceed subjectivity, thinking, and narrative. Ultimately, the idea is that love has the power to put subjects in relation to all manner and matter of things—including beloveds, ideas, situations, thoughts, and even one's very self. However, love is not in itself a state that can be located or pinned down, but rather is the means through which one can find place. This is why Nancy argues that "love is always missed by philosophy, which nevertheless does not cease to designate and assign it" ("SL," p. 90).

From the chivalric romances of the medieval period to eighteenth-century gothic romances, to Jane Austen's nineteenth-century marriage dramas, right through to contemporary women's films and soap operas, love is destined to fulfill its dialectical fate in operating as a point of narrative access, sustenance, and end. In romance, love is meant to be transcendent in transporting lovers and beloveds beyond their world of conflict, error, and imperfection. It is supposed to provide a reason for drama, conflict in drama, and also drama's resolution. In romance, every element is engineered toward love's ultimate triumph and reconciliation. In such narratives, love's power is divine in its ability to liberate characters from their embedded cultural and social environments. However, in James's novels, love cannot transcend the social sphere in which it is experienced and articulated because it is neither divine nor transcendent, but messy and incomplete.

## V

The golden bowl itself operates as a powerful emblem and guiding motif of flawed, broken love. It is also a key narrative agent in providing Maggie with material evidence of her husband's past relationship with Charlotte. Ironically, Charlotte once offered the bowl as a possible

wedding gift to Maggie and the prince while enjoying a secret rendezvous with him on the eve of his marriage. Suspecting a flaw concealed beneath the bowl's gilded surface, the superstitious groom discourages her from making the purchase.

However, Charlotte's interest in the bowl, visibly undiminished, encourages the shopkeeper to keep it aside for her future acquisition. She never returns. Much later, searching for a birthday present for her father, Maggie stumbles upon the same store, shopkeeper, and bowl, and buys it. Soon after, the bowl's vendor pays Maggie a visit to apologize for its hidden flaw. At her home, he sees photographs of the prince and Charlotte, recognizes the glamour couple, and provides evidence of their secret past. Maggie receives much more than a bowl and an apology—she possesses the gift of real knowledge that is rare in a James novel.

Love may be compromised, betrayed, and broken in *The Golden Bowl*, but it is also made visible through insults and degradations. Moreover, like the hidden crack beneath the bowl's gilded surface, it was never whole, complete, or perfect to begin with. In the words of Fanny Assingham: "What I take her to be waking up to is the truth that all the while she really *hasn't* had" her husband (*GB*, p. 310). The "her" that Fanny refers to is her friend Maggie, as she tells her husband, Colonel Bob Assingham, that Charlotte has had the prince's heart all along.

James's novel closes on an uncertain, even ambivalent note: Adam Verver and his young bride, Charlotte, depart for American City, leaving Maggie and the prince alone for the first time in their married lives. The final scene between the now-exclusive couple, Maggie and Amerigo, is awkward and anxious as he tries "too clearly, to please" in assuring his wife that he now sees "nothing but" her—presumably because she is all he has left. Loss and failure, so palpable in the force of his words and the strange light in his eyes, are too much for Maggie as she buries her face "in his breast" (*GB*, p. 580).

Gregory Alan Phipps's analysis of *The Golden Bowl* asserts that Maggie's victory over Charlotte is not "hollow" because she has "every indication that Amerigo has lost his attraction to Charlotte and truly *does* desire Maggie."<sup>15</sup> This reading is possible since James's fictions, famous for their ambiguity and obliquity, encourage speculation. Yet the belief that the prince "truly" desires Maggie regardless of her wealth is unlikely. In a slightly different way, Nussbaum also seeks to retrieve a sense of resolution in the last scene between Maggie and her husband by arguing that, in the spirit of Aristotelian tragedy, Maggie knowingly surrenders

herself to a fallen world and to a man in accepting the “fullness” of her husband’s “passion” (*LK*, p. 137). However, the reader cannot ignore an overwhelming sense of isolation and claustrophobia permeating the scene of their final embrace. Amerigo’s last words to Maggie—“‘See’? I see nothing but *you*”—indicates a narrowing of his vision (*GB*, p. 580).

Love’s disappointment in *The Golden Bowl* propels thinking, drama, and conversation. However, as already suggested, there is no third movement or final stage of reconciliation where love is recovered without question or ambivalence. Love remains suspended within an anxious middle that keeps characters alive to their environments, and readers alert to James’s language. The uncertainty and difficulty of this middle is not necessarily a shortcoming or limitation but leaves open future possibilities for thinking, narrative, and subjectivity. Everything in James, especially love, is negotiable and contingent. *The Golden Bowl*, sustained and assembled through interior states of mind and exterior dialogues, reveals and enacts the constant turnings and transformations of language and perception. Much like a conversation, love is never quite finished, since we can always find more to know, think, feel, and say.

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1. In Plato’s *Symposium* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989), the notion that love completes the self is articulated by Aristophanes: “‘Love’ is the name for our pursuit of wholeness, for our desire to be complete” (p. 29).
2. Jean-Luc Nancy, “Shattered Love,” *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1991), p. 9; hereafter abbreviated “SL.”
3. David McWhirter, *Desire and Love in Henry James: A Study of the Late Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 143.
4. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 3.
5. Henry James, *The Golden Bowl* (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 44; hereafter abbreviated *GB*.
6. Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History*, trans. Alison Martin (London: Routledge, 1996), p.19.
7. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 267–68; hereafter abbreviated *LK*.

8. Mr. Longdon first sees Nanda Brookenham in her photographic portrait and is deeply moved by her vivid likeness to her grandmother, Lady Julia, which foreshadows his future interest in her. See Henry James, *The Awkward Age* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), pp. 41–42.
9. J. Hillis Miller, *Literature as Conduct: Speech Acts in Henry James* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), p. 289; hereafter abbreviated *LC*.
10. Gore Vidal, “*The Golden Bowl* of Henry James,” *Armageddon? Essays 1983–1987* (London: St. Edmundsbury Press, 1987), p. 200.
11. Susan Winnett, *Terrible Sociality: The Text of Manners in Laclos, Goethe and James* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 216.
12. In the final stages of *The Awkward Age*, Nanda and Vanderbank conduct a very oblique conversation in which it is suggested that he has not only abandoned her as a future husband but also abandoned her mother’s society (pp. 355–60).
13. Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw and The Aspern Papers* (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 147.
14. Henry James, *The Wings of the Dove* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p. 457.
15. Gregory Alan Phipps, “Desire, Death, and Women in the Master-Slave Dialectic: A Comparative Reading of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* and Henry James’s *The Golden Bowl*,” *Philosophy and Literature* 35 (2011): 248.