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Realistic Portrayal of Capitalism, Human Relations, and Cultural Change in James's *Washington Square*

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Abstract:
This article situates James's novel Washington Square in a cultural context. It explains that the paraphernalia of James's realism in the novel explores the shifting values in nineteenth-century American life resulting from the change it had undergone after the Civil War from a land-oriented civilization to a one increasingly concerned with money and commerce. James explains in the novel the effect of this shift upon structuring the human relations of his characters. Being naïve and innocent of the new commercial life of corporate America, Catherine Sloper, the heroine in the novel, is displayed as an object of purchase transacted through the solid and fluid techniques of her father Dr. Sloper and the fortune-hunter Morris Townsend. The father, who was brought up in the old agrarian America, is confronted now by the commercial New York society and has to struggle for power against Townsend who seeks to better himself financially by gaining the affections of Dr. Sloper's daughter. Both Dr. Sloper and Townsend try to dominate and possess Catherine who is viewed by her father as a dressed valuable object that attracts the attention of fortune-hunters. Sensing her weakness and commodity-like value, the father and Townsed exercise power over Catherine, disregarding her passions and interests. She stands silenced and frozen between the firm and scientific behavior of her father and the fluid and romantic adaptability of the fortune-hunter.
The historical resonance in James's novel regarding nineteenth-century American materialism and capitalistic thinking and the way they structure human relations is explicit and informative. However, James does not state historical realities directly; rather, he presents them implicitly and in a novelistic form. James's realism, in this sense, is not only about historical realities but is also about the ways by which history can be presented in a fictional form.

America had undergone after the Civil War traumatic social, economic, moral and political change, and the realists came thereafter to use fiction to reflect these changes and even to interpret the effects on people of these various kinds of change. The nature of this change is evident in the rise of the city, materialism, prevailing social masks and social hypocrisies, expanding immigration, rapidly increasing wealth, and acceptance of technology as the American way of life. The American people's faith in a just life decreased drastically in a Darwinian materialistic country in which man is controlled by social and economic circumstance. Conspicuous consumption spreads. People in general began to be concerned with just making money and spending that money on buying valuable items and dress for the sake of giving others the impression of wealth. These social and economic conditions provided a rich material for the novelists, who fictionalized them with different degrees of emphasis and frankness. A perfect harmony between the social and intellectual history and a close reading of the texts of the period is hard to maintain. Nevertheless, any nineteenth-century reader can discover how those texts reflect a wide range of themes and thoughts of the milieu. This paper explains how James dramatizes some of these conditions in his novel *Washington Square*, which reflects conspicuous historical realities of the period, such as materialism and the way it affects human relations.

In his article, "Realism and Regionalism," Eric Sundquist views realism as a new phenomenon unleashed upon the American scene during the 1870s and 1880s by rabid industrialization and urbanization in the post-Civil War period. He judges realism as a "developing series of responses to the transformation of land into capital, of raw material into products, of agrarian values into urban values, and of private experience into public property."[i] This definition of realism fits well James's realism in *Washington Square*. James sets *Washington Square* during the period 1830-1840, and views this setting from the perspective of the late 1870s (the date of composition of the novel). By the 1830s a commercial American world was in the process of development.[ii] James explains this clearly at the very beginning of the novel when he describes the setting of Dr. Sloper's living place: the doctor's own house and neighboring houses (which all look the same) were supposed, thirty years ago, to represent a kind of industrial uniformity. James writes:

Some three or four years before this [the 1820s], Doctor Sloper had moved his household gods uptown, as they say in New York. He had been living ever since his marriage in an edifice of red brick, with granite copings and an enormous fanlight over the door, standing in a street within five minutes' walk of the City Hall which saw its best days (from the social point of view) about 1820. After this, the tide of fashion began to set steadily northward, as, indeed, in New York, thanks to the narrow channel in which it flows, it is obliged to do, and the great hum of traffic rolled farther to the right and left of Broadway. By the time the Doctor changed his residence, the murmur of trade had become a mighty uproar, which was music in the ears of all good citizens interested in the commercial development, as they delighted to call it, of their fortunate isle. Doctor Sloper's interest in this phenomenon was only indirect—though, seeing that, as the years went on, half his patients came to be overworked men of business, it might have been more immediate-and when most of his neighbors' dwellings (also ornamented with granite copings and large fanlights) had been converted into offices, warehouses, and shipping agencies, and otherwise applied to the base uses of commerce, he determined to look for a quieter home. The ideal of quiet and of genteel retirement, in 1835, was found in Washington Square, where the Doctor built himself a handsome, modern, wide-fronted house.[iii]

The first American industrial revolution took place in the 1830s, and America was therefore in the process of shifting from an agrarian community to a commercial one. Rapid industrial growth during this period and the spread of corporations engendered a change in perception to life and human beings—the start of materialism and its consequences. And in the 1870s (the date of the novel's composition) America had undergone serious changes, such as the spread of consumer culture and social disguises—what Ian Bell calls "the ravages of materialism."[iv] As Bell argues, this period became a "paper world," a theater of "speculators," merchants, dealers, and, particularly, witnessed "the beginnings of consumer culture."[v]Dress became of great significance to people as a kind of social mask, and a materialistic world governed by the solid techniques and manipulations of the market place spread little by little. Karen Halttunen writes, "the danger of the 'unlocked heart' lies precisely in its singleness of angle, expressed through candor and sincerity, within a world that is increasingly reliant on multiplicity, on performance, for its procedures . . . . An increasing attention to fashion and cosmetics, literal mechanism for altering the self, from the 1850s onwards resulted in 'dress as a form of disguise' whereby 'middle-class women' were clearly leaving behind the sentimental insistence on the candid countenance."[vi] During this period, Halttunen adds, "the social-self became little more than a cluster of appurtenances, a collection of masks, surfaces, and performances."[vii] Consumerism is apparent in *Washington Square*. The focus on Catherine's dress is emphasized throughout the novel. For example, at one point in the novel Dr. Sloper views his daughter as "overdressed," and then he addresses her: "You are sumptuous, opulent, expensive …. You look as if you had eighty thousand a year" (23). Catherine replies: "Well, so long as I haven't," and the father tells her: "So long as you haven't you shouldn't look as if you had" (23). Catherine, James writes, "suddenly developed a lively taste for dress," to conceal the "dryness" of her nature and her plainness (14). Literally, she is commodified, and can be viewed as just a piece of garment; her clothes come to play an important role in her life. They become a means to express herself: "Her great indulgence of it [her clothes] was really the desire of a rather inarticulate nature to manifest itself; she sought to be eloquent in her garments, and to make up for her diffidence of speech by a fine frankness of costume" (14). The obsession with dress and luxury in the 1850s makes James write of consumerism in general in the United States:

The standard of luxury in the United States thirty years ago was carried by no means so high as at present, and Catherine's clever father took the old-fashioned view of the education of young persons. He had no particular theory on the subject; it had scarcely as yet become a necessity of self-defense to have a collection of theories. It simply appeared to him proper and reasonable that a well-bred young woman should not carry half her fortune on her back. Catherine's back was a broad one, and would have carried a good deal; but to the weight of the paternal displeasure she never ventured to expose it, and our heroine was twenty years old before she treated herself, for evening wear, to a red satin gown trimmed with gold fringe; though this was an article which, for many years, she had coveted in secret. It made her look, when she sported it, like a woman of thirty; but oddly enough, in spite of her taste for fine clothes, she had not a grain of coquetry, and her anxiety when she put them on was as to whether they, and not she, would look well. (15)

It is from this world of materialism, consumerism, as well as social hypocrisy and disguise that James's composition of *Washington Square* emerged. The historical representation in the novel, however, is not direct. As Joseph Conrad writes, James is a "historian" who once claimed in a critical study that for the novelist, "the standing of the historian . . . [is] the only adequate one."[viii] But James is not a mere historian, for, as Stuart Sherman asserts, "A part of the historic sense he indubitably has, and far more historical learning is implied in his work than is explicit in it."[ix] A reader who is familiar with James's style of writing and the history of early nineteenth-century America can detect James's historicization of nineteenth-century American life. First of all, money, dress, and social disguises are emphasized throughout the novel, and came to be a kind of novelistic paraphernalia for James. Bell writes: "Throughout the period of all these changes [in America], it is money and its forms that provide the clearest index to the complex structure of the transforming world from which James was writing."[x] It is on "the manners, customs, usages, habits, forms, life-style" and other life-material that James the artist lives, as he once wrote to his friend William Dean Howells.[xi]

In most of his novels and short fiction James talked about the effects of money when misused in nineteenth-century American life. He condemned it, and projected it as a stimulus for greed. As his letters and autobiography show, he detests money as an end, and so do his characters, who renounce materialism and seek self-idealization. In his novel *The Portrait of a Lady* his heroine Isabel rejects her fortune to idealize herself, and Newman in *The American* tells Madame de Cintre: "I cared for money-making, but I have never cared so very terribly about money." Stephen Spender points out that James associated

money with "the moral incongruity and decadence of the world he was studying, that without this stained and dishonored money, a life that was civilized and intelligent was particularly impossible."[xii] All through his fiction the "symbolic value" of money is "damned."[xiii] Further, for James, money comes to hurt when it is misused. If it is well invested and used for good, its advantages will prevail. Spender writes: "The Symbol of corruption is not the wealth, but the misapplication of wealth in our civilization . . . . Money is, in James's books . . . a corrupted tradition."[xiv] In James's *The Wings of the Dove* Merton Densher and Kate Croy damn themselves for plotting to have Milly Theale's fortune; and in James's *The Ivory Tower* the father, Abel Gaw, is rendered very greedy and his daughter is full of rage at his greed. When the father dies, the daughter refuses to inherit his wealth, which she views as a tool of corruption and destruction. Moreover, in most of his early tales written during a period of consumerism (1860s-1970s), James asserts the dangerous use of money as an end in itself. In these tales James highlights the devilish effect of money on the human being and praises its idealistic side. Money, James implies in these tales, can smother one's identity and alienate a person from the world of ideals—the ideals of love, art, and understanding. In these tales some of the characters are obsessed with money to the degree that they do not admit anything worth living for in the world except money. Other characters in his tales come, like Isabel in *The Portrait of a Lady*, to sense the devilish effect of money and seek therefore to escape it. In "A Light Man," for example, two characters are contrasted, Max (the narrator) and Theodore. Max is interested in the cash value of money as an end in itself, and James asserts his "latent wickedness."[xv] He knows only "hate" (73). In contrast, Theodore is interested in translating money into human love and kindness. Love is a word that does not exist in Max's world; he remarks to Theodore: "I don't understand the word [love] in the sense you attach to it . . . love means quite another thing for me." In "Master Eustace," on the other hand, we face the spoiled Eustace, who is driven by his greed for money. He "has a keen relish for luxury."[xvi] Eustace knows only how to spend money, as James describes him: "Eustace . . . knows only how to spend" (361). He is both selfish and spoiled. He disapproves of his mother's second marriage because of blind "vanity and egotism" (368), feeling that in this action his mother has "cheated," "betrayed," and "dishonored" him (368). Finally, his "monstrous egotism" and his "rotten" arrogance and "pride" make him treat his mother as one of his property items. In "Guest's Confession," another tale about the bad effects of money, Edgar Musgrave admits without apology that "man's property is man's person."[xvii] His obsession with money leads him on his death-bed to say "I might get better and rich" (441). His imagination is fully moneyed: "I hate," he says, "to see money bring in less than what it may. My imagination loves a good investment" (385). In "Poor Richard" and "A Landscape Painter," we encounter two characters who sense the dangerous side of money and thus try to escape it. Gertrude Whittaker wants a man to propose to her for the moral value of her character, not for her money. Her feeling that her money "had done her an incurable wrong inspired her with a profound disgust for the care of it."[xviii] Like Gertrude, Locksley in "A Landscape Painter" believes that money had done him wrong. He first thinks that Esther loves him for his self (not for his money which he does not tell her about), but he discovers later that she married him for his money (she learned that he is rich from his dairy).[xix]

James's condemnation of money as an end in itself continues in *Washington Square*. In this novel, he explains how the human being comes to be commodified and how the human being's interest in money and power may lead him to ignore his humane duties toward other people in his society. The plot of *Washington Square* is simple in its framing. Time is running out for Morris Townsend, and he must find some place to land. Before meeting Catherine, he has obviously known of her inheritance from her mother, some ten thousand dollars a year, and he can figure out for himself her expectations upon the death of her father, so he makes his way to her. But this is not all: the father himself also comes to abuse his daughter by exerting on her a power imbibed from the bourgeois history of the masculine dominating the feminine. Townsend is "awfully sociable" (27), and has a lot of talents; but he is not a gentleman. His struggle is not for Catherine the individual, but for her money. When Townsend knows that Catherine will be deprived of her fortune because her father disapproves his marriage to her, he leaves her alone and desperate. He tells her that he is going away to New Orleans for some business in cotton, which will bring him six thousand dollars. When Catherine asks him "What will be the use of six thousand dollars if you die of fever? [the yellow fever spread in New Orleans]" (145), Morris gets angry. Finally, he leaves her forever because her estimated cash value has become too low. In other words, Morris commodifies Catherine, and views her as an object of purchase. Dr. Sloper senses Morris's bad intentions and so he rejects him as a husband for his daughter. But Dr. Sloper himself, like Townsend, had married a woman of "promising capital" (6). Dr. Sloper shares several other qualities with Townsend: both are intellectuals and have impressive talents, especially the "display of style" in their speech. Dr. Sloper's manner in life does not set him far apart from Townsend: "He was very witty, and he passed in the best society of New York for a man of the world—which, indeed, he was, in a very sufficient degree" (6). As Robert Emmet Long puts it clearly:

The antagonism between them [Dr. Sloper and Townsend] is particularly strong because they are in many ways similar. Dr. Sloper has been a successful man, and knows it, but Morris, too, is worldly, and is alert to ways in which to advance himself. Even in their personal background, similarities can be noticed. Dr. Sloper came from modest circumstances and married an heiress. He married . . . "for love" . . . and managed a successful career that was in every way honest. One man has married an heiress, the other wishes to, and between them there is great opposition; it is as if the doctor, for all his nobility, recognizes an assaultive or aggressive impulse in Morris that he understands personally only too well.[xx]

Caught between the two shrewd men who are to some extent antagonists, the daughter's suffering begins. Townsend makes her fall in love with him easily and the father opposes this love. Being a commodity, Catherine is rendered submissive and obedient to the father's orders. The daughter solicits the reader's sympathy all through the novel. She is attracted to Townsend, whom her father views rigidly as "not what I call a gentleman; he has not the soul of one. He is extremely

insinuating; but it's a vulgar nature. I saw through it in a minute. He is altogether too familiar—I hate familiarity. He is a plausible coxcomb" (40-1).

In *The American Scene* (1907), James compares America, after an absence of many years, to a "huge Rappaccini garden, rank with each variety of the poison plant of the money-passion."[xxi] Dr. Sloper's personality is close to Rappaccini's in Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "Rappaccini's Daughter": the latter is a scientist and is overwhelmingly proud of his intellect. Hawthorne describes him as a "scientific gardener"; a man with "intellect and cultivation,"[xxii] who takes care of some "poisonous" plants in a small garden. Although Rappaccini knows how fatal these plants are, he involves his daughter Beatrice in an experiment with these plants: he asks her to come down to the garden to inhale the poisonous odor of the plants. Beatrice's body, as a result, is nourished with poison: the poison fills her veins, and her breath becomes poisonous. When Beatrice complains to her father that he inflicted a "miserable doom" (1161) upon her, he accuses her of being foolish to think like that, for she is no longer weak now. The father boasts that she has a marvelous gift and can "quell the mightiest" with her deadly breath (1161). Beatrice, Hawthorne explains toward the end of the story, is sacrificed for her father's scientific attitude. The "powerful antidote" in Beatrice's case, Hawthorne writes, "was death" (1162). In a similar manner, Dr. Sloper repeats Rappaccini's experiment when he ruins his daughter's life to fulfill his own scientific and rigid temper. He is so proud, "extremely thorough," "philosopher," "observer" (6), and "theoretic" (5). He has an "intellectual nature," and "he cares for nothing but facts—he must be met by facts" (82). And of him his daughter says: "His ideas, his reasons .... They are so—so terribly strong."As he tells his daughter: "What I tell you is the result of thirty years of observation" (41). He never relents, exactly as "geometrical proposition" does not. He is a real representation of the American scientific temper during the Gilded Age, which relents only to reason and logic. He follows several scientific ways to track out Townsend's nature. He takes notes, observes, and inducts. He visits Townsend's sister Mrs. Montgomery and learns from her how selfish Townsend is. He tries to communicate the facts he has gathered about Townsend to Catherine, the simple ignorant daughter, but she is in blind love with Townsend. He tells her that "You [Catherine] know a part of him [Townsend]—what he has chosen to show you. But you don't know the rest" (59). This is Dr. Sloper's "theory" of Townsend. Further, he hypothesizes that Catherine's marriage to Townsend would be a failure, for its basic motivation is money and not "moral worth." Dr. Sloper tells Catherine: "but the principal thing that we know about this young man—who is, indeed, very intelligent—leads us to suppose that, however much he may value your personal merits, he values your money more" (59).

Being theoretical as he is, the father's style of speech with the daughter is rendered very rigid. As L. C. Knights asserts, "His [Dr. Sloper's] is a mode of speech that never varies with the person or the occasion: it is dry, ironical, and wary: it is self-contained, with none of the flexibility of a genuinely responding mind. It is a form of speech designed to dominate."[xxiii] The father's satirical comments cover every movement of hers. This satire adds a comic touch to James's realism in the novel. The comic effects come from the idea that although the father is scientific and successful in the commercial market, he cannot understand, interpret, and deal appropriately with his daughter's love for Townsend. Rather, he ignores her passions and treats her very rigidly. This mistreatment of Catherine led several critics to consider her a tragic figure. These tragic and comic elements are there in the novel, but do not negate the dominant mode of writing in the novel, namely, realism, and more specifically historical realism. Catherine is not comparable, for instance, to Shakespeare's tragic heroes and heroines. She is not Juliet or Macbeth. Rather, simply speaking, she represents a historical reality in nineteenth-century America: the girl who is victimized by America's materialism and by her own innocent and submissive nature. She is too weak, for instance, to resist her father. After the father asks Catherine to give up Townsend, she, James tells us, was very afraid and felt "tongue-tied" (19). Catherine's submissiveness and weakness led several critics to assert that she is rendered in the novel as a commodity manipulated by both her father and Townsend. Long writes: "In their will to dominate, both men regard Catherine as they might 'property' that is in contention."[xxiv] Both of them try to have their own way with Catherine, but in two different styles—the father by employing ironic solid scientific language, and Townsend by using the soft language which reflects his own fluid and easy-going nature.[xxv] The competition of these two figures over Catherine continues throughout the novel. For example, at Elizabeth's party, Townsend tells Catherine that he is deeply in love with her, he dances with her, and quickly gets close to her. Later, he uses her as a tool to convince her father of his intentions. Because Townsend fears the effect of the father on Catherine, he tries to persuade her to be on his side, and he asks her several times to choose between him and her father. He comes even to criticize her father: "Your father has insulted me . . . he has taunted me with my poverty . . . . He laughed at me for having no position . . . .He will tell you I am mercenary .... It's a big word, but it means a low thing. It means that I am after your money" (50-4). The father's view of him, however, never changes: "He strikes me as selfish and . . . . I don't dislike him in the least as a friend, as a companion. He seems to me a charming fellow, and I should think he would be an excellent company. I dislike him, exclusively, as a son-in-law" (72-3). Dr. Sloper does like Townsend as a companion because he feels they have similar personalities, matured by an interest in money and the making of money. But while Townsend is flexible and manipulative, Dr. Sloper is firm and rigid in his negotiations. It is interesting that in *Washington Square*: *Styles of Money* Bell constructs Catherine as a valuable purchase for Townsend. Money, commodification and social disguises, Bell implies, are overtly projected via James's presentation of Catherine, Townsend, and Dr. Sloper. Literally speaking, James takes Townsend and Dr. Sloper to represent the competing styles of commercialism over the commodified victim (the object of purchase Catherine), and, in Bell's words, "Dr. Sloper as a 'hard' money figure (associated with the solidity of the earlier Republican values evinced by Jefferson and Adams who recognized the 'cheat' of any discrepancy between the bank bill and the quality of gold and silver which sanctioned it) and Townsend as belonging to the world of 'soft' money, the paper world of extended

credit."[xxvi] Catherine, on the other hand, is the commodity of exchange. This commodified position of Catherine is further asserted when we know that she is represented by James from the start as naïve and ignorant girl who understands nothing of the mechanics of the commercial market. Her simplicity and pathetic nature posit her as an object of purchase in the hands of both Dr. Sloper and her lover. Almond tells us, for example, that Catherine "dresses very richly" (61), and James adds that she "was sentimental; she had a passion for little secrets and mysteries—a very innocent passion, for her secrets had hitherto always been as unpractical as addled eggs …. she had been so humble in her youth" (206). Mrs. Penniman declares that Catherine is "very stupid" (179), and that she is "an object of affection and solitude" (171). She falls in love with the "natural" Townsend at the first glance. Her ignorance of the real complexity of human nature makes her misjudge Townsend, who turns to be a fortune-hunter.[xxvii] Townsend proves to be at the end masked. When he leaves Catherine, and does not come back, James uses free indirect style to project Catherine's feelings:

It was almost the last outbreak of passion of her life; at least, she never indulged in another that the world knew anything about. But this one was long and terrible; she flung herself on the sofa and gave herself up to her grief. She hardly knew what had happened; ostensibly she had only had a difference with her lover, as other girls had before, and the thing was not only not a rupture, but she was under no obligation to regard it even as a menace. Nevertheless, she felt a wound, even if he had not dealt it; it seemed to her that a mask [emphasis added] had suddenly fallen from his face. He had wished to get away from her; he had been angry and cruel, and said strange things, with strange looks. She was smothered and stunned; she buried her head in the cushions, sobbing and talking to herself. (148)

Catherine's father treats her constantly as a weak ignorant woman, and he criticizes her simplicity all through the novel. For him, she is just a "weak young woman with large fortune" (89). Townsend, on the other hand, represents the fluidity of the market because of his fine "natural parts" (180), confidence in manner, and ironic-soft tone of voice. Catherine is caught between them, and in Bell's words, "is victimized as the commodity of human form."[xxviii] James contrasts Catherine to Townsend and Dr. Sloper indirectly in his narrative via certain gestures that give the reader hints about Catherine's character. For example, Catherine's language is unbalanced and her syntax is broken—both means of asserting her quietude. After dancing with Morris at Elizabeth's party Catherine is mesmerized, and it is Morris who "did all the talking" (20). During most of her confrontations with her father, she just "stared, in a long silence" (56). And in her reaction to her father's opposition to her relationship with Townsend, James writes of Catherine's feelings: "The idea of a struggle with her father, of setting up her will against his own, was heavy on her soul, and it kept her quiet, as a great physical weight keeps us motionless." She is so "quiet and irresponsive" (13). Townsend comes to like her only when she is quiet. When he was discussing with her the possibility of his leaving to New Orleans for business, Catherine protests slightly at first, and Townsend silences her by his powerful male style. James writes, "Morris bent his head and kissed her forehead," and says to her "When you are quiet, you are perfection …. but when you are violent, you are not in character" (147). And tired of her quietude, her aunt Mrs. Penniman tells her, "You must act, my dear; in your situation the great thing is to act" (79). When she decides to inform her father of her relation with Townsend, she prefers to meet him during a very silent night in her father's library. James writes: "At last the clock struck eleven, and the house wrapped in silence; the servants had gone to bed. Catherine got up and went slowly to the door of the library. Then she knocked" (91). Even when she cries, her tears, James writes, "flowed very silently." The years of her life, she tells Townsend at her final meeting with him, "have passed very quietly" (177). Catherine's silence and the quietude of her life lead critics like Bell to view her as a "frozen" commodity, and as a human being who cannot oppose the materialism represented by Dr. Sloper and Townsend: "The disengagement of Catherine's words from a communicative, actively dialogical position between speakers approximates, again, to the frozen condition of commodities. Her broken syntax shares the same arena as Sloper's balanced syntax: both register, in their different ways, the effects of the marketplace."[xxix] Needless to say, James's presentation of Catherine the way she is in the novel—"weak" and "poor" (the word "poor" is used of her several times in the text [pp. 13, 14, 29, 60, 71, 79, 100, 101, 111, 127, 130, 158])—reflects another historical reality, namely, the position of women as weak, or to use Barbara Rasmussen's phrase, "the weaker sex.[xxx]

James is a Victorian moralist. He experienced the Victorian life in the 1860s and 1870s and was affected by their social standards and attitudes to sexuality and gender distinction. The Victorians gave a great focus to the biological and psychological differences between men and women. Moreover, they conducted several studies to highlight the sex/gender distinction, and thus to maintain the Victorian hierarchical social order. In his book, *Sexuality in Victorian Fiction*, for example, Dennis Allen explains how the Victorian culture was taken by social categories and "ranks" with regard to gender difference upon which "the Victorian culture is constructed."[xxxi] In her article, "The Body Versus the Social Body in the Works of Thomas Malthus and Henry Mayhew," Catherine Gallagher, on the other hand, generalizes that the Victorians' strategy of maintaining the class system is denying biological universality by insisting on "taxonomies" of bodies.[xxxii] The Victorians considered women as fallen, subjected, subordinate, and inferior to men. They are not created to mingle in any kind of political action, because all government belongs to man. A woman thus, the Victorians believed, is required to submit herself and her fortunes to man. By the same token, women were also considered the weaker sex in pre-Civil War America, as several critics assert, and were meant to yield to men. James sensed this cultural attitude to women in both England and America, and, being a realist, he came to express it sincerely in his novel. This led Rasmussen to consider James's novel not merely "a classic realist text" for the historical reality it represents, but also a kind of "expressive realism"—in the sense that the narrative discourse of the novel "denies its own materiality and offers itself as the vehicle of truth …. Hence it invites reader identification [women in this case]."[xxxiii] Lauren Berlant agrees with Rasmussen's point in viewing the novel as a "case study" of the "patriarchal society" in

pre-Civil War America where women are deprived of their rights and are dominated by men.[xxxiv] There are several places in the novel where James signifies the position of women (Catherine, her aunt and Townsend's sister Mrs. Montgomery) as weak. Catherine, for example, is viewed as "ignorant," "pathetic," and "has no sense of her rights." When Morris decides to leave New York, she cannot control her emotions and is described as "bursting in tears."She is projected by James as victimized by the male because of her "intellectual limitations" (119), sentimental nature ("her passion possessed her"), simplicity, and helplessness. Her father tells her, "You have taken up young Townsend; that's your own affair. I have nothing to do with your sentiments, your fancies, your affections, your delusions." She does not try to resist in the first two thirds of the novel, and she is portrayed by James as passive and "unpractical."At the very beginning of the novel, Catherine senses her own imperfections as a female, and she "perceived that there were in effect good reasons why she should have a companion of her own *imperfect* [emphasis added] sex" (9). Even her father's sister, Mrs. Penniman, is posited in the novel as a weak and submissive woman. In several occasions Mrs. Penniman does not have the courage to oppose her brother with regard to his opinions of Catherine's relation to Townsend; most of the time she is silent like Catherine. James writes:

If Catherine was quiet, she [Mrs. Penniman] was quietly quiet, as I may say, and her pathetic effects, which there was no one to notice, were entirely unstudied and unintended. If the Doctor was stiff and dry, and absolutely indifferent to the presence of his own companions, it was so lightly, neatly, easily done, that you would have had to know him well to discover that …. But Mrs. Penniman was elaborately reserved and significantly silent. (111)

In comparing Mrs. Penniman's personality with Townsend's, James writes: "Mrs. Penniman was not a brave woman, and Morris Townsend had struck her as a young man of great force of character, and of remarkable powers of satire—a keen, resolute, brilliant nature, with which one must exercise a great deal of tact" (31). By the same token, Mrs. Montgomery, Townsend's sister, is rendered weak and submissive to Townsend. She used to give him money, and she could not confront him with his tyranny and irresponsibility toward her and her children. It is Doctor Sloper who awakens her to Townsend's real nature and his selfishness. And taking her as an example of her fellow women, Sloper sums up the woman's position in relation to men like Townsend:

'You women are all the same! But the type to which your [Mrs. Montgomery's] brother belongs was made to be the ruin of you, and you were made to be its *handmaids and victims* [emphasis added]. The sign of the type in question is the determination—sometimes terrible in its quiet intensity—to accept nothing of life but its pleasures, and to secure these pleasures chiefly by the aid of your complaisant sex. Young men of this class never do anything for themselves that they can get other people to do for them, and it is the infatuation, the devotion, the superstition of others that keeps them going. These others, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, are women. What our young friends chiefly insist upon is that someone else shall suffer for them; and women do that sort of thing, as you must know, wonderfully well.' The Doctor paused a moment, and then he added, abruptly 'You have suffered immensely for your brother!' (73)

Like Bell, Rasmussen acknowledges the historical reality in the novel (i.e. weak women in a capitalist society)—which Catherine signifies in her relationship to both Townsend and Dr. Sloper—when she quotes Bell in his "Money, History and Writing in Henry James: Assaying *Washington Square*": "[James] exploits forms of abstraction and human paralysis, entailed in the commodity production of industrial capitalism."[xxxv] Catherine then functions in the novel as a weak object; she is transacted, and it is men who make the transaction. She is left toward the end of the novel victimized by the solid and fluid techniques of both Dr. Sloper and Townsend. Deserted by Townsend, she, James writes, is left alone "for life, as it were" (180).

References

i. Eric Sundquist, "Realism and Regionalism," *Columbia Literary History of the United States*, ed. Emory Elliot (NY: Columbia UP, 1989), 501.

ii. Walter Nugent explains in *The Money Question During Reconstruction* the increasing attention of people to money and the making of money during the reconstruction period (1867-1879). He notes, "no one realized in 1865, but money was destined to become the chief perennial issue in national politics for over thirty years . . . . Its particular dimensions were established in almost all-important ways during the Reconstruction years." Walter T. K. Nugent, *The Money Question During Reconstruction* (NY: W. W. Norton, 1967), 21-2. Other critics who discuss money and commercialism during the reconstruction period, the time of composition of *Washington Square*, are Irwin Unger, *The Greenback Era: A Social and Political History of American Finance 1865-1879* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1967); and Robert P. Sharkey in *Money, Class and Party: An Economic Study of Civil War and Construction* (Baltimore: John Hopkins P, 1967).These two writers provide the most detailed and reliable guide to the history of money during the period, and they offer excellent bibliographies of the massive literature concerned with the subject.

iii. Henry James, *Washington Square* (NY: Penguin Popular Classics, 1995), 15-6. Further references to page numbers of the novel will appear in parentheses in the main body of the paper.

iv. Ian Bell, Washington Square: *Styles of Money* (NY: Twayne Publishers, 1993), 145.

v. Ibid., 145.

vi. Karen Halttunen, *Confident Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1982), 188.

vii. Ibid., 123.

viii. Joseph Conrad, "The Historian of Fine Consciousness," *The Question of Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays* (NY: H. Holt and Company, 1945), 44.
ix. Stuart Sherman, "The Aesthetic Idealism of Henry James," *The Question of Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1945), 80.
x. Bell, Washington Square: *Styles of Money* (1993), 60.
xi. Leon Edel, ed. *Henry James: Letters*, vol. II, 1875-1883 (Cambridge: Mass, 1975), 276.
xii. Stephen Spender, *The Destructive Element* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983), 27-8.
xiii. Ibid., 60.
xiv. Ibid., 62.
xv. James, "A Light Man," *The Complete Tales of Henry James*, (1868-1872), vol. II., ed. Leon Edel (Philadelphia and NY: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1962), 97. Further references to page numbers in this short story will appear in parentheses.
xvi. James, "Master Eustace," *The Complete Tales of Henry James*, (1868-1872), vol. II., ed. Leon Edel (1962), 352. Later references to page numbers will appear in parentheses.
xvii. James, "Guest's Confession," *The Complete Tales of Henry James*, (1868-1872), vol. II., ed. Leon Edel (1962), 388. Later references to page numbers will appear in parentheses.
xviii. James, "Poor Richard," *The Complete Tales of Henry James*, (1864-1868), vol. I., ed. Leon Edel (1962), 139. Later references to page numbers will appear in parentheses.
xix. James, "A Landscape Painter," *The Complete Tales of Henry James*, (1864-1868), vol. I., ed. Leon Edel (1962).
xx. Robert Emmet Long, *Henry James: The Early Novels* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983), 90-2.
xxi. James, *The American Scene* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1968), 57.
xxii. Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Rappaccini's Daughter," *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, vol. I, 3rd ed. Ed. Nina Baym (NY, London: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1989), 1144. Later references to page numbers will appear in parentheses.
xxiii. Qtd. in Bell, *Henry James: Fiction as History* (NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1984), 25.
xxiv. Long, 92.
xxv. In his book Washington Square: *Styles of Money* (1993), "Solidity" and "Fluidity" are key terms in Bell's discussion of James's novel. He associates "solidity" with realism because it renders life "closely and in comprehensive detail" and "fluidity" with romanticism because it "feels free to render reality in less volume and detail" (4). Then, Bell moves to relate both terms to the new form of James's fiction. As he writes: "I havechosen these latter terms [solidity and fluidity] carefully: they mark the intimacy between the new from we find in James [indirect historical realism] and the changing nature of contemporary commerce to which he responds" (4). Bell explains that during America's first industrial revolution through to the 1830s and 1840s (the period of the setting of *Washington Square*) "the value of an object was determined by its [solid] inherent properties," but during the second industrial revolution of the 1870s (the period of the novel's composition) the value of a commercial object was determined by "the dictates of the marketplace, by the [fluid] laws of supply and demand" (5). Dr. Sloper's solidity and rigidity are set against Townsend's fluidity in the novel: "The Solidity of Dr. Sloper (whose scientific temperament registers the valorization of technology during America's second industrial revolution), with its capacity for fixing things against change and movement, is visibly set against the fluidity of Morris Townsend, who mirrors all the mobility, novelty, and uncertainty of the changing world" (5).
xxvi. Bell, *Henry James: Fiction as History* (1984), 46.
xxvii. Several critics comment on Townsend's devious morality, accusing him of being a "fortune-hunter," "villain," and an "adventurer." For example, John Locas refers to Townsend's "coarseness," and describes him as a "coward." John Locas, "*Washington Square*," *The Air of Reality: New Essays on Henry James* (London: Methuen, 1972), 42, 55-6. F. W. Dupee asserts that Townsend cruelly deserts Catherine. F. W. Dupee, *Henry James* (NY: William Sloane Associate, 1951), 64; and Millicent Bell findshim "insincere." Millicent Bell, "Style as Subject: *Washington Square*," *Sewanee Review* 83 (1978), 19-38.
xxviii. Bell, Washington Square: *Styles of Money* (1993), 5.
xxix. Ibid., 98.
xxx. Barbara Rasmussen, "Notes and Comments: Re-Producing James: Marxism, Phallocentrism and '*Washington Square*," *Journal of American Studies* 23 (1989), 66.
xxxi. Dennis Allen, *Sexuality in Victorian Fiction* (London: U of Oklahoma P, 1993), 29.
xxxii. Catherine Gallagher, "The Body Versus the Social Body in the Works of Thomas Malthus and Henry Mayhew," *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth-Century*. Ed. Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Lanqueur (Berkeley: U of California P, 1987), 83-106.
xxxiii. Rasmussen, 56.
xxxiv. Laurent Berlant, "Fancy-Work and Fancy Foot-Work: Motives for Silence in *Washington Square*," *Criticism* 29 (1987), 440.
xxxv. Qtd. in Rasmussen, 63.