

of Schneider's distinction eludes me. Indeed, the remainder of his argument suggests that in practice the distinction does not really hold for Schneider either—that he simply does not think the world of *The Golden Bowl* very ambiguous after all.

Nor do I understand the privileged status that images are said to occupy in helping us solve our critical dilemmas. Looking closely at patterns of imagery is undeniably useful, and I have no doubt that we must grant such patterns more weight when other evidence, such as the commentary of the late lamented “reliable narrator,” is absent. But why endow images alone with such significance, arbitrarily isolating them from dialogue, say, or plot? Ritualistically to invoke “images” in this fashion is to overlook the obvious fact that the meaning of a novel is a function of all its language, whether overtly figurative or not. I am equally puzzled by the contention that every image is “an evaluation” of the subject to which, in Schneider's rather mechanical phrase, “it is applied.” Are the moral implications of the concrete things of this world always so clear or so one-sided? Do all metaphoric vehicles have moral or spiritual implications? Surely our reading of a particular image depends largely on the context in which it appears, and context and image alike may be ambiguous. Not all figurative beasts, even, are beastly. Examining the structure of images in James's novel will not alone settle our debate.

Indeed, I do not see how we can separate the images in *The Golden Bowl* from their imaginers. If Charlotte and the Prince are to be condemned as “irredeemable materialists,” then what are we to make of Adam Verver, in whose impressive collection the Prince figures as a “representative precious object,” a thing with “the great marks and signs,” as we are told in Adam's first meditation, that “he had learnt to look for in pieces of the first order” (XXIII, 140)? Such language raises as many questions about the millionaire who buys, I think, as about the prince who allows himself to be bought. The Ververs' “rare power of purchase” may acquire a redemptive as well as an economic force, but the darker implications of all this buying and collecting of persons remain. Even at the very end of the novel the Ververs do not always distinguish clearly between their spouses and their sofas: “Mrs. Verver and the Prince fairly ‘placed’ themselves, however unwittingly, as high expressions of the kind of human furniture required aesthetically by such a scene.” “You've got some good things,” the millionaire says to his daughter, and “Maggie met it afresh—‘Ah don't they look well?’” (XXIV, 360). Whatever the Princess' “spiritual aspirations,” in Schneider's terms, her triumph here is grounded unmistakably in the material of this world.

In fact, though Schneider repeatedly argues that

Maggie somehow transcends “mere” appetite and passion, what is most striking about this last Jamesian Princess is her passionate desire to win back her worldly Prince, her refusal simply to renounce and die. Maggie hardly “rises above” desire, as Schneider claims, though she is capable, of course, of delaying gratification, of temporarily postponing sexual surrender to the Prince in order to achieve her own ends. What Schneider terms her “rising” is less a spiritual ascent than an emotional awakening, a half-conscious decision to abandon her Oedipal innocence for the pleasures and burdens of adult love. Indeed, all this language of vertical motion, this talk of “rising” to “higher” worlds “above,” seems to me to guide us through *The Golden Bowl* by an alien map: James's last novel is not *The Wings of the Dove*.

And despite her desire to “pay all,” Maggie is not in the end the only one who pays: Led away to her “doom” on that sinister if silken leash (XXIV, 287), her voice sounding like the “shriek of a soul in pain” (p. 292), Charlotte too shares some of the cost of their terrible situation. That it is through the consciousness of Maggie herself that we imagine Charlotte's suffering only intensifies the moral ambiguities here: For all her imaginative identification with Charlotte's pain, for all the sympathetic tears even that she sheds, Maggie continues to act so as to inflict that pain. Maggie weeps, but Maggie wins.

Given the conflicting needs and desires that James imagines here—including, that is, Maggie's own “selfish desire” for her husband—I agree with Schneider that the pattern the Princess imposes appears to be the least painful solution. It is impossible, indeed, to balance this emotional equation *without* pain. But to speak of Maggie's “correcting” her “mistakes” in the second volume of *The Golden Bowl* is to gloss over the terrible necessities that she faces, to fail to comprehend how good and evil are to the very end of this novel painfully mixed. If James's last completed novel both moves and disturbs us, it is precisely by postulating a heroine who does not choose the moral purity of renunciation, who chooses rather to live and struggle in a world in which “everything's terrible, cara—in the heart of man” (XXIV, 349).

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VIXI

To the Editor:

With reference to R. G. Peterson's “Critical Calculations: Measure and Symmetry in Literature” (*PMLA*, 91, 1976, 371), although we all know that Latin and other foreign languages are not studied the way they used to be, it does come as a bit of a shock

to be told, in a supposedly learned article, that *VIXI* means "I have conquered." It means "I have lived." Or is *vici* being mispronounced? Or, since the reference is to Satan, are we being alerted to watch out for lies? So much for numerology!

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Mr. Peterson replies:

Edward Le Comte is, of course, correct: *VIXI* means not "I have conquered" but "I have lived." I do regret that my error was such a howler; I do not believe, however, that there is any less reason to doubt—as I was doing in the paragraph in question—the value of reading Roman numerals as words. I failed to realize what I should have realized (*viz.*, *VIXI* not *VICI*) when first reading the passage in Christopher Butler's *Number Symbolism* (London: Rout-

ledge & Kegan, 1970), and the error was there engendered that grew so huge in my comment. Butler was describing some of the numerological theories from Pietro Bongo's *Mysticae Numerorum Significationis Liber* (Bergamo, 1585) and speculating on their application to *Paradise Lost*: "According to Pristine Theology, he [Bongo] says, it [the number 17] has always been a detested and loathed number. He points out that in Roman numeral form it may spell *VIXI*—and Satan conquers Eve" (p. 153). It seems to me that the correct translation of *VIXI* as "I have lived" makes even more doubtful Butler's claim that the number of lines (xvii) in Satan's proem (*PL* ix, 532-48) has significance, and I am grateful to Le Comte for catching my mistake. His "So much for numerology!" has been a painful reminder to me that one gets nowhere without correct beginnings.

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