Chapter Three
Paradox of the Gift and Strategies of Gift-Wrapping

The exchanges in *The Wings of the Dove*, in the form of giving and taking the gift, reveal the paradoxical nature of the gift. The process of giving and taking, rather than being disinterested and unilateral, shows a circulation in which a gift given will be followed by a countergift from the receiver. Maud’s manipulation of Kate’s marriage, for example, is to exchange Kate’s wifehood for Mark’s title of nobility, which will in return proliferate Maud’s symbolic capital and thus her material capital. Kate’s plan on Merton’s liaison with Milly, as a duplication of Maud’s exchange, also takes Merton’s love as a gift to exchange for Milly’s wealth. Milly, unaware of Kate’s plan, is inactive to the Londoners’ preying on her. In this regard, it seems impossible to give a pure gift without asking any repayment in the London society depicted in *The Wings of the Dove*.

Examining the paradoxical nature of the gift revealed in the exchanges in *The Wings of the Dove*, this chapter first focuses on the similarity between the gift and the commodity. Next, this chapter will discuss how the exchangers deal with the paradox embedded in gift giving, taking action to conceal the fact of profit gaining. Making use of the situations they confront in the exchanges, the gift givers in *The Wings of the Dove* are enabled to pretend that their gifts are gratuitously offered.

I. Paradoxical Nature of the Gift

Mauss’s theory of the gift considers that gift giving is an exchange which asks
for return rather than a representation of the giver’s largess. A case in point is the Maori notion of gift returning which Mauss uses to explain the obligation of return. From the Maori practice of gift giving, Mauss observes that the gift given is not an inanimate object but “alive” and “personified” (10). It is because “to give something is to give a part of oneself” (Mauss 10). The gift, in this regard, brings with it the “hau” (Mauss 8)—the spirit of the gift. That is, when a gift is given, the hau is simultaneously brought to the receiver and creates a “bond between persons” (Mauss 10). Accepting the gift with its hau, the receiver is burdened with a sense of indebtedness and is urged to return a countergift.¹ Thus, a gift given is like a “debt” (Mauss 41) or “loan” (Mauss 22) to be repaid. C. A. Gregory, following Mauss’s study of the gift, also assumes that “gift economy [. . .] is a debt economy” (19).

Explaining the obligation to return with the Maori concept of hau, Mauss nonetheless raises a contradictory contention that the gift is a “hybrid” (70) of generosity and calculus. As can be seen in most parts of The Gift, Mauss by explaining the obligation to return has presented an economic interflow between the gift and the countergift. But in the end of the book, he states that the “interest” and “economy” of the gift cannot be probed with Western economics (74) and that “the expenditure and exchange” in gift giving is “other than economic ones” (75). Mauss’s conclusion, from Jacques Derrida’s perspective, reveals an irreconcilable contradiction. On the one hand, Mauss “reminds us that there is no gift without bond,

¹ Although Mauss is criticized as mystifying the analysis of the gift with the aboriginal interpretation of the obligation to return (Lévi-Strauss, Introduction 47-49), Mauss’s discussion on the Maori concept of hau is of critical value for it points out the personality embedded in the gift. With this idea Mauss shows the bond between the gift giver and the object he/she offers, which is furthered in the American anthropologist Annette Weiner’s study on the inalienability of the gift. More discussions on the bond between the gift giver and the gift can be found in Frow, 109-114.
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without bind, without obligation or ligature; but on the other hand, there is no gift that does not have to untie itself from obligation, from debt, contract, exchange, and thus from the bind” (Derrida 27).

Mauss’s survey apparently shows the paradox of the gift that the gift exchange is incompatible with the notion of the gift as a gratuitous offer. As Derrida indicates, “[f]or there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, countergift, or debt” (13). That is, a gift should be offered without any speculation on the material return and without the receiver’s gratitude, which Pierre Bourdieu terms as “symbolic capital” (Logic 112). If a gift is followed by a countergift, the gift giver is rewarded or recompensed for his/her previous offer, and the gift is no longer a gratuitous one. Derrida explains that “[a]s soon as the donee knows it is a gift, he already thanks the donator, and cancels the gift. As soon as the donator is conscious of giving, he himself thanks himself and again cancels the gift by re-inscribing it into a circle, an economic circle” (Derrida and Marion 59). In this respect, the purity of generosity is contaminated or even destroyed by such a repayment. The gift, therefore, annuls itself once it is recognized as a gift.²

However, the self-annulment of the gift is nearly unavoidable, for the gift can hardly secede from the economic circulation in which it moves. According to Derrida, the traffic of the gift produces an economy, which “implies the idea of exchange, of circulation, of return” (6). That is, the gift circulates in a “revolution” (Derrida 6) following “the path of Ulysses”—striving to “return to the point of departure, to the

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² Derrida holds that a pure gift demands that it should be returned neither by a material countergift nor by the receiver’s gratitude. The recognition of the given object as a “gift,” that is, the recognition of the giver’s “generosity,” nonetheless implies that the gift is repaid symbolically. The gift, in this regard, is taken out of the realm of total disinterestedness and brought into an economic circulation.
origin, also to the home” (Derrida 7). Traveling in the circle, the gift is inevitably followed by a counterpart which goes after the previous one and strives to balance the effort of the original giver.

As the reciprocity of the offer and the repayment seems unavoidable, the purity of the gift can be saved only by a complete “forgetting” (Derrida 35) of the act of giving. As long as the donor and the donee do not recognize that they are giving or receiving a gift, what is given can be unintentional and unconditional. These qualifications of the gift, however, can scarcely be filled in the general practice of gift giving. In this regard, Derrida comments that “the gift is the impossible” (7). Instead of referring to the gift as being impossible, Derrida attempts to show that the gift’s “possibility is sustained by its impossibility” (Caputo 141). Since the purity of the gift is utterly ruined once it is given or recognized as a gift, the presence of the gift is the very embodiment of the impossibility—the paradox that a truly free gift does not exist.

II. Similarity between Gift Exchange and Commodity Exchange

When the exchanges in *The Wings of the Dove* are probed with the fundamental paradox of the gift, it is explicit that the gift givers—the Londoners and the American newcomer Susan—participate in an economic circulation in which their possessions are provided to obtain the objects of desire in return. Kate and her elders, as gift givers in the system of gift exchange, do not offer a disinterested gift but are conscious of their acts of giving. Since the gifts are intentionally given to exchange for the countergift, the gifts recognized as such are no longer genuine ones out of the
givers’ generosity. The paradox of their gifts, being projected onto their acts of gift giving, shows a blurred distinction between the gift exchange and the transaction in the market. As love and money are gifts and countergifts transferred in the exchanges in *The Wings of the Dove*, the marital exchanges through gift giving seem to take place in a “marriage market” (McCormack 69) where gifts are like commodities to be sold.

The similarity between the characters’ gift exchanges and the transaction of commodities can be first illustrated by the case of Kate’s marriage. In the marital exchange planned by Kate’s father (Lionel) and Kate’s aunt (Maud), it is utility rather than generosity that the gift givers hold as the principle of exchange. Lionel, for example, weighs his costs and benefits when making the decision on Maud’s offer to keep Kate at Lancaster Gate. On the surface, Lionel seems to agree on Kate’s separation from the Croys, but his calculation of repayment lies beneath his approval of the plan. Intending “to get something for giving up” (*Wings* 11; bk. 1) his relation with Kate, Lionel refers to his insistence on Kate’s staying with Maud as “the basket with all my eggs” (*Wings* 13; bk. 1). From Kate’s relation with Maud, he is to make “the final fatal sponge [. . .] well-saturated and well applied” (*Wings* 14; bk. 1). Taking the daughter as one of his private possessions, Lionel estimates the present transference of his ownership of Kate and the potential profit from her marriage. His consideration of Kate, in a word, shows no concern about the familial tie. Rather, it reflects his value judgment based on utility.

Maud, likewise, applies her business acumen to wielding her governing power on Kate’s marriage. Asking Kate to leave her father, Maud calls her keeping Kate as
“investments” (Wings 59; bk. 2) by which Maud as the director of the ensuing exchange can make a profit. She believes that Kate, like a treasure in safekeeping, will “appreciate” and thus attract “a high bidder” (Wings 59; bk. 2) who can afford it. It is only natural that in the eyes of Kate, Maud appears as a “Britannia of the Market Place—Britannia unmistakeable but with a pen on her ear” (Wings 22; bk. 1). Before giving away anything, either material or immaterial, Maud always calculates the expense and income by such doing. For both Lionel and Maud, therefore, gift giving is merely a means to the end. What they disperse at present, like that of the capitalist, is never futile but is aimed at balancing the budget or reaping a greater profit in return. As a result, Lionel and Maud as gift givers are close to businesspersons who seek to make the most out of the investment.

Like an object of interest transferred from Lionel to Maud, Kate assumes a position oscillating between a gift and a commodity. On the one hand, she is a gift by which Lionel and Maud manage to build up marital alliance with Lord Mark. In such an indirect way, the two parties of the exchange amass and divide their symbolic and material capital without making any public bargain. On the other hand, Kate’s position is analogous to that of a commodity in transaction. Not only does she find herself threatened to be a good “chalked-marked for auction” (Wings 3; bk. 1), but she is also appraised for her own value in the marital exchange. For instance, Kate notices that Lionel “judged […] her own appearance, […]; recognizing, estimating, sometimes disapproving, what she wore, showing her the interest he continued to take in her” (Wings 5; bk. 1). With careful observations of Kate’s features and clothing, Lionel finds “pleasure that she was handsome, that she was in her way a tangible
value” (Wings 6; bk. 1, emphasis mine).

What Lionel regards as Kate’s value is her exchange-value in the marital bargains, which lies in her physical beauty and in her being an unmarried woman. 3 Before Kate is priced and offered to the husband, her exchange value has been assessed by “the ratio at which it will exchange with other commodities” (Lee 8). Comparing Kate’s value with Marian’s, Lionel contends that Marian “might be handsome,” but she is “widowed and almost in want” and thus has “no such measure” (Wings 6; bk. 1). Kate, on the contrary, is “so precious a capture” (Wings 9; bk. 1) that she can be desirable and priced well in the marital exchange.

Objectified and weighed for her exchangeability, Kate is further exhibited as a commodity by Maud. Concerning her own position under Maud’s operation, Kate describes that “I am [. . .] on the counter, when I’m not in the shop-window; in and out of which I’m thus conveniently, commercially whisked: the essence, all of it, of my position, and the price, as properly, of my aunt’s protection” (Wings 199; bk. 5). Because Kate has received Maud’s offer to stay at Lancaster Gate, she cannot but endure the patroness’s control over her actions. During the dinner party held at Lancaster Gate, Merton also discerns that Kate was always [. . .] under arms; living up, every hour, but especially at festal hours, to the ‘value’ Mrs Lowder had attached to her. High and fixed, this estimate ruled on each occasion at Lancaster Gate the social scene; so that

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3 According to Irigaray, women’s exchange value in the male-dominated exchange of women lies in her body as a signifier of masculine economy. Different from women’s use value seen in her ability to reproduce, the “virginal woman, on the other hand, is pure exchange value. She is nothing but the possibility, the place, the sign of relations among men. In and of herself, she does not exist: she is a simple envelope veiling what is really at stake in social exchange. In this sense, her natural body disappears into its representative function” (Irigaray 184-185).
he now recognized in it something like the artistic idea, the plastic
substance, imposed by tradition, by genius, by criticism, in respect to a
given character, on a distinguished actress. As such a person was to dress
the part, to walk, to look, to speak, in every way to express, the part, so all
this was what Kate was to do for the character she had undertaken, under
her aunt’s roof, to represent. (Wings 240; bk. 6)

From Merton’s perspective, Kate’s performance at the dinner party is merely a
sociable “drama” (Wings 241; bk. 6) directed by Maud. Kate, acting out every detail
demanded by Maud, is presented in the manner of luxury goods on display. Among
the beholders of the staging of Kate’s desirability, Merton occupies “a paying place in
front, and one of the most expensive” (Wings 241; bk. 6). Yet he is not a bidder
allowed to participate in the tender for such a “commodity.” Ironically, Merton feels
like an audience “relegated to mere spectatorship” (Wings 241; bk. 6).

In Lionel’s and Maud’s manipulations of the value of the gift, Kate’s physical
appearance is reduced to a tool by which the givers augment their capital. Their
calculations and manipulations of Kate’s exchange value, to all appearances,
demonstrate what Georges Bataille refers to as the restricted or the “restrictive
economy” (Accursed Share 25). According to Bataille, such an economy can be
detected in the capitalist mode of consumption among the bourgeoisie. In the market
that follows the capitalist principle of exchange, people never give without return.
Rather, their expense must be a proper use of resources of scarcity so that they can
gain as much repayment as possible. What is more, the returning profit will be
conserved either for future spending or as the source of further reinvestment. Under
the “fundamental necessities of production and conservation” (“Notion” 117), the
exchangers in the market take account of accumulation over expenditure. As a result,
it generates a restricted economy that confines interpersonal relations to those based
upon production and reproduction.

Such a distribution of capital, to Bataille, is proved to be restricted because it
“surrenders the possibilities inherent within society to immediately perceived
necessities that are often illusory” (Richardson 68). Opposing the restricted economy,
Bataille means to point out the deficiency of utility and rationality in the capitalist
mode of exchange. Bataille states that the “material utility” is on the one hand
“limited to acquisition (in practice, production) and to the conservation of goods; on
the other [hand], it is limited to reproduction and to the conservation of human life”
(“Notion” 116).

As Jean Baudrillard points out, Bataille’s criticism of utility is its being “an
apparently positive principle of capital: accumulation, investment, depreciation” (192).
Against the principle that prices an object by its utility and exchangeability, Bataille’s
critique of restricted economy discloses a value judgment which is a

non-Marxist critique, an aristocratic critique, because it aims at utility, at
economic finality of capitalist society. The Marxist critique is only a
critique of capital, a critique coming from the heart of the middle and petit
bourgeois classes, for which Marxism has served for a century as a latent
ideology: a critique of exchange-value, but an exaltation of use-value.

(Baudrillard 192)

Bataille’s attack on the capital apparently differs from that of Marx, despite that both
of their ideas show the relatedness between value and social hierarchy. Marx, though assailing the capitalist manipulation of exchange-value of the commodities, adopts Adam Smith’s notion that the use-value—“utility of a thing” (Marx 13)—is what allows an object to enter the market. Unlike Marx, Bataille makes a radical break with use-value and exchange-value alike which trap people in an “order of things” (qtd. in Richman 19) and thus deprives people of subjecthood and autonomy. In the market economy, people are urged to consume and conserve with rationality. The capitalist mode of consumption, in other words, reveals the restricted economy regulated by the calculation of costs in proportion to returning profits.

The gift exchanges in *The Wings of the Dove*, unfolding the restricted economy aimed at production and conservation, disclose the capitalist mode of exchange. From the arrangement of Kate’s marriage, it can be discerned that Lionel and Maud are analogous to investors. Not only do they calculate the potential benefits in return, but they also estimate the value of the gift to be given away. Kate’s plot against Milly, as a duplication of the previous ones, also appears as a commercialized exchange between the vendor and the vendee. On the surface, Merton’s love is a gift in the marital exchange between Kate and Milly. Nevertheless, the countergift to Kate’s offer is Milly’s money. Gift giving, in this sense, is confined to an economic circulation and even resembles a mercenary exchange in private.

The similarity between the gift and the commodity confirms the paradox that

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4 Marx’s stance on the use-value can be further seen in the following paragraph from Denis Hollier: “‘The usefulness of a thing’, Marx writes, ‘makes of this thing a use-value.’ This usefulness or use-value of the thing is therefore inseparable from its material support. It has no autonomous, independent existence. But it is at the same time a property of the thing that is only realized in the consumption, that is, the destruction, of the thing” (136).
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gift giving as a form of exchange inevitably contains a circulation of gifts and countergifts. On the one hand, giving a gift is a way to show one’s generosity, which can help construct and consolidate the amity between the giver and the receiver. On the other hand, a gift, whether it is intentionally given, will be returned with some material or symbolic countergift. The interflow between gifts and countergifts not only fouls the purity of the gift but also contaminates the giver’s liberality shown by gift giving. Due to the paradox of the gift, the exchangers’ offer can be given with interest and be taken as a means of making profit. Accordingly, it is hard to distinguish the gift exchange from the transaction. After all, the exchanges in *The Wings of the Dove* fall between two stools—they are neither offers without interest nor transactions in the market.

**III. Gift-Wrapping as a Way to Conceal the Interest**

Since the boundary between the exchange of gifts and the transaction of commodities is blurred in the Londoners’ exchanges, the gift givers have to resort to skills of gift-wrapping to deal with the incongruity embedded in their gift giving. Pertaining to the efficacy of wrapping the gift, Philip Mirowski states that

[. . .] the market origins and the calculation of intentions cannot of course be effectively banished from the act of gift-giving in a market culture, but they can be disguised in such a way that the donor signals his willingness to suppress those phenomena. The wrapping of a gift pretends that it is temporarily extracted from the mundane level of commerce, and that its identity and its value [. . .] are irrelevant to the occasion. (454)
Although gift givers can hardly preclude the calculus from their offers, they can have their gifts exquisitely decorated or wrapped. The cover, dazzling the receiver of the gift, serves to screen the interest from the act of giving and stress the purity of the gift. By means of the veil, the gift can be transitorily decommercialized and thus be transmitted to the receiver without the giver’s gains and losses being noticed.

Gift-wrapping, therefore, is a way to deal with the paradoxical nature of the gift and to maintain its totality for the moment.

The gift givers in *The Wings of the Dove*, in the same manner, employ strategies to conceal the fact that they gauge the costs and benefits behind gift giving. To make their interests invisible, they make use of the unspoken or unspeakable facts related to their plans. Lionel’s unnamable disgrace, for instance, provides an excuse for both his own plan on Kate and Kate’s scheme against Milly. Due to Lionel’s scandalous past, the Croy family has been suffering from the ruined reputation and the deficiency of symbolic capital and material capital. Caught in such a condition, Lionel is not eager to do anything positive to revive the name of the family. On the contrary, he strives to make money from Kate’s value in marital exchanges and by haggling over every penny with his daughters. Displeased by Kate’s “dividing with Marian her scant share of the provision their mother had been able to leave them,” Lionel blames Kate for not “divid[ing] it with him” (*Wings* 17; bk. 1).

What Kate does under the pressure from Lionel, however, is to reap money from Milly instead of making clear her father’s dishonor which causes their poverty. When Merton inquires what “Mr Croy had originally done” (*Wings* 47; bk. 2), Kate only replies that
I don’t know—and I don’t want to. I only know that years and years ago [. . .] something or other happened that made him [Lionel] impossible. I mean impossible for the world at large first, and then, little by little, for mother. [. . .] And it was, oddly enough, my sister who first made out that he had done something. I can hear her now—the way, one cold black Sunday morning when, on account of an extraordinary fog, we hadn’t gone to church, she broke it to me by the school-room fire. [. . .] I suddenly heard her say, out of the fog, which was in the room, and apropos of nothing: “Papa has done something wicked.” And the curious thing was that I believed it on the spot and have believed it ever since, though she could tell me nothing more [. . .]. (Wings 47; bk. 2, emphasis mine)

Without specific and reliable information to verify Marian’s statement, Kate insistently accuses her father of having committed a certain mistake. Even though she is asked later by her mother not to believe in any rumor about Lionel (Wings 48; bk. 2), it does not remove her distrust of him. In the face of Merton’s curiosity about Lionel’s wrongdoing, Kate still keeps to her conviction of Lionel and persists in inheriting her “father’s dishonor” as “[a] part of me” (Wings 49; bk. 2).

Kate’s obstinate belief, when it comes to her exchange with Milly, betrays her maneuver to wrap the gift. Since Lionel’s mysterious scandal leads to the Croys’ poverty, Kate is enabled to justify her pursuit of money by presenting Merton’s love to Milly. Had Lionel’s dishonor proved a misunderstanding, there would be no justification for Kate’s exchange with Milly. The concealment of the fact about Lionel, in other words, is necessary for Kate to continue the exploitation of Milly. To
implement her gift exchange, Kate has to hang the truth in doubt rather than clarifying what exactly the wicked thing is done by her father. So Lionel’s past can neutralize both his own profit seeking and Kate’s desire for Milly’s wealth. Keeping the scandal in suspense, Lionel and Kate as gift givers can mask their calculations and maintain the genuineness of their gift giving.

Like the unknown past of Lionel, Milly’s unspecified illness also allows Kate to obscure her aims and estimations under the exchange. Although the physical condition of Milly is never made explicit, Kate’s plan of sending Merton to please Milly is already made on the premise of her certainty of Milly’s death. If Milly did not die after receiving Kate’s gift, the latter would lose both Merton’s love and Milly’s money. But when Merton asks if Milly suffers from “a bad case of lung,” Kate only makes a random answer that “[n]ot lungs, I think” (*Wings* 254; bk. 6). Kate goes on with a winding statement that

> [s]he [Milly] won’t die, she won’t live, by inches. She won’t smell, as it were, of drugs. She won’t taste, as it were, of medicine. No one will know. [. . .] I believe that if she’s ill at all she’s very ill. I believe that if she’s bad she’s not a *little* bad. I can’t tell you why, but that’s how I see her. She’ll really live, or she’ll really not. She’ll have it all or she’ll miss it all. Now I don’t think she’ll have it all. (*Wings* 254-255; bk. 6)

Like her reaction to the mysterious scandal of Lionel, Kate’s description of Milly’s illness is given without discovering the precise malady of her. Aided by the uncertainty of Milly’s illness, Kate creates a space for herself to adjust the interpretation of Milly’s death to the situation at the moment. For example, to
intensify the propriety of her exchange with Milly, Kate convinces Merton that this exchange is intended to help Milly before her death. Stressing on the fact that Milly is dying and is lacking of the experience of being in love, Kate asks Merton to “make things pleasant for her [Milly]” (*Wings* 254; bk. 6). Persuaded by Kate’s explication of her purpose of gift giving, Merton begins to show “pity for the poor girl who had everything else in the world, the great genial good they, alas, didn’t have, but failed on the other hand of this [tender passion from men]” (*Wings* 255; bk. 6). Out of compassion for Milly, Merton gradually accepts that Kate’s plan will do good to the dying girl. Such is the way the explication of Milly’s illness distracts Merton from noticing Kate’s interest in making money behind her gift giving.

Nevertheless, Kate’s interpretation of Milly’s illness varies with Merton’s reluctance to deceive Milly. As he is unwilling to “make up to a sick girl” (*Wings* 256; bk. 6), Kate defends herself with the fact that Milly “doesn’t affect you as sick” (*Wings* 256; bk. 6). Since Merton admits earlier that Milly “has none of the effect [. . .] of an invalid” (*Wings* 254; bk. 6), Kate asks him not to worry about Milly’s health in the process of the gift exchange. But when Merton complies with Kate’s instructions to visit Milly, he shows his doubts again. This time he finds it difficult to figure out why Kate can endure her fiancé’s flirtation with another girl. To dispel his suspicion, Kate replies that Merton can “break off [. . .] with Milly” (*Wings* 284; bk. 6) if he distrusts her, but she will “stay and explain to her [Milly] [. . .] that you can’t stand her” (*Wings* 284; bk. 6). Although Merton shows his concern about Milly’s reactions to such an explanation of his departure, Kate simply says:

‘[. . .]. It will of course greatly upset her. But you needn’t trouble about
that. She won’t die of it.’

‘Do you mean she will?’ Densher presently asked.

‘Don’t put me questions when you don’t believe what I say. You make too many conditions.’ (Wings 284-285; bk. 6)

Kate seems to permit Merton liberty to retreat from the exchange, but her mention of Milly’s death actually warns him of the outcome of his withdrawal from the exchange. Unable to cope with Kate’s manipulation of Milly’s death, Merton loses the ground for his objection to the plan. Thus he begins to “recover himself and renew his discretion” and then promises that “I’ll do all you wish” (Wings 285; bk. 6). Kate, threatening Merton with the potential harm to Milly, thus gains “one of her usual victories” (Wings 285; bk. 6).

The uncertainty of Milly’s illness, like that of Lionel’s scandal, is manipulated to wrap Kate’s gift by covering her real intentions behind the exchange with Milly. With the unspoken illness of Milly, Kate is enabled to underscore the merits of her plan while evading the benefits that activate the exchange. When Merton hesitates to lie to Milly, Kate claims that his love as a benevolent gift can be a solace to the dying girl. But when Merton shows reluctance to see Milly, Kate warns him of the fact that Milly may die if he retreats from their plan. In this way, Kate’s wordplay successfully covers her calculations, functioning as an effective way of gift-wrapping.

IV. Misrecognition: Another Strategy to Conceal the Interest in Gift Giving

Besides the strategies like Kate’s making use of the uncertainties about Lionel and about Milly, the gift givers in The Wings of the Dove use another way to wrap the
gift—keeping their interest away from public conversations. In the plan on Kate’s marriage, for example, the givers’ expectations of Mark’s countergift are not announced in public but are kept under the counter. Rather than exposing their intentions to the gift receiver, Kate’s relatives maintain an amicable relationship with the gift receiver of the exchange. The real condition behind the scenes, however, can be perceived from the antagonism between Maud and Mark. Maud “[t]akes him to her heart” (Wings 259; bk. 6) on the one hand, but she “thinks he cheats” (Wings 259; bk. 6) on the other. On Maud’s ambivalent attitude towards Mark, Kate also agrees by saying that it is “the way people are. What they think of their enemies [. . .] is bad enough; but I’m still more struck with what they think of their friends” (Wings 259; bk. 6, emphasis mine). Although Maud appoints Mark as the ideal husband for her niece, she maintains vigilance against him before the marital exchange is expected to be completed.

As the gift receiver, Lord Mark not only avoids exposing his own calculations but also remains silent on recognizing the giver’s intention. Regarding Maud’s acquaintance with Milly, he has observed that Maud is to “get back [. . .] her money” (Wings 114; bk. 4) at all events. Naturally, he is not unaware that it is his exploitability that motivates Maud to build up relations with him. But he does not show any sign of his knowledge of the interest underlying their association. Instead, he maintains the friendship with Maud and utilizes her when he is in need. At Christmas, for instance, Mark turns to Maud for help, staying at Lancaster Gate “with his confessed, his decidedly proclaimed want of money” (Wings 489; bk. 10).

From the interaction between Maud and Mark, it can be seen that both
exchangers seek to maintain ostensible harmony in spite of their mutual distrust and exploitation. Their deliberate denial of self-interest, as Bourdieu indicates, is an “individual and collective misrecognition” (*Logic* 117) or “common miscognition” (“Marginalia” 232) by which the gift giver and the gift receiver carry out their exchange. Concerning the necessity of misrecognition, Bourdieu explicates that

> [g]ift exchange is one of the social games that cannot be played unless the players refuse to acknowledge the objective truth of the game, the very truth that objective analysis brings to light, and unless they are predisposed to contribute, with their efforts, their marks of care and attention, and their time, to the production of collective misrecognition. (*Logic* 105-106)

That is, the interflow of the material capital and the symbolic capital in gift giving is kept as a tacit understanding between the giver and the receiver, even though both of them are well aware of the exchange behind their seemingly liberal offer. Through the communal disavowal of the underlying transaction, the “‘naked self-interest’” (*Outline* 196) is “disguised” so that the gift can be “transfigured” and “euphemized” (*Logic* 126) into a disinterested one. In this way, the giver and the receiver are enabled to pretend that they are presenting a gratuitous gift without asking for return.

Under the concealment, however, Bourdieu observes that gift giving is one of the “modes of domination” (*Logic* 121)—a way of “getting and keeping a lasting hold over someone” (*Logic* 126). Because “[a] gift that is not returned can become a debt” (*Bourdieu, Logic* 126), the giver is enabled to exercise a power or “symbolic

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5 Bourdieu states that the only difference between debts and gifts is that the former are “overtly economic obligations,” while the latter is a “moral obligations” (*Logic* 126). While the debtor has the “overt violence” on the creditor, the gift giver shows “symbolic violence” (*Logic* 126) on the receiver before the countergift is given back.
violence” (Bourdieu, *Logic* 126) over the receiver who fails to make a requital. With the aid of individual and collective misrecognition, the giver’s interest and his/her superiority over the receiver can be practiced in a commonly accepted way rather than being accused of exploitation. The exchangers’ profit gaining from gift giving, therefore, is “socially recognized” (Bourdieu, *Logic* 126) and legitimized through the misrecognition.

The key to the misrecognition in the gift exchange, according to Bourdieu, is its “conversion of economic capital into symbolic capital which produces relations of dependence that have an economic basis but are disguised under the veil of moral relations” (*Logic* 123). In other words, the capital circulating in gift exchange can be invisible, accumulated under the moral relations between the subjects of exchange. As a result, “the inevitable and inevitably interested relations imposed by kinship, neighborhood or work” become endurable and “elective relations of reciprocity” (*Logic* 112). The gift givers in *The Wings of the Dove*, in a similar manner, wrap their gifts by using the moral relations between the gift giver and the gift receiver. The marital alliance with Lord Mark, for example, is that from which Lionel and Maud hope to reap benefits. In the exchange between Kate and Milly, their friendship is also what the former uses as an excuse for her interest in Milly’s fortune. A case in point is seen when Kate is confronted with Merton’s question that he will become “[a] brute of humbug” (*Wings* 233; bk. 6) by deceiving Milly. Against his query, Kate argues that Milly “regards me [Kate] as already [. . .] her dearest friend” (*Wings* 234; bk. 6, emphasis mine) and that “[a] friend always helps—and she’s [Milly’s] a friend” (*Wings* 228; bk. 6).
Like Lionel’s and Maud’s establishments of marital alliance with Mark, Kate’s emphasis on her friendship with Milly also utilizes the moral relations between the giver and the receiver. Milly to Kate, as Lord Mark to Maud, is a friend to be exploited. Taking Milly as a friend, Kate believes that she will “help us [Kate and Merton] to go on” (*Wings* 233; bk. 6). Their acquaintance, in this sense, demonstrates how the moral relations between the exchangers play a part in the misrecognition. Accordingly, the gains and losses in the process of gift giving are maintained without leaving any track of economic circulation.

As perceived in the exchanges in *The Wings of the Dove*, the fundamental paradox of the gift is reflected in their practice of gift giving. On the one hand, the gift is inevitably followed by a countergift which attempts to pay the debt to the original giver. Based upon the reciprocal relation between the two parties of the gift exchange, the gift givers in *The Wings of the Dove* take the form of gift giving but estimate the exchangeability of their gifts like merchants do. On the other hand, the exchangers strive to conceal their interests with various strategies of gift-wrapping. One of these strategies is Kate’s mystifying Lionel’s dishonor and playing on the uncertainty of Milly’s death. Another strategy of gift-wrapping is revealed in the collective misrecognition among all the exchangers, which helps them make profits from the gifts given and returned. Through the moral relations between the subjects of exchange, the givers can conceal their calculations and thus preserve the seeming purity of the gift.

In the end, a gift can hardly be given without interest, whereas the proceeding of the exchange is an “open secret” (Bourdieu, “Marginalia” 232) meticulously kept by
all of the exchangers. Regarding the paradox of gift giving, Bourdieu suggests that ‘[t]he gift economy [. . .] is based on a denial of the economic (in a narrow sense), a refusal of the logic of the maximization of economic profit, i.e., of the spirit of calculation and the exclusive pursuit of material (as opposed to symbolic) interest [. . .]’ (‘Marginalia’ 234). In the end, gift giving turns out to be an ‘anti-economic economy’ (Bourdieu, ‘Marginalia’ 232), allowing the practice of exchange on the one hand while prohibiting the disclosure of the truth on the other.