

A Weberian Reading of Henry James's *The Ambassadors*

Ali Yiğit

Summary

This article discusses the intriguing intersection of the literary work of prolific American writer, Henry James and the theories of German sociologist, Max Weber. In James's oeuvre, *The Ambassadors*, stands out for depicting the impacts of ascending consumer capitalism in the early twentieth-century in a similar manner to Weber. Through the character representation, the novel symbolically engages with ideas of strict work discipline, moral devotion of Puritanism, and anti-Puritanical worldview. Furthermore, the embodiment of the controversy between supporters of the Puritanical order and the modern lax way of life are explored and represented in James's work. Drawing on this relationship, this paper argues that *The Ambassadors* shares many of Weber's arguments and ideas concerning the trinity of Puritanism, Protestantism, and capitalism, in spite of the fact that Weber's magnum opus was published two years after *The Ambassadors*. I intend to bridge the works of Weber and James by exploring how James's fiction forecasts Weberian approaches to Puritanism and the emergence of the capitalist spirit.

Opsomming

In hierdie artikel word die interessante raakpunte tussen 'n roman van die Amerikaanse skrywer Henry James en die teorieë van die Duitse sosioloog Max Weber bespreek. Die opkoms van verbruikerskapitalisme in die vroeg twintigste eeu word in *The Ambassadors* uitgebeeld. Deur die karakterisering word die idee van 'n streng werksediek en toewyding aan die Puriteinse leer teenoor 'n teen-Puriteinse lewensbeskouing gestel. Voorts ondersoek James in hierdie roman die polemieë tussen die voorstanders van die Puriteinse orde en dié van 'n moderne, lakse leefwyse. Daar word aangevoer dat Weber se idees oor die drie-enigheid van die Puritanisme, die Protestantisme en die kapitalisme weerklank vind in *The Ambassadors* alhoewel Weber se magnum opus eers twee jaar ná die verskyning van die roman gepubliseer is. Hierdie artikel wil aantoon dat James se roman 'n voorloper is van Weber se beskouing oor die Puriteinse leer en die opkoms van die kapitalisme.

Introduction

By the twentieth-century, pure religious moralism and concerns rooted in an American Puritanism had lost efficacy and relevance in the context of twentieth-century industrial capitalist world. However, Puritanism, as an extension of European Reformation, continued to be an intermittent source of inspiration for a wide range of writers¹ and various academic fields. In the scope of this study, I focus on Henry James and Max Weber with respect to how the former ridiculed Puritan values in his fiction, *The Ambassadors* (1903), and the latter accounted for the rise of capitalist enterprise predicated on Puritan and Protestant moralism and tenets. It is not merely the industrialisation and capitalism that intersect Weber and James's works, but the arguments Weber conveyed in his book are surprisingly endorsed by the Puritan characters James creates in *The Ambassadors*. By way of explanation, James, through the depiction of Puritan characters (who reside in New England nevertheless in negotiation with Europe) ironically presents unique literary representations of Weberian approaches to capitalism-Puritanism/Protestantism inter-twinement. This entanglement offers a plausible reasoning for us to place these authors and their works under the same umbrella. Thus, while Weber's work may inform the way literary scholars engage in literary analysis, similarly, James's novel provides sociology readers with an enriched perspective to Weber's literary representations of his insights.

Their works have been separately researched by numerous scholars. Yet, I propose that a comparative study of their works is needed, for the relationship between Puritanical values in *The Ambassadors*, and the Protestant ethics that promote the rise of the capitalist spirit and mercantilism as advocated by Weber in his magnum opus, has failed to receive scholarly attention. Considering the absence of studies which discuss the intersection of literary and sociological perspectives, this article attempts to establish a link between the representations of Puritan characters in *The Ambassadors* and the theoretical buttress of the Protestantism-capitalism intersection posited by Weber. By merging literary and social perspectives, this article highlights the importance of how literary, sociological, religious, and economic ideas intersect and negotiate with one another exceeding boundaries of time and space.

1. Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Henry David Thoreau, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Arthur Miller are sure to be alluded first.

Reading James through Weber's Lens

A Contestation of Ideologies

James, more than merely reflecting sixteenth-century Puritanism itself, uses his art in a way that ironically and humorously depicts early American Puritanical values, and shifts the point of focus to how these values survive within the sphere of early twentieth-century capitalist ways of acquisition and competition. Set in America and Europe in early twentieth-century, James's dark comedy, *The Ambassadors*, juxtaposes European and American ethics through the story of protagonist, Lambert Strether. He portrays Puritanical values in a humorous and ironic manner through Strether's storyline, which serves as an example of the capitalist enterprise and spirit Weber examines in his masterwork.

The two antipodal settings in James's novel serve as the groundwork for my study. The first is the small American town of Woollett, Massachusetts, which is the home to Puritan characters namely the Lambert Strether, his female boss and fiancée, Mrs. Newsome, and Waymarsh, with whom Strether is to meet in England, Mrs Newsome's daughter Sarah Pocock, and her husband Jim Pocock. This is a small but economically growing Puritan town, where people work hard, live responsibly, and foster temperate social relationships in tune with their faith. Throughout the novel, Woollett is a site of learning and understanding for Strether as he attempts to comprehend and analyse Europe. Just like the ideology it stands for, Woollett is a town of simplicity and industriousness.

The second major setting of the novel is Europe's glamorous city of Paris, where Chad temporarily stays with his dubious companions Madame de Vionnet, her daughter, Jeanne de Vionnet, Little Bilham and Miss Barace. James displays a diametrically opposite worldview to that of Woollett by choosing Paris, a city renowned for its artistic splendour, night life, high fashion, grandiose restaurants, hotels, theatres, and opera. As Jean Meral states, it was common among American writers of the nineteenth-century to choose Paris as an ideal city for American characters who want to extricate themselves from the moral bounds of New England, and experience Europe in its entirety (quoted in Hutchison 2011: 66). Contrary to the disciplined lifestyle under intense work pressure of Woollett, Strether ascertains during his time in Europe that Parisian society relishes in the delightful activities of daily life, in how they ascribe importance to art, artists and worldly pleasures instead of monotonous hard work.

Such a deliberate contrast is perhaps a "vehicle" for the protagonist's character development and provides a means for analysis of the contradictions in the lives of characters stemming from ethical values and their divergent perspectives to life and business. Life in Europe provides a catalytic environment where Strether questions some aspects of his reality.

As such, he evolves from a naive but capitalist Woollettian to a more elegant, art embracing and materially careless.

Puritanical Values Revisited in *the Ambassadors*

Relying on his reading of Benjamin Franklin's autobiography, Weber calls attention to the foremost fundamental ingredients of the capitalistic spirit pointing out that "honesty is useful, because it assures credit; so are punctuality, industry, frugality, and that is the reason they are virtues" (1905: 17). In particular, he places a special emphasis on honesty stating, "to anticipate this much, we have already called attention to that most important principle of the capitalistic ethic which is generally formulated as honesty is the best policy" (1905: 98). Applying honesty to *The Ambassadors*, Mrs Newsome choosing Strether as an ambassador is the first striking example. He is preferred because he is a middle-aged and trusted family friend who is subsequently required to prove his loyalty to his mission and family before being allowed to marry. Strether initially demonstrates an enthusiasm to fetch Chad through which he hopes to secure marriage, social position and obtain more wealth from his employer. This honest and self-confident characterisation of him is in accordance with the economic orientation charted out by Weber based on the rationality of strict ethic codes in Puritans, which, as Etzrodt informs us, "necessitates increasing one's capital as the fulfilment of a duty placed on honest people" (2008: 51). Strether, by following his mission strives to attain a certain amount of award or profit. Later in the novel, when his engagement to Mrs. Newsome is ended and he is discharged of his duties, he still "feel(s) a strong sense of the responsibility in being Mrs. Newsome's ambassador" (Gibson 2014: 162), which again illustrates his loyalty to the principle of honesty. The second wave of ambassadors, the Pococks, also prove themselves honest with their unswerving attitude and decisiveness in the face of the enchanting beauties of Europe. Unlike Strether, they are committed to their initial task of fetching Chad irrespective of how improved he seems in Paris as observed by Strether. For this reason, the Pococks, who demonstrate a patient and earnest observation of Chad, are described as "honest minds" with reference to their mission of "dealing" with Chad (1909: 274).

As Weber underlines above, for the growth of capitalist spirit, of equal importance is valuing time and punctuality, both of which are considered deep-seated virtues in Puritanism. Based on his readings of Richard Baxter, one of earliest English Puritan church leaders, Weber succinctly puts that:

Waste of time is thus the first and in principle the deadliest of sins. The span of human life is infinitely short and precious to make sure of one's own election. Loss of time through sociability, idle talk, luxury, even more sleep than is necessary for health, six to at most eight hours, is worthy of absolute

moral condemnation. It does not yet hold, with Franklin, that time is money, but the proposition is true in a certain spiritual sense. It is infinitely valuable because every hour lost is lost to labour for the glory of God. (104)

Sufficiently validating this argument by Weber, *The Ambassadors* is studded with examples demonstrating the importance of time and punctuality for American Puritan characters. Indeed, *the Ambassadors* is, more than any other, a novel of time and time elapses as Stallman states, "time is the all-consuming theme of the novel" (quoted in Hama 2004: 9). Mrs Newsome, the foremost Puritan character of the novel and the patron of business in New England upholds this principle of punctuality and the value of time. Through-out the text, Mrs Newsome depicts this as is conveyed by the narrator:

Four of the letters were from Mrs. Newsome and none of them short; she had lost no time, had followed on his heels while he moved, so expressing herself that he now could measure the probable frequency with which he should hear. (75)

During his stay in Paris, when Strether is delayed in fulfilling his mission, she sends him an ultimatum which is read through Strether's own voice, "If I don't immediately sail, the Pococks will immediately come out. That's what I mean," said Strether, "by your mother's ultimatum" (1909: 239). Thus, Mrs Newsome, who is leading the family business in Woollett, demands that Strether act swiftly. Like Strether, the second group of ambassadors; Sarah Pocock and Jim Pocock are also warned by Mrs Newsome to act quickly as reflected in Strether's stream of consciousness; "Is what Mrs. Newsome had cabled her daughter an injunction to break off short?" (354). Both examples suggest well enough that Mrs Newsome, with her determination not to lose any time awaiting for the return both of her son to whom she intends to hand down family business of advertising, and her fiancé with whom she plans to marry, greatly enacts Weberian perspective to Puritan ethics that values time at its best so as to spin the wheel of production.

Not so different from Mrs Newsome, the Pococks are punctual too in dealing with their mission; such that, directed by Mrs Newsome's order, Sarah Pocock and her husband, Jim quickly set out and arrive in Europe as depicted:

They had come straight from Havre, having sailed from New York to that port, and having also, thanks to a happy voyage, made land with a promptitude that left Chad Newsome, who had meant to meet them at the dock, belated. (1909: 261)

The Pococks' punctual arrival accurately conveys the idea that Jamesian conservative Woollettian characters abide the strictly disciplined way of life the capitalist system created and demanded. The room where Sarah Pocock stays in Paris is full of clocks, a significant symbol that, as Hama claims (2004: 23), indicates how important time is for the Pococks. James expertly portrays Mrs Newsome and the Pococks as punctual people; this creates an agreement with Weber, who communicates that tardiness is a breach of a significant Puritanical principle. Weber's claims of what early Puritans were like appear to correspond with the Puritan characters James creates at the turn of the twentieth-century.

Weber, son to a religious Calvinist mother and a pleasure-loving father (Leonard 1975: 6), bears an interesting resemblance to the incompatibility between Mrs Newsome and Chad. He observes that in Puritanism the real moral objection is to relaxation in the security of possession, the enjoyment of wealth with the consequence of idleness and the temptations of the flesh, above all of distraction from the pursuit of a righteous life" (1905: 104). Furthermore, James ridicules these Puritanical values by presenting Chad as one who breaches all these ethical impositions by enjoying worldly pleasures at their best. This is revealed in the stream of Strether's consciousness:

The season had been one at which Mrs. Newsome was moved to gratitude for small mercies; it had broken on them all as a blessing that their absentee HAD perhaps a conscience – that he was sated in fine with idleness, was ambitious of variety". (1909: 82)

That Mrs Newsome takes action to save her "absentee" from the yoke of worldly pleasures, and idling with a woman, displays how Weber's postulation intersects with Jamesian Puritan characters. To elaborate, a Puritan mother resists the lures of earthly desires and enjoyments of wealth, and expects her son to do the same. She fiercely upholds a tradition which promotes a strict road to "salvation" while unintentionally paving the way for capital accumulation.

Salvation of Body and Spirit

In Protestant sects like Calvinism and its offspring, Puritanism, "the salvation of the soul and that alone was the centre of their life and work", writes Weber (1905: 48). Moreover, their "ethical ideals and the practical results of their doctrines" were all based on that alone, and were the consequences of purely religious motives" (1905: 48). Weber elaborates:

All the sensuous and emotional elements in culture and in religion, because they are of no use toward salvation and promote sentimental illusions and

idolatrous superstitions. Thus it provides a basis for a fundamental antagonism to sensuous culture of all kinds. (1905: 62)

James, reflects how this ethical value is obeyed by Mrs Newsome; and violated by Chad, whose “rational ascetic alertness, self-control, and methodical planning of life are threatened the most by the peculiar irrationality of the sexual act” (Weber 1978: 604). The mission assigned to Strether exemplifies the Puritanical notion of salvation, thereby legitimising the Weberian thoughts. In the novel, Strether is charged to find and persuade Chad to return to Woollett, thus he is expected to save him from the enticements of Parisian life and the clutches of Madame de Vionnet. Miss Gostrey, an American expatriate and Strether’s confidant states that Strether’s mission is a mission of rescuing, a term which suggests a “holy task” (1909: 52). In this respect, Strether’s mission involves both this-worldly and other-worldly consequences. Firstly, to help Chad “take up his definite material reward, a big brave bouncing business, a roaring trade” as Strether states (1909: 57); and secondly to save Chad’s soul from a sinful and wasteful life. For as the Puritan minister, Thomas Taylor precisely expounds, “a man at ease is a man lost” (qtd. in Walzer 1963: 70), and Chad’s family is determined not to lose him. Both cases undergird some elements of capitalism Weber discusses in relation to Protestantism and Puritanism. The fulfilment of a worldly mission is connected with successful management of labour, for without an accurate management, all the wealth accumulated may be risked, as revealed in the words of Strether: “Yes – workshop; a great production, a great industry. The concern’s a manufacture – and a manufacture that, if it’s only properly looked after, may well be on the way to become a monopoly” (1909: 57). “A very old disease” though Abbott P. Usher, Chester W. Wright, John Ise, A. Berglund, Vanderveer Custis, Harry W. Laidler and Francis Tyson describe monopoly, they emphasise that monopolisation has registered a pacey expansion in the US soon after the turn of twentieth-century (1933: 5-9). Referring to this potential for monopoly, Strether delineates how manufacturing can be turned into monopoly. The success and care of the business would be predicated on obeying the moral and ethical codes of Puritanism, which exalts hard work and rational organisation of labour. In this regard, Chad’s family, like Strether are well aware of the fact that industriousness in their “land of opportunities” yields material prosperity. The other-worldly mission – the mission of saving Chad’s soul – implied by James, is in accordance with Weber’s thesis which is influenced by Ritschl (Carroll 2009: 63) in that the ethereal or soteriological salvation of Chad results in him leading the family business while growing their wealth. This is the case within the Weberian context which states that the accumulation of wealth will grant spiritual satisfaction to the family and ensure Chad is virtuous.

At this juncture, Chad can, to some degree, be said to be exposed to social and communal pressure and restraint. The human individuality represented by Chad, is exposed to the threat arising from commercial or capital oriented inclinations and motivations, of which James critiques, for as Seguy (qtd. in Gronow 1988: 320) states, this culminates in loss of freedom in tandem with a Puritanical tendency. Such a curtailment on Chad's life can also be discussed with reference to Weber's concept of the "iron cage". In his introduction to Weber's *The Protestant Ethic*, Anthony Giddens, broaching the metaphor of iron cage used by Weber, directly relates it to the disciplined and controlled life Puritanism calls for; "Puritanism has played a part in creating the 'iron cage' in which modern man has to exist – an increasingly bureaucratic order from which the 'spontaneous enjoyment of life' is ruthlessly expunged" (xvii). The whole fiction is interspersed with symbols such as prison, cage, glass cage, and trap, all of which are ironically employed by James to criticise the restrictions brought by modern capitalism and materialism to the lives of modern people. As an example, James mouthpiece, Strether, in his conversation with Miss Gostrey, referring to Woollett, says, "Don't I when I lift the last veil? – tell you the very secret of the prison-house?" (64). James is at odds with both familial and social pressure on the individual that he finds "highest degree damn'd, loathsome and detestable" (Pound 1918: 7). Similarly, the family pressure on Chad, as Walzer defends, appears as a result of an unofficial Puritan congregational discipline that seeks to watch one another's life particularly in the neighbourhood in the absence of official Puritan state rules (1963: 67).

Maintaining Inheritance

Weber opens *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* with an interesting observation that most of the business leaders, capital owners, and educated personnel in Germany were overwhelmingly Protestant without specifying their sects (1905: 3). In New England, from the very beginning of their settlement, Puritans attached utmost importance to education, establishing first rate schools and universities. As Douglass Campbell states, "all the Puritans whether in Holland, England or America were seriously dedicated to education", which played a substantial role in prospering their business (quoted in Leonard 1975: 148). Considering the changes in American economy in the early twentieth-century, when the trend shifted from worker-based tangible production model to mental-labourer based intangible production, it was the new educated middle class who filled the void in the system which required "corporate white collar workers, entrepreneurs and businessmen" (Sánchez-Pardo 2011: 39). In *The Ambassadors*, the Jamesian Puritan characters are educated and good candidates for the professional business world of the twentieth-century. For, as Long demonstrates, "the

Newsomes as their name implies the representatives of the new financial and business age" (1969: 50). Another epitome of this is Waymarsh, who Strether describes as "the American statesman, the statesman trained in 'Congressional halls'" (33). Apart from them, Chad Newsome, notwithstanding his interests in tastes enjoined by his Woollettian circle, is a good candidate to lead a family business even make it a monopoly as I shall discuss later. In brief, schooled Jamesian Puritan characters in *The Ambassadors* both come from a certain "cultivated" background, and are prepared to climb the social ladder since they are well adapted to the modern capitalist economic model that has dominated the world as Weber highlights. Therefore, Weber's claim for the middle and upper middle class in the nineteenth-century Germany is literally exemplified by the emerging upper middle class American characters, namely the fictional Newsomes.

Weber connects the reason why capital was accumulated mostly by Protestants to the fortunes they earned in the sixteenth-century (1905: 4). According to Weber, by holding wealth in their hands because of the generous inheritance they received, Protestants, knew how to successfully invest the money and earn more and thus came into positions of ownership and management in the modern world (1905: 5). In *the Ambassadors*, though it is hard to date back and relate directly to the sixteenth-century Puritanical convention, do we see Puritan origin Mrs Newsomes, who, in parallel with Weber's argument, have a certain amount of wealth bequeathed by their progenitor. Strether gives vent to this inheritance, "She has of course the resource of cutting this allowance off; but even then he has unfortunately, and on no small scale, his independent supply money left him by his grandfather, her own father" (1909: 59). Mrs Newsome is successfully perpetuating this family business complying with Woollettian ethical codes. The Newsome family, to whose wealth Strether refers as "it will be easy if he remains there and he'll remain for the money. The money appears to be, as a probability, so hideously much" (1909: 232), takes forward this heritage through increasing their financial power at a time when American capitalism is prominent.

Familial inheritance, however, is not sufficient in championing the capitalist economic model, it has to be accompanied by hard work and managed by people who are prepared to accept working as a holy activity in service of God rather than a mere worldly turmoil. Perhaps in no other religion or religious sect, is working sanctified so much as it is in Puritanism, which Weber interrogates. By scrutinising the utmost importance attributed by early Puritans to working, he reaches the conclusion that Puritanism highly motivates its adherents to work hard not for the sake of earning and becoming rich but for the glory of God. In other words, Puritans believe that it is through hard work that they can accurately worship and serve God, and thus be "saved". Such a labour in divine calling, Weber claims, spawns the birth of the spirit of modern capitalism:

The Puritan wanted to work in a calling; we are forced to do so. For when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order. (1905: 123)

As Weber expresses, the Puritan desire to work in calling did not remain bound to Puritans, but rather became a worldwide influential economic system affecting the lives of modern people. In *The Ambassadors*, the importance of working hard is best epitomised by Mrs Newsome, who, like a conventional Puritan type, has “supreme qualities” such as “virtue and respectability” (Lohmann 1974: 342). Throughout the text, Mrs Newsome’s presence as a serious, industrious punctual businesswoman is felt by the reader. In the beginning, Strether, in his conversation with Miss Gostrey both exposes the general hustle bustle in Woollett and the particular situation of Mrs Newsome: “They’re very busy people and Mrs Newsome in particular has a large full life” (55). Completely dedicating herself to work, she is, so to say, the ideal “type of personality that matched the capitalist enterprise itself – the methodical, disciplined, work-oriented individual” demanded by modern capitalism (Bell 1996: 35). Not lagging behind her mother, Sarah Pocock enunciates how working is important for her life and social milieu as such; “I’ve never wanted for opportunities to see my brother. We’ve many things to think of at home, and great responsibilities and occupations, and our home’s not an impossible place” (1909: 285). Here, the Pococks insinuate that their commitment to their occupations are motivated by their convictions. Separating household from business is consistent with what Weber suggests for the increase of capitalist enterprise (qtd. in Etzrodt 2008: 53). By carrying off her business undeterred and unaffected by domestic issues, Pocock is representative of the ideal Puritan who has the aptitude and capacity required by professional enterprise.

Abstaining from Worldly Pleasures

Weber delineates that the Puritanical way of spending money has no space for pure worldly pleasures that solely satisfy men, succinctly stating:

Man is only a trustee of the goods which have come to him through God’s grace. He must, like the servant in the parable, give an account of every penny entrusted to him, and it is at least hazardous to spend any of it for a purpose which does not serve the glory of God but only one’s own enjoyment. (1905: 114)

James, offering characters some of whom observe, and some others violate this moral code, reveals to what extent this ethical behaviour has survived up to the twentieth century with an ironical style. Being cognisant of this

Puritanical aspect of New Englanders, Strether's reliable friend, Mrs Gostrey, articulating authorial voice, taunts Strether remarking "you are not enjoying it, so much you ought" and Strether responds, "It is the failure of Woollett. THAT's general" (1909: 27). Strether's utterances make it clear that refraining from extravagant pleasures is an inevitable characteristic of the whole Woollettian community, which is in harmony with the designation Weber launches. In this regard, Strether also divulges his discontent with people not being able to enjoy themselves as they wish in Woollett, which deepens and becomes more and more acute in his character in the subsequent chapters and finally becomes an issue of regret. Consequently, he gives Little Bilham an emancipatory injunction in the Gloriani's garden to live life to the full: "Live all you can; it's a mistake not to" (1909: 166). Paris, free of Puritanical restrictions, allows Strether to experience life with all its aspects. In representing what is contrary to Woollettian ideals of morality and thrift, the renegade son, Chad, relishes art, travelling, shopping, and consorting with a charming woman. In his conversation with Miss Gostrey, Strether points to the Achilles heel of Chad, "He can't stand, anything Europe" and "He may buy everything" in which is embedded individual pleasures (1909: 45). By the terms, "everything", while James substantiates the extent of never-ending human needs, he also implies the spurring influence of industrial capitalism on this weak side – as the author put by "Achilles heel" which is restrained in Woollett. Puritanism as Weber contends, turned against the spontaneous enjoyment of life and worldly pleasures (1905: 11), since it costs money that is required to be spent very discreetly as it is God's grace, and wasting money in this way impedes accumulation of wealth. Chad's liaison with Madame de Vionnet, the symbol of European art, temptation, aesthetics and mystery is by its nature found sinful and reprehensible by his Puritan milieu in New England.

Violations of Woollettian ideals by Chad, thus vitiation of the spirit behind accumulation, however, do not mean that he completely breaks ties with the business world of New England. He is aware of his family's booming business of advertising. In his conversation with Jim Pocock, a businessman himself and Chad's brother in law, Strether, both seeks to convince Jim that Chad has not left his paternal heritage behind through underlining Chad's talent for business, and discloses his rooted interest in advertisement as;

Don't you then think it important the advertising should be thoroughly taken in hand? "Chad WILL be, so far as capacity is concerned", he went on, "the man to do it". "Where did he get his capacity", Jim asked, "over here?" He didn't get it over here, and the wonderful thing is that over here he hasn't inevitably lost it. He has a natural turn for business, an extraordinary head. (1909: 276-277)

As this excerpt clarifies, Chad is an ideal candidate to lead the growing advertising firm despite having "other tastes and tendencies" that bar him

from sacrificing his personal desires. With regard to James's major phase novels, Sánchez-Pardo comments that he distinguishes "between an older stage of British capitalism and an emerging American brand of corporate capitalism" (2011: 40), and in *The Ambassadors*, it seems that Chad can steer the corporate capitalism ship. Toward the end of the novel, deciding to set to work, Chad proves what Strether thought of him,

He came out quite suddenly with this announcement while Strether wondered if his revived interest were what had taken him, with strange inconsequence, over to London. He appeared at all events to have been looking into the question and had encountered a revelation. Advertising scientifically worked presented itself thus as the great new force. (1909: 442)

Chung, introducing the importance of advertising at the outset of the twentieth-century, urges that James incorporated the technological developments in American advertisement into his *The Ambassadors* by using the character of Chad as well as embracing it for the growth of his own writing (2007: 330). In this way, she interpretes Chad's words about advertisement "it's an art like another, and infinite like all the arts In the hands, naturally, of a master" (1909: 443) as a reflection of James's own policy and mentality. According to Chung, Chad in Paris, draws a portrait of a master of advertisement choosing an opera stage intentionally to meet Stether as part of his impressing the coming ambassador, and delegating Bilham with the responsibility of representation in his absence (2007: 318, 324). Agreeing with Chung's approach, this paper observes that while Chad transgresses some of the principles of Woollett, he additionally discovers new advertising techniques in Paris that he could utilise later. Therefore, he can be seen to bear a dual nature: one who desires to cross the moral borders set before him – that also shows how James parodies conservatism of Woollett – and the other who qualifies some of the competences needed for a prosperous job. Ultimately, he enjoys the pleasures of life and performs his task updating his parents's conventional methods in complying with the necessities of time and business. In a way, the dual character of Chad proves Jamesian attitude to morality, work and entertainment whose convergence and occasional violations of one another seem like an exigency at the turn of the twentieth-century.

The concept of "sacred rage" is the metaphorical expression used by the narrator to define the sombre personality of Waymarsh, who is both living solemnly and earnest in his relations with people unlike Chad, and Maria Gostrey, who have already adapted to European tastes and *modus vivendi*. Strether expresses his opinion of Waymarsh:

Poor dear old sombre glow! Something straight and simple, something heavy and empty, had been eclipsed in its company; something by which he had

best known his friend. Waymarsh wouldn't BE his friend, somehow, without the occasional ornament of the sacred rage (1909: 352)

From Weber's vantage point, abstaining from the "joy of living" in Puritanism is substantial for the accumulation of more and more wealth (1905: 8), and the "sacred rage" associated with Waymarsh demonstrates this abstention. His reticence from entertainments occasionally poses an impediment for Strether in his concourses with Chad's milieu. As an example, after being reproached by Miss Barrace, who grew up in Paris, and hence appropriated Parisian culture and social relations, Strether both questions and grumbles;

What had she meant if not to ask whether she couldn't help him with his splendid encumbrance, and mightn't the sacred rage at any rate be kept a little in abeyance by thus creating for his comrade's mind even in a world of irrelevance the possibility of a relation? (1909: 138)

This excerpt, if superimposed with the above noted reflections of Strether, justifies well enough the argument put forward by Dawidoff that, "the sacred rage was especially active in preventing Americans from feeling comfortable with refinements and luxurious corruptions such as sophistication, belles lettres, or anything other than dulce and utile (and better utile than dulce)" (1992: xix). In the Weberian sense, this means James ironically deploys one of the characteristics of early Puritans in such a way that it affects Waymarsh's living and spending habits.

Simplicity

In accordance with their doctrine, early Puritans embraced wearing simple, modest clothes instead of costly jewels and daring designs, this propensity began to change particularly among later generations of New England Puritans. For, as Weber indicates, "This worldly Protestant asceticism, as we may recapitulate up to this point, acted powerfully against the spontaneous enjoyment of possessions; it restricted consumption, especially of luxuries" (1905: 115). With reference to Puritans, Weber informs us that modest choice in dressing enables one to rationally spend his/her wealth (1905: 115). On the contrary, the wasteful use of money on luxurious clothes would, according to Weber's inference from Puritanism, mean irrational expenditure that deserves to be condemned. Preferring luxurious and flamboyant dresses would mean arrogance and uppishness that God forbade. Bremer's meditation on Puritanism affirms Weber: "Puritans did reject fashions such as bodices cut excessively low and exaggerated male codpieces, both of which they believed were sexually provocative" (2009: 51). In *The Ambassadors*, James, as if directly referring to the early

Puritanical clothing style, presents Mrs. Newsome in her conservative attire which strikes Strether when he is with Maria Gostrey in France:

There was much the same difference in his impression of the noticed state of his companion, whose dress was “cut down”, as he believed the term to be, in respect to shoulders and bosom, in a manner quite other than Mrs. Newsome’s, and who wore round her throat a broad red velvet band with an antique jewel – he was rather complacently sure it was antique – attached to it in front. Mrs. Newsome’s dress was never in any degree “cut down”, and she never wore round her throat a broad red velvet band (1909: 49)

This modest choice accompanied by imperturbability makes Mrs. Newsome unfamiliar to wearing low-cut clothes, which approves the conjecture suggested by Weber and undergirded by Bremer’s deliberation on Puritanism. Furthermore, her sensible dressing and jewellery can also be considered as a display of the Puritanical eschewal from the temptations of worldly flesh. The dioristic factor of Mrs. Newsome’s personality is due to her adherence to the ethical value that restricts making the body sexually attractive and tantalising. Independent of this Puritanical constraint, Madame de Vionnet, however, is described as attractive and alluring in her revealing dress. James’s narrator depicts her:

She had struck our friend, from the first of her appearing, as dressed for a great occasion, and she met still more than on either of the others the conception reawakened in him at their garden-party, the idea of the femme du monde in her habit as she lived. Her bare shoulders and arms were white and beautiful; the materials of her dress, a mixture, as he supposed, of silk and crape, were of a silvery grey so artfully composed as to give an impression of warm splendor; and round her neck she wore a collar of large old emeralds, the green note of which was more dimly repeated, at other points of her apparel, in embroidery, in enamel, in satin, in substances and textures vaguely rich. (1909: 204)

James, in whose style allusion is an indispensable element, alluding to Shakespeare’s lines in Hamlet as goes “My father, in his habit as he lived” (quoted in Herford 2011: 179), both reinforces the image of Madame de Vionnet as a beautiful woman with beautiful habits and demonstrates his own admiration of European style, a fact which is expressed by several James critics. Her charming and elegant image is in sharp conflict with the moderate and austere appearance of Mrs. Newsome. Relevant to Weber’s approach, Madame de Vionnet, through wearing luxurious silk and crape dress and ornaments suggests the idea that she is careless of the amount of money spent and accordingly can be claimed to use her money irrationally.

Although in Puritanism theatres and play performances were not entirely banned, they were generally condemned by early Puritans (Bremer 2009: 58). Indeed, early Puritans saw this form of art as a medium to realise their

ideals, namely valuing it to disseminate their holy and moral messages to people. It is known that theatres were shut down in England between 1640 and 1650 under the Puritan regime of the day, not to mention the absence of any performance of plays in New England (Bremer 2009: 59). Bremer traces the eruption of this hatred back to sixteenth and seventeenth-century London theatres, which were used by some as sites for prostitution and thereby found by Puritans to be centres of depravity (2009: 59). According to Weber, not so different from Bremer's detection,

The theatre was obnoxious to the Puritans, and with the strict exclusion of the erotic and of nudity from the realm of toleration, a radical view of either literature or art could not exist. The conceptions of idle talk, of superfluities, and of vain ostentation, all designations of an irrational attitude without objective purpose, thus not ascetic, and especially not serving the glory of God, but of man, were always at hand to serve in deciding in favour of sober utility as against any artistic tendencies. (1905: 113-114)

In *The Ambassadors*, even if not strictly forbidden as in previous centuries, theatres in Massachusetts which are simply decorated and unpretentious, seem at first glance, to be in accordance with the Puritan mores, thus converges with Weber's observation. Strether's comparison of London and Boston theatres reveals this convergence to a great extent:

He had been to the theatre, even to the opera, in Boston, with Mrs. Newsome, more than once acting as her only escort; but there had been no little confronted dinner, no pink lights, no whiff of vague sweetness, as a preliminary: one of the results of which was that at present, mildly rueful, though with a sharpish accent, he actually asked himself WHY there hadn't. (1909: 49)

From the vantage point of Weber, we can claim that non-appearance of theatres decorated with cozy and romantic components, or, in other words, pleasurable details in New England prevent the conservative residents of the region from being impressed by worldly pleasures. After all, Puritans, as the people who are more preoccupied with performing their mission to God, are trained to concede comfort and seek God's mercy and favour in simplicity. In the rest of comparisons we read through Strether's mind, in London, Strether "felt as if the play itself penetrated him with the naked elbow of his neighbour, a great stripped handsome red-haired lady who conversed with a gentleman on her other side in stray dissyllables which had for his ear ..." (1909: 51). This may hint to the sexual implications that are against Woollettian codes. It is therefore in Europe that James introduces his protagonist to more intimate theatre experiences.

The simplicity in New England theatres is also represented in the costumes and characters of stage actors and actresses of Woollett who are considered

by Strether deprived of rich varieties and therefore just simple “types”. This is unlike the rich, dynamic and well-rounded stage performers of England (1909: 51). Such perceptions, along with above noted simple clothing preferred by Mrs. Newsome, approximates us to, and justifies Weber’s discussion of modesty in clothing, “That powerful tendency toward uniformity of life, which to-day so immensely aids the capitalistic interest in the standardization of production, had its ideal foundations in the repudiation of all idolatry of the flesh” (1905: 114).

Conclusion

As products of the same period, *The Ambassadors* and *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, though belonging to totally different disciplines, draw on the same legacy of Puritanism and its persistent influences on the lives of American people. Due to the overarching connections established in this article, it is possible to read James from the vantage point of Weber, and vice versa. Weber’s scathing analyses of Puritanism, Protestantism and capitalist enterprise have been ascertained to be enlivened in James’ fiction in a literal way. In other words, James’s Woollettian characters conspicuously embody Weberian approaches to the nature of the correlation between religious tenets and economic development.

James reflects the haunting impacts of conventional Puritanical merits on lifestyle, business and commerce at the turn of the twentieth-century through Woollettian conservative characters such as Mrs Newsome, Sarah Pocock and Waymarsh. In contrast, through the Chad and Strether characters who have largely disentangled themselves from Woollettian influences, James displays how the changing conditions of the Gilded Age required professional and adaptable actors or players talented enough to surpass conventional New England codes, and that the fusion of European art, aesthetics and American commercial life based on early Puritanism is not impossible.

Despite unintentionally promoting each other, James, and Weber, have captured the attention of literature and sociology readers who appreciate their ideas in comparative ways. Even though there have been numerous ways of reading and interpreting *The Ambassadors*, a Weberian reading of the text offers a fulfilling denouement and interpretation of the text.

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Ali Yiğit
Kirkklareli University, Turkey
aliyigit46@gmail.com