

Flight to Monte Carlo:
Conversational Analysis of Book I,
The House of Mirth

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In the field of pragmatics, it is well-noted that one of the major facts about speech acts is that a great many of them are performed indirectly. Speech acts conducted in such a way are generally termed as "indirect speech acts." Since sentences that can be used to perform indirect speech acts can also be used to perform direct speech acts, the usual basis for distinguishing between a direct and an indirect speech act is contextual. Referring to indirect speech acts, Traugott and Pratt point out that indirect communication raises an interesting social question; why doesn't a hearer, on hearing an apparently inappropriate utterance, simply decide that the speaker is failing to use the language appropriately and just give up understanding the speaker's intention? What motivates the hearer to seek the speaker's message behind the literal one? Despite such questions, in reality, indirect communication often works because and only because there is a shared assumption between a speaker and a listener that when they speak and listen to each other, they usually intend to accomplish purposeful and effective communication. Such an assumption is called the "cooperative principle." Generally a cooperative speaker speaks with a hearer with a certain communicative purpose in his/her mind and speaks in such a way that the hearer can recognize this purpose. A cooperative hearer trusts that the speaker is speaking with some reasonable purposes in mind and further does the necessary work to discern that purpose even if it may not be known obviously from literal message. The cooperative

principle is particularly important in indirect communication because the speaker and the hearer cooperate to the extent of relying on unspoken inferences. In reality, however, people often speak without showing any definite purposes, or not reasonably or not comprehensively. Hearers do not always understand what is in the mind of speakers. Such communicative breakdowns often occur either intentionally or unintentionally. In other words, the cooperative principle is not always fulfilled in real conversations. The principle, however, bears significance more or less because total non-cooperation is rare. It usually does not occur unless the speaker has anti-social behavior or means to make political or tactical evasion (Traugott and Pratt 236-238).

Within this global notion of cooperative principle, Paul Grice further distinguishes the four of more particular principles or maxims that govern communication.

- (a) The maxim of QUANTITY concerns the degree of information normally demanded. Participants should be as informative as required; but not more than is required.
- (b) The maxim of QUALITY concerns truthfulness. One should not tell lies, for instance.
- (c) The maxim of RELEVANCE describes normal expectations of relevance.
- (d) The maxim of MANNER concerns clarity. One should avoid obscurity, ambiguity, prolixity, and be orderly.

Wales says that these maxims amount to a kind of "sincerity principle": "Say what you mean and mean what you say." Again, as Grice himself points out, these maxims don't always apply and are violated easily. They still serve, however, as an implicit model of ordinary communicative behavior. In real conversations, people sometimes "violate" maxims, blatantly "flout" them or exploit them. The point, however, is that because ordinary communication is based on these implicit conversational rules, on that basis, people may exploit the maxims in certain contexts in order to imply more than they literally say.

Grice calls such implied meanings “conversational implicature.” Sometimes being polite, at other times, being ironical, for example, constrain conversational behavior to have much conversational implicature (Wales 95-96).

The concepts of cooperative principle, conversational maxims and conversational implicature have been extremely popular since Grice coined them. The analysis of literary discourse by applying Grice’s maxims has also been prevalent. In literature backgrounds and contexts for conversations between characters vary so widely that many conversations can deviate from the ordinary cooperative patterns of communication. The study of peculiar conversations in literature by applying Grice’s maxims clarifies the cause of deviation and hidden implicatures in the text and deepen the analysis of characters and contexts.

His maxims will be used to study the conversations between Lily Bart and Lawrence Selden in *The House of Mith*, because they will show the nature of uncooperative, vague, evasive conversations between the two.

In the beginning of the novel, the heroine, Lily Bart is twenty-nine years old. She is an unmarried, beautiful social butterfly, supposedly in search of a suitable wealthy husband. Because of the way she was brought up, it is ingrained in her that a poor “dingy” life is unbearable and that she should marry somebody rich. Being gifted with beauty and social skills, she succeeds in attracting quite a few wealthy suitors. Meanwhile, she meets Selden, a lawyer with relatively low income, and becomes attracted to him. He, too, is attracted to her because she is beautiful. Selden is quite different from her wealthy suitors and the set of rich people she usually associates with. He is not as rich as they are, considers too much eagerness in money sordid and acts as if he stands aloof from the money-oriented society Lily is in. His difference from others and his seeming aloofness attracts Lily. She keeps comparing him and other people of the wealthy set, above all, him and her rich suitors. This comparison robs her of the opportunities to accept the proposals of any one of

them. One by one, her wealthy suitors leave her. The reader might expect that Lily and Selden will become more and more intimate and get married eventually as she keeps rejecting other possibilities. To Lily, however, Selden's drawback is that he is not rich enough to let her live as luxuriously as she wants to. Meanwhile, Selden hardly considers her seriously for marriage though he admires her beauty. He does not think that she will be satisfied with his relatively low income. He despises the money-oriented value of the society Lily lives in and keeps doubting strongly whether she is morally above that value or not. Although he enjoys very much looking at her beauty, he does not make any personal earnest approach to her till the very end of the novel. His conversations with Lily reveals his lack of passion for her, and he does not speak like a cooperative speaker. The conversations between the two are evasive and full of word-plays.

Lily's conversations with Lawrence Selden, however, have much impact on her because he is the only man around her to whom she is attracted at all. He is important and alluring for her. The structure of the novel clearly reflects his importance and influence on her life. The novel begins and ends with his appearance. The very first word of the novel is his surname and the first chapter is an episode of her visit to his personal library and their conversation. In chapter XI of Book II, Lily finally thinks about threatening her nemesis, Bertha Dorset, by using Bertha's love letters to Selden, in order to regain her own position in the society that Bertha has unfairly robbed her of. But on passing the building of Selden's apartment on her way to Dorset's, she remembers her own feeling for him. She decides not to use the letters addressed to him even for her own interest, and enters his library following her feeling, just as she did in the first chapter. The last chapter of the novel again begins with Selden's observation of his day and thoughts just as in the first chapter and finally ends with the description of Lily's deathbed and his recollection of the past at her bedside. Wagner- Martin's interpretation of this structure featuring Selden as a male protagonist is keen and apt. She observes

that Lily's story is framed with the beginning and the ending told from Selden's point of view. According to Martin, Selden is the narrator of Lily's story. The reason why Wharton let him observe and narrate Lily's life is because Lily so much lets him influence her view and action. She is lead on by his "glowing rhetoric." Martin calls him "a man of words" and the way Lily believes in his words her "vacuous acceptance" of them (30-33). Not having anybody to turn to for advices but wanting to rely on somebody, possibly a man, she keeps listerning to Selden and reacting sensitively and nervously to his words and actions. Deep inside she keeps wishing that he is seriously in love with her. Being wishful, she becomes mentally dependant on him. But her heavy reliance on him leads her to a great danger because he is not as reliable for her as she wishes him to be. His replies to her often violate maxims of a cooperative conversation and shows his unwillingness to assist her.

In the first chapter of Book I, Selden's attitude to Lily is that of a spectator. The novel starts with his pausing in surprise in the afternoon crowd of the Grand Central Station, having seen Lily Bart by chance. Because she is strikingly good-looking, for him it is "refreshing" to enjoy her sight; The word, "refresh," is used twice in this chapter. She is also "amusing" for him; the word, "amuse," is used five times in the chapter. On seeing her, he is suddenly tempted to test how skillfully she would evade him on seeing him if she wants to, and the idea of testing her "amuses" him very much. So he deliberately passes her by. She is so glad to see him because she wants to kill time for about two hours until the next train comes. He replies to her that he is glad to help her. Usually he would not think that he could possibly be a partner of her romance because he does not care for the moneyed world of luxury and grace she lives in, nor does he think that he is qualified to be its member. But now she is suddenly acting intimate toward him. This unexpected development "amuses" him — the second appearance of the word. Such an unusual "adventure" with a costly beautiful unmarried lady strikes him as "diverting."

He feels “a luxurious pleasure” in walking so close to her. On finding out that they have entered the street of his residence, she asks him which is his room and on being told which window is his, comments that it looks nice. Now Selden casually asks her to have a tea in his room. For a *jeune fille a marrier* in her society, even such a small act can be inappropriate, so she blushes at the suggestion but consents immediately. He is surprised that she agrees with him without giving a second thought. Having tea in a man’s room whom she does not intend to marry is surely not a calculated advance to her goal of marriage but must be a purely spontaneous detour. That she promptly agrees to have a totally unplanned tête-à-tête with himself, this time, even consenting to come up to his room, again, strikes him as a “refreshment” — the second use of the word, “refresh,” in this chapter.

As they start to have a conversation and as the topic grows a bit personal, Selden keeps his pose as a spectator being entertained by a beautiful girl. He makes sure, intentionally or unintentionally, to make his replies not too personal. Telling him how she dislikes the way Mrs. Peniston, her aunt, arranges the furniture in the drawing-room, Lily points to him that he rarely comes to visit Lily at her aunt’s and says, “Why don’t you come oftener?” A cooperative answer to her request, using Grice’s term, would have been to express either his willingness or unwillingness to visit her more frequently. He does not answer in either way, just saying jestingly, “When I do come, it’s not to look at Mrs. Peniston’s furniture.” His reply violates Grice’s maxim of quantity; he avoids showing her if he will visit her oftener or not and conceals his reaction to her request. His answer also violates maxim of relation. In telling Selden to come oftener to visit her, Lily has moved on from the topic about furniture to the relation between her and him, although they are just casual friends at the beginning stage of the novel; Flinging the topic back to the furniture, Selden is being irrelevant. His reply violates yet another maxim, the maxim of manner, because he is avoiding to clearly tell her yes or no. He is being evasive and playful, not thinking that they are having a serious

conversation in any sense. To tell her frankly that he will gladly visit her more is too serious and too much of a commitment for him, because he wants to remain in a casual relation with her. On the other hand, he feels that it is not necessary to tell her clearly that he won't come more often, either; Besides, he does not wish to completely give up his right to visit her once in a while, because he is interested in her anyway. He violates these maxims of cooperative conversation in order both to avoid any commitment and to keep some possibility of a light romance with her. Lily immediately senses and reacts to the ambiguity of his response and retorts, "Nonsense," to his non-sensical reply, which is neither yes or no, nor not even a clear expression of his wish to withhold the answer. Lily points to him, "You don't come at all." Then she adds immediately before either he or she gives any reason for his not coming, deepening the topic further into their relationship; "— and yet we get on so well when we meet." Lily enjoys and appreciates the pleasant friendship between herself and Lawrence Selden. There are not many men with whom she can "get on so well." She tells him shortly after this that some men dislike her, and other men are afraid of her because they think she wants to marry them. As Selden himself asks her later, in early nineteenth century, for upper-class young women, marriage was their only "vocation," and they were "all brought up for" this particular "vocation," not prepared and trained for any other possibility. Because Lily always acts nicely and sweetly to everybody, naturally many men think that she wants to marry them in order to provide for herself, but find the idea disagreeable. There still must be another set of men, who want to marry her. They are willing to support her by being her spouse if they can possess beautiful Lily. They want to purchase her beauty in exchange for their wealth. Lily perceives her relationship with these men as give-and-take interests in each other, bartering — as some critics point out as echoing Lily's surname, Bart — commodities with each other, their wealth and Lily's beauty. Lily considers her beauty and taste for grace

as the only means that she possess and must keep up at any cost for earning living, using them effectually on men. This idea has been ingrained in her through her mother, who thought that only her daughter's beauty could win back the lost wealth of the family.

The idea of marriage as her sole 'vocation,' a future mean to provide for herself, however, is not emotionally appealing for Lily. She feels that such a marital prospect reduces herself to a mere commodity, an "ornament" and relationship between her and men to mere commercial exchange. She longs to have a more humane, reciprocal relationship, not easily found in the gilded society of upper-class luxury. For her in such an unstable dissatisfied emotional state, Lawrence Selden suddenly looms up as a new man. She thinks that he does not think of her as a commodity because he does not seem to barter with her and to want to earn her, a beautiful object, through marriage, but that he is willing to have a friendly talk with her. According to her, they get along splendidly as two humans, having reciprocal relation instead of commerce. But Selden's reply to her is chilling, reminding readers of his view of Lily only as "refreshment" and "amusement" and showing his evasiveness against developing any relationship with her beyond a passing one. Being told by her that they are in such good terms, he answers promptly, "Perhaps that's the reason," meaning that he does not come to see her because they get along. This reply strikes Lily as incomprehensible and uncooperative. Then he asks if she wants to have a slice of lemon in her tea without showing any further interest in the topic of his further visit to her. But Lily still wants to talk about it and "insists," "But that is not the reason." He needs to be reminded of the subject and echoes back her assertion, not remembering the topic immediately; "The reason for what?" On telling him that that they get along is not the reason for his never coming, she leans forward in a perplexed air. "I wish I knew — I wish I could make you out," she says. Then after referring to men who dislike her and who are afraid of her, she

points out that he neither dislikes her nor is afraid of her because he is not her marriage target. He admits that he is not, but withholds his comment about his liking of her. Lily is fairly convinced that he does not dislike her, but she cannot figure out what exactly is in his mind about her. He is not like any type of men she has met in the past. His attitude puzzles her but also intrigues her, driving her anxious to find out what he thinks of her. So she persists in asking him; "Well, then — ?" If he is reconciled to the fact that she does not intend to marry him and still keeps liking her considerably, then, what is it that he wants? Lily's considerable interest in himself becomes quite an "amusement" for Selden — the third and the fourth use of the word in this chapter. He takes the anxiousness in her eyes as "provocation" and feels amused that she seems to be interested in him. He wonders why she is and thinks of several reasons why, but cannot figure out definitely. The only thing that he can be sure about at the moment is that she is so pretty and that he should help her killing time because he has offered her to have tea in his room. Feeling obligated to fulfill his light duty, but not out of any graver motivation, he echoes her question and says, "Well, then, perhaps that's the reason." He tells her that because she does not want to marry him and is not available for him, he does not feel tempted to visit and make advances to her, being aware that such a statement is daring. Lily does not think that Selden is as "stupid," using her term, as wanting to make love to her, so dismisses his remark about her "inducement" for him with a laugh. She thinks many "stupid" men make approaches to her by trying to please her, but they are not sincere enough to tell her what she really needs even if she might be offended. Her aunt, for example, only follows trite traditional moralities in minute details and cannot give her niece, Lily, any useful advice. Other women are supposedly her friends, but only "use or abuse" Lily and does not truly care for her. Lily tells Selden seriously that she really needs a friend who cares for her and who can give her useful advice without being afraid of displeasing her.

She says that people are tired of her because she has been in the social circle too long without getting married. But she, too, is getting tired of the shallow mercenary relationship between people. She craves for a true friend outside material interest. She confesses to Selden, "Sometimes I have fancied you might be that friend.... I shouldn't have to pretend with you or be on my guard against you." The tone of her voice suddenly grows serious and she "gazes up at him with the troubled gravity of a child." Lily is indeed a gravely troubled child in search of a true friend and true value in place of commercial relation and value. Selden, however, is not interested in her inward trouble. When she tells him gravely how she feels and what she thinks of him with imploring eyes, he thinks of indulging himself in making his rendezvous with this beautiful girl slightly more intimate. He "meditate[s]" one or two replies calculated to add a momentary zest to the situation." This narration tells readers how emotionally detached he is from Lily's entreaty for friendly guidance, while he fully enjoys being with her. Readers already discern a great gap between Lily's and Selden's emotional involvement. Lily has considerably exposed her inner state to Selden without being "on [her] guard." But Selden is emotionally so removed from her personal topic that he is able to coolly "calculate" one or two remarks, instead of speaking out of his personal and emotional reaction to her confession. Furthermore, by saying a few more words, he only means to "add a momentary zest" to their short rendezvous; in replying to her, Selden, at best, only means to make their short meeting just a little bit more interesting only for the time being. The author's use of the word, "momentary," clearly tells readers Selden's lack of interest in a long-term commitment, either friendship or marriage. Then after all he does not even give these "calculated" remarks for adding color to the situation, and asks her a simpler question; "Well, why don't you [get married]?" Reacting to the simplicity of the question and the lightness of his tone, Lily blushes, laughs and says, even making fun of her own former

mention of friendship, "Ah, I see you *are* a friend after all, and that is one of the disagreeable things I was asking for." Selden tells her pleasantly that he did not mean to be disagreeable. He continues in the same tone: "Isn't marriage your vocation? Isn't it what you're all brought up for?" She sighs. "I suppose so. What else is there?" "Exactly. And so why not take the plunge and have it over?" She shrugs her shoulders. "You speak as if I ought to marry the first man who came along." What characterizes his remarks on the subject of her marriage is that he does not perceive that she thinks of it as a personal and emotional matter rather than commercial. Her reaction of sighing and shrugging her shoulders shows that she does not quite agree with his view of marriage of the women of her society. In his interaction with Lily in talking about her marriage, Selden does not quite violate maxims of cooperative conversation, but he fails to see through what she feels about marriage. As they keep talking about this topic, he feels "a purely impersonal enjoyment." He enjoys observing attentively minute details of her beautiful features such as her black lashes, white lids, the shade and color of her cheek etc., whereas he has no personal interest in her heart. When she expresses grievances about the difference between men and women's lives, complaining that it is all right for men to look "a little shabby," but not for women, inside she really laments for women's fate in her society. Her eyes implore him for commiseration and advice, but he still looks at her only as an object of his "amusement" — the fifth use of the word in the chapter. In the literal meaning of words, he does not violate conversational maxims; but the gap between his and her emotional involvement in the conversation widens as he tells her that there must be plenty of men interested in marrying her, wanting to reward her for her large investment for always dressing-up pretty. It is impossible for him "to take a sentimental view of her case," although he fully acknowledges the loveliness of her eyes as she looks at him imploringly. He keeps his interest in her at a purely physical and material level, fully but only appreciating

her outward appearance. He tells her that she might meet her prospective husband at the party at Trerors' that night. Lily's mind still lingers on the personal friendship that she secretly dreams to have with Selden, so she asks him "interrogatively" if he is coming to the party or not. She hopes and assumes that he will come, and shoots "a query through her lashes." But Selden's feeling remains completely unmoved.

Throughout the first chapter, Lawrence Selden talks and acts with Lily purely as a spectator without perceiving Lily's personal thoughts. He only thinks that maybe she is "keeping her hand in," or that a girl as pretty as her and who is the center of people's attention as a *jeune fille a marrier* has "no conversation but of the personal kind." On the other hand, Lily keeps pouring out her own emotional trouble to Selden, thinking that he is the first man she has ever met who is free from material interest. The gap between their expectations of each other often results in violation of Grice's maxims of a cooperative conversation (5-15).

In chapter VI of Book I, Lily and Selden have conversation by themselves again. This is the second time in the novel for them to be alone. One afternoon after the party at Trenor's in Bellomont was over, where Lily was heading the previous time when she met Selden at the station, Lily takes a walk with Selden to the top of the hill in Bellomont and talks with him for some time. Her second rendezvous with Selden becomes a significant turning point in her life. The meeting causes her downfall from social ascendancy for the following reasons. First of all, wealthy Mrs. Bertha Dorset becomes Lily's nemesis as Lily intrudes on Mrs. Dorset's and Selden's private talk in the library at Trenor's. Mrs. Dorset and Selden have been said to have had some affair in the past. Running into two of them in the library sets Lily wondering if the affair is over or not and if Selden likes herself better than Mrs. Dorset or not. After the incident, Bertha Dorset resorts to every vengeful scheme to contrive Lily Bart's downfall. Secondly, Lily turns Mr. Percy Gryce away from herself as she

breaks her promise to go to church with him the very morning she runs into Selden. Mr. Gryce is noted for his wealth and Lily has endeavored to draw his attention to her between the day and the previous Saturday when she visited Selden. After leaving Selden's room, Lily has tried to be realistic, forgetting Selden. She is now after wealthy Mr. Gryce, and prides herself on her beauty and social deftness as she successfully makes him consider marrying her. But when she flouts her appointment with him and when Bertha Dorset tells on Mr. Gryce that Miss Bart has once gambled, Mr. Gryce quits Lily for good. Shortly after this, he is engaged to a girl much less arresting than Lily but whom he thinks is safer than her. Thirdly, Lily's conversation with Selden on the hill of Bellomont convinces her wrongly that Selden is the right man with right ideas. Selden, "a man of words," makes Lily believe with his "glowing rhetoric" that she should get out of the moneyed world she was born into and raised in. But he does not suggest to her any feasible alternative to her original plan to provide for herself by finding a rich husband. She cannot think of any other concrete alternative, either, though she is at first allured by Selden's theory.

Conversational analysis of her talk with him at Bellomont shows how Selden evades Lily's request for his concrete suggestion. According to Selden's rhetoric, his idea of success in life is "personal freedom... from everything — from money, from poverty, from ease and anxiety, from all the material accidents," and "to keep a kind of republic of the spirit." Selden's sudden energy in mentioning them, the freshness of the afternoon, the beautiful scenery from the hilltop and, above all, being with Selden make Lily feel so good that she tells him that she has been feeling exactly that sort of "freedom" all the day. On being asked by Selden if she feels this "freedom" so rarely, she answers that nobody has ever told her about such a republic and freedom. But Selden tells her that one has to find way by oneself to enter the "republic." He is not to be responsible for showing Lily the way. Before Lily met Selden, she has not known another way of

earning a living other than achieving her ambition to become rich by marrying a rich man. Although she has not been satisfied with such an aspiration at heart, she has not been able to imagine other provision for her living. She cannot imagine being poor or not having enough money to be always dressed splendidly and tastefully. To look "dingy" is what she is most afraid of. She thinks that she ought to become rich through marriage in order to avoid dinginess at any cost. But she has also known that her materialistic aspiration has prevented her from having healthy reciprocal relationship with any man and that no rich man was ever attractive for her except that he was rich. Selden's point that success in life is to be free from any material greed touches on the sore contradiction of Lily's heart. Hearing his ideas, Lily suddenly feels her doubt grow. Her search for a rich husband may not be as worthwhile as she used to believe. A rich man may not necessarily be an ideal husband. Having money may not guarantee her real happiness. To the contrary, money might shut her out of happiness. Selden has just clearly told her that if she marries a rich man, she cannot have freedom from money and thus cannot enter what he calls the "republic of spirit." If being rich prevents her from being the member of Selden's "republic of freedom," she might not enjoying having money at all after having made all her effort to be rich. But to her, Selden seems to think that unworthy people enjoy having money and that money is good enough for them including Lily. She says appealingly to him, "But if you think they are [money is] what I should really enjoy, you must think my ambitions [to be rich] are good enough for me." Selden, however, replies only with a laugh, saying, "Ah, my dear Miss Bart, I am not Divine Providence, to guarantee your enjoying the things [money] you are trying to get!" He evades her appeal to let her know if he thinks she is as unworthy as other rich people enjoying money. He is not to be responsible for informing her if she will be satisfied with only having money, and if she is a worthy person or not. Lily's point, however, is that he should tell her his opinion because

he has started to tell her about freedom and spiritual republic. He is, however, indifferent to her course of life, although he might criticize her endeavors in roundabout expressions. Lily says, "Then the best you can say for me is that after struggling to get them, I probably shan't like them?" Drawing a deep breath, she continues, "What a miserable future you foresee for me!" Whatever he thinks of her future, it is not his serious concern. On being asked for his opinion, he always turns the answers to somebody else such as Divine Providence or to herself and avoids giving his own opinion; "Well, have you never foreseen it for yourself?" "Often and often," she says, "But it looks so much darker when you show it to me!" This time Selden does not even say anything. Suddenly, Lily cries, "Why do you do this to me? Why do you make the things I have chosen seem hateful to me if you have nothing to give me instead." Again, his answer is not cooperative. He avoids to tell her why he points to her the unworthiness of her material pursuit, which is her effort in her own way to provide for herself. He gives, however, a simple, direct comment to the latter half of her exclamation. He answers her point-blank that he has nothing to offer her instead. Being made known clearly that she should not expect anything from him, Lily Bart might as well stop associating with Lawrence Selden.

But the next remark that he abruptly adds throws her out; "If I had, it should be yours, you know." He would have offered her a better choice of life if he had something to give her, but the fact is that he does not. Lily was given a glimpse of a better life by Selden and she thought that he might guide her out of the former way of her life, but he cannot, even if he would have wanted to. Lily feels helpless and weeps for a moment. Selden adds ironically, "Isn't it natural that I should try to belittle all the things I can't offer you?" In this sentence, he is saying that the reason why he "belittle[s]," criticizes money-centered culture is because he does not have much money to offer Lily. To put this sentence into his phraseology, he is

showing his republic of freedom and spirit to Lily Bart where a citizen needs not be rich, because he has no right to be with Lily in the gilded empire of money, grace and luxury where the prerequisite for associating with a beautiful woman like her is to be rich. He makes his line sound like he likes her, but the sentence is just another way of saying that he is not to guide her. Lily is not blinded by his evasive remark; "But you belittle *me*, don't you, in being so sure they are the only things I care for?" Again Selden violates maxims of cooperative conversation, not answering if he belittles her or not. Instead he simply retorts, "But you do care for them, don't you?" and adds his usual point, "And no wishing of mine can alter that." Lily cries at him derisively, "Ah, for all your fine phrases you're really as great a coward as I am, for you wouldn't have made one of them if you hadn't been so sure of my answer." He would not have told her about the value of another world where people do not care so much about money, if he had thought at all that Miss Bart might actually be willing to get out the moneyed society and come to another world. If she actually does, he would have to be held responsible for inviting her there and show her the way in it. But since he is quite sure that she will not depart from her current value system, he can be assured that he will not be held responsible and can say whatever pleases him from outside without worrying about being held responsible for the consequence of what he says. Her exclamation is so pointed and tart that Selden is shocked. Instead of admitting that what she says is correct, he answers quietly, "I am not so sure of your answer... and I do you the justice to believe that you are not either." Lily is astounded to hear Selden say this. Does he really think that she might actually take a step out of the moneyed world, give up her search for a rich husband, become another member of Selden's republic and be reconciled to the less luxurious life as can be lived with Selden's relatively low income? What does he intend to do if she really decides to live as meagerly as himself? She asks him, "Do you want to marry me?" He

answers, "No, I don't want to," and laughing, goes back to his way of flinging the responsibility of the argument to her, "but perhaps I should if you did!" He might want to marry her provided that she would want to, but he would not wish to if she does not want to. Lily says sadly, "That's what I told you — you're so sure of me that you can amuse yourself with experiments." Since he is sure that Lily does not want to marry him, he can freely tell her that he might want to marry her because he will not have to pay for his words by really marrying her. But he insists, "I am not making experiments....Or if I am, it is not on you but on myself. I don't know what effect they [experiments] are going to have on me, but if marrying you is one of them, I will take the risk." Lily reminds him with a faint smile that it is a great risk for him and her to get married. Selden exclaims, "Ah, it's you who are the coward!" He repeats the sentence, "It's you who are the coward," and catches her hand in his. The day and the hilltop are so perfectly beautiful, and their conversation about her life has finally brought them this far after many evasive turns and tart retorts. They have never felt closer to each other than at that moment. Lily declares, "I shall look hideous in dowdy clothes, but I can trim my own hats." She might not look as beautiful as she is now if she marries Selden and has less money, but she does not mind venturing it.

They stood silent for a while after this, smiling at each other like adventurous children who have climbed to a forbidden height from which they discover a new world. The actual world at their feet was veiling itself in dimness, and across the valley a clear moon rose in the denser blue.

But suddenly a motor car passes by the road far down below them and Lily comes out of the trance of feeling united with Selden. She suddenly realizes that she has broken the code of the social circle and has stayed out so long while she was supposed to stay inside feeling unwell as a pretext for not going to church with Mr. Percy Gryce. Selden also wakes out of the momentary trance of feeling one with Lily and goes back to think that after all Lily will not depart

the upper-class, conventional, moneyed society and descend into his republic of relatively meager, but quiet and free living (72-78).

The next time Lily sees Selden is at the wedding of Jack Stepney, Lily's cousin, to Miss Van Osburgh, one of the daughters of another upper-class family. Lily does not want to see Selden again, because his presence always makes her less confident of the line of life she intends to follow. His sight "throw[s] her whole world out of focus" (93). Later on after the ceremony was over, however, Lily is glad to run into Selden because she is afraid of being caught by Augustus Trenor or Simon Rosedale. They are more ominous for her than Selden, although their wealth shows her the straight line of her material pursuit. Trenor, a husband of Judy Trenor, has offered her to speculate some of her money for her at Wall Street to increase it. Lily has accepted his offer, being unaware of his secret plan to make her owe him instead of investing it, and thereby to make love to her eventually. Lily wants money badly but even a touch by Trenor on her arm vexes her. Rosedale, a rich Jew, wants to ascend the social ladder of New York and is looking for a beautiful, upper-class young woman to marry, who will guarantee his social ascendancy and is pleasing for him to have as a wife. For these reasons, he is interested in Lily, but Lily dislikes the "glossy-looking," "plump, rosy" Jew. Compared with the vexation she feels when she sees Trenor or Rosedale, being with Selden calms her nerves. Selden's perfect composure in seeing her, however, is disturbing for her because she wishes that he is as moved as she is by their last conversation at Bellomont. He seems to have completely regained his footing on reality, totally uninfluenced by their last momentary dream together to be united. Now he seems to have the original view of her. To him, she is again nothing "more than a piece of sentient prettiness, a passing diversion to his eye and brain," a beautiful creature inaccessible to him, being caged in the upper-class moneyed society. But Lily tries to remind him of the effect the meeting had on her; "I have never recovered my self-respect since you showed me how

poor and unimportant my ambitions were." Selden answers in a light tone, "I thought, on the contrary, that I had been the means of proving they were more important to you than anything else." Selden not only shuns from having to help her, but also denies that he told her anything to cause her to want to get out of her class. Furthermore, he even maintains that he helped her to realize that she will never come out of the class and that the value of the society is more important to her than anything, by giving her the glimpse into the world outside. Lily feels hurt and helpless to be starkly reminded that Selden is never to assist her though he might cause her to want to depart her class. Her helpless gaze touches Selden momentarily and they seem to be together again. But they are interrupted by the reappearance of Trenor and Rosedale. Lily resents to show Selden that she propitiates such rich men, but she does, being brought back to the reality of her need to keep her standing in the class, just as the passing of a motor-car brought her out of the trance to reality at Belmont (96-102).

The next time Lily and Selden meet is after the performance of *tableaux vivants* at the Bry's. In performances of *tableaux vivants* women dress themselves resembling the figures of famous paintings and appear on a stage featuring the background of each painting. At the Bry's Lily poses as Mrs. Lloyd by Reynolds and makes a great success. The whole audience is astounded by her beauty. Selden is among them. Being overwhelmed by her beauty, Selden, after a long interval, longs to recapture his private moment with her. He has avoided her intentionally since the Van Osburgh wedding, but having witnessed Lily's true beauty, he feels that he must be with her at once. After finding Lily in the ball-room, he takes her arm and they walk together out to the garden. She murmurs to him beseechingly, "You never speak to me; you think hard things of me." Being carried away by the sensation caused by Lily's performance, Selden exclaims, "I think of you at any rate, God knows!" Lily is not impressed with his enthusiasm, which she painfully knows is only temporary, and keeps asking accusingly;

“Then why do we never see each other? Why can’t we be friends? You promised once to help me.” Selden replies in a low voice, “The only way I can help you is by loving you.” Then their lips touch. Suddenly Lily says, “Ah, love me, love me — but don’t tell me so!” There is a great gap between what Selden means by “love” and what Lily means by the same word. He does not mean anything by the word. At best, the word only means for him that he tremendously appreciate Lily’s beauty. To him, to “love” her is no different from his always feeling refreshed, amused and diverted at her sight. He is not to do anything for her at all after all. But Selden is capable of using the abstract word, “love,” that can either mean nothing because it is so abstract or mean so much. Being swept off by the beauty of Lily and the atmosphere of the night and the garden, he does not tell Lily in prosaic words that he is not going to do anything for her. He comes up with the perfect rhetoric to be fitted into the romantic scene and to fuel his intoxication, and to still keep him exempted from any concrete responsibility. Lily, on the other hand, uses the word to imply not only romantic feeling but also actions manifesting and materializing the feeling. She wants Selden to show her by his actions his care for her instead of remaining a spectator and telling her empty words. Entreating him thus much, she leaves him and disappears, going back to the bright ball-room. Selden is drawn back to the reality again in the light, noise, and the smoke from cigars and men’s clamorous, lecherous praise of Lily (143-145).

After this, Lily Bart and Lawrence Selden never meet in Book I. Each of them tries to see the other, but they always cross each other.

The next morning after the night of *tableaux vivants* at the Bry’s, Lily receives a note from Selden to let him know what time she can see him the following day. After some speculation, Lily writes, “To-morrow at four.” The same morning, she receives another note from Judy Trenor, Gus Trenor’s wife and Lily’s friend, asking her to dine with her that night. Lily sends Judy Trenor a telegram to answer her that she will go to her house at

ten in the evening. Until ten o'clock, she spends some time at Mrs. Fisher's, where people gather to talk. Then she leaves Mrs. Fisher's for Trenor's at ten. When she arrives there, to her great astonishment, Judy Trenor is not at home; Gus Trenor has tricked Lily to be alone with him at his house by sending her a false note using his wife's name. She has never been willing to succumb to Gus Trenor's solicitation, so finally he deceives her and tries to make her pay for the money he gave her. Lily narrowly escapes being raped by him. As she breathlessly comes out of his house onto the Fifth Avenue, she sees a man's figure, and his outline looks familiar.

Meanwhile, the same day, Selden wants to see Lily badly, still being in the wake of enthusiasm of the previous night. He sends her a note to ask her to see him and presently receives her answer that they shall meet at four the next day. Then he happens to hear from Gerty Farish that Lily has gone to Mrs. Fisher's. Being impatient to see her, he immediately goes there although he is assured to be able to see her the following day. But Lily has already left for Trenor's. Selden is disappointed. Then he soon becomes sick of the talk going on in the room about her. People rumor that Lily is thinking about accepting Rosedale's proposal, that she has an affair with Gus Trenor and that she has indeed just left for Trenor's. Selden knows that Lily needs money, but he cannot believe that she will receive money from such men, either through marriage or illegal affairs. He enthusiastically tells himself that he will rescue her out of this sordid association of the moneyed society, like Perseus rescuing Andromeda. The note from her in his pocket, "To-morrow at four," seems like her cry for his rescue. Selden leaves Mrs. Fisher's, craving to get the fresh air of the night. As he walks in the night air down Fifth Avenue, he sees a woman's silhouette coming out of Trenor's, going into a hansom. Then it drives off.

Next morning, back to her aunt's, Mrs. Peniston's, Lily tells Mrs. Peniston in utter desperation that she owes much money, although she doesn't tell her to whom. Mrs. Peniston tells her niece coldly and angrily

that it has been enough for her to let Lily stay at her place after the death of Lily's parents and that she will not help her to pay the debt back. Lily despairs. Suddenly she remembers that Selden is to come at four and fervently thinks of asking for his consolation and rescue. But at four o'clock, Selden does not appear. She waits the rest of the day and all next morning, but neither himself nor a note from him arrives. In the evening, she finally finds in the evening newspaper a paragraph reporting that Mr. Lawrence Selden has sailed for Havana, West Indies and Monte Carlo that afternoon in a liner. He has fled from her thinking that she is so soiled and caged in the moneyed society that she is a prostitute of Gus Trenor. Lily does not know what exactly has caused him to flee from her because she does not know that he has seen her at Fifth Avenue the previous night. It torments her, however, to find out that he has fled from her and has refused her when she most needs solace and assistance. His empty and evasive talks full of violations of cooperative maxims have made her suspect of his insincerity. Her fear has been true, her hope, false. Book I of *The House of Mirth* ends.

(Due to the limitation of page numbers allotted to a paper for the present journal, the conversational analysis of discourse between Lawrence Selden and Lily Bart in Book II will be continued in the next issue.)

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