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***The Portrait of a Lady* by Henry James: A Thematic Study**

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:by

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

((فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ (١٥٩))

صدق الله العظيم

(ال عمران_159)

Dedication

I dedicate this project to God Almighty, my Creator, my strong pillar, and the source of my inspiration, wisdom, knowledge and understanding. He has been my strength throughout this search. I also dedicate this work to my beloved mother who encouraged me all the time and whose encouragement support me to do everything in my .power to finish what I started

To my beloved father , mother and my sisters who have been effective in every possible way by this mission, I thank you all and may God .protect you from all harm and grant you the Gardens of the Most High

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A Glimpse at the Life of Henry James and his Main .Contributions

Henry James was born into a wealthy and educated family in New York on April 15, 1843. An American novelist and native Englishman, he was a great figure in transatlantic culture. Henry James was named after his father, who was a prominent social theorist at the time. By his mid-twenties, James was considered one of the most skilled short story writers in America. However, critics have described his tendency to write about the life of the mind, rather than about action. The stories of these early years show the pleasant existence of the wealthy in Newport and Saratoga. James' training was meticulous. He wrote stories, reviews, and articles for nearly a decade before attempting to write a full-length novel. There was also to be the traditional 'Grand Tour', and James went abroad for the first adult encounter with Europe in 1869. His tours that year in England, France and Italy paved the way for a lifetime of traveling in those countries. James never married. By nature he was friendly and even sociable, but while he was an active observer and participant in society he tended, until late middle age, to be "aloof" in his relationships with people and was careful to avoid "getting involved". (*James 1881*)

The Portrait of a Lady Summary

The Portrait of a Lady is one of the great realist novels of the nineteenth century. It's a simple tale. James decides again and again to return the closest Americans to the ancient world to represent the dream-fulfilled prophecies. But Isabel doesn't do justice to one of the great female canon characters in American literature. Where Henry creates characters who suffer as well as we suffer, In a picture of a lady, she tells the story of Isabel, a rich girl from New York City, who is creative in addition to being confident in herself. She goes abroad to find a suitable husband, as she stayed in the city of England, and she was courted by many suitors of luxurious classes along the River Thames. One of them was Caspar Goodwood, the son of a wealthy Boston mill owner. Isabelle is drawn to Casper, but her fierce commitment to independence makes her fearful of him because she felt marrying him would be a bad thing or a sacrifice of her freedom. After her father's death she is visited by her gruff aunt, Lady Touchet, who offers to travel across Europe to which Isabel agrees, telling Casper that she cannot tell him she does not want to marry him. Departing with her Aunt Touchet for a city in England, Isabel makes a wise and severe impression on Mrs. Touchet's mansion. Lord Warburton falls in love with her and proposes to marry her, but Isabel refuses because she believes that marriage will harm her independence, and for that she promises herself to accomplish something wonderful in her life, as that justifies her refusal to marry Warburton. Isabelle travels with her aunt Touchet and Madame Merle to Florence, a man named Osmond proposes to her, a man who does not have a social status, meaning that he was from the middle class, but Madame Merle described him as a rich person, his wife died in secret and Madame Merle urged Isabelle to marry Osmond. Isabelle agreed in any case, and Isabelle discovers after a short time that he is an arrogant person and recently discovered that she became the stepmother to his daughter Pancy. (*James, 1881*) This novel is tragic in how easily manipulated she is, but it was a big topic about whether she would succumb to everyone who manipulated her feelings or easily chose her own destiny, which is the title because the idea of determining her own destiny speaks to so much of the American spirit. (*Depository, 2009*)

Important themes in the Novel

Old World vs. New World

James looks at the difference between the old world and the new world, the old world that means European culture, while the new world that means American culture, and there is a huge difference between the European and American cultures. With regard to Europeans in the mid-nineteenth century, there was a good idea that Americans could develop a culture commensurate with their ability to produce any work of great literature since they had the creativity and innovation to do so. (*GradeSaver, n.d*)

James wrote a lot of stories that contrasted the values of the (new) American world with creativity, optimism, etc., with the values of the (old) European world where there was a lot of immoral decadence. From the effect of this contradiction, James' novel, *The Portrait of a Lady*, plays on this great international contradiction. James was an American man who had spent a long time living in Europe, meaning that he witnessed the values of the ancient world of European culture and how much it suffers from decadence and false history. Like wise, the protagonist of the novel, Isabelle Archer, is a young woman who travels from America to Europe for worldly interests, and this has caused her to suffer recently because of the terrible European culture. In the beginning, Isabelle was an intelligent and energetic girl who loved freedom and independence, which represented the values of the new world of European culture, but she was attached to the values of the old world of European culture and this led her to a terrible marriage. Through this event, James suggests that the Old World imitation of European culture has done more harm than the New World to American culture. (*Ash, 2022*)

Although Henry has shed many positive and negative lights, it is interesting that none of the characters in the novel *the Portrait of a Lady* are influenced by the values of American culture (the New World), which represents vitality, freedom, activity, optimism, innovation, and so on. Since Isabelle did not harm any of the characters in the novel except herself because of her wrong choice of marriage. Caspar Goodwood, an American man who hates England but proposes to Isabel, is the epitome of the New World man of American culture because of his modern insight. In contrast, James highlights the blunt figures of the old world of European culture as well as their feudal traditions, as in the character of Osmond and Merle representing the decadence of the old European world and Isabel falling victim to their pity. Osmond, in particular, represents the worst values of the old world, and the reason for this is that he treats his daughter and his new wife (Isabel) as possessions that add a wonderful feature to his material collection. In other words, Osmond married Isabel for her wealth and vitality. Isabel recently discovers the values of the old European world and how much this world suffers from vulgarity and immoral history, and that she has fallen victim to the mercy of Osmond and Madame Merle. Here, James discovers that the old world harms social duty, and despite that, Isabel did not allow the values of the old world to affect her because moral conscience is the most important characteristic she has, as she refuses to follow in the footsteps of Osmond and Merle in ignoring the moral conscience. The contradiction that has arisen between American and European value systems is similar to what the author himself experienced as an expatriate American author residing in Europe. (Seltzer, 1984)

Aesthetics and Morality

On the topic of aesthetics, James sheds light on it in a novel with high art details through the artistic features that Isabel saw. Although Osmond is the rude and vulgar character in the novel, he is characterized by high taste and his artistic outlook on life. On the other hand, Osmond is unable to perform any work in life as he is morally corrupt and this is represented as being unable to represent or .form,.art itself in the ancient European world. (*Donald, 124-132*)

As Isabelle became more acquainted with European aesthetics, she realized that she was more familiar with high art. On the other hand, Isabelle makes a fatal mistake because of her choice of artistic values and her neglect of moral values, and this is what caused her a big problem when she married Osmond. In the novel James focuses on Isabel being fascinated by the artistic values of Europe. The character of Ralph also represents high artistic taste in the ancient European world. It can be said that Ralph has a morally upright personality, unlike Osmond, who represents the darkness of art and is only interested in social status and material possessions. This is one of the examples that James suggests that art is a measure of good taste and culture, which is What was true in the late nineteenth century. On the other hand, art does not represent moral values, for example, Osmond places other people and adds them to his artistic possessions that he can control however he wants. (*GradeSaver, n.d.*)

The art in *The Portrait of a Lady* is a subtle allusion, as the scale of high art greatly influences the character of Isabel and this is reflected in the title of the novel, as James paints many portraits of Isabel, which is represented by an enveloping but independent and free young woman to a sophisticated but .restrained personality or wife. socially because of her marriage to Osmond

James criticizes this kind of life in the old European world, which suffers from decadence and vulgarity, where Isabel believed that the artistic vision could also be reflected in moral values, and that the idea of her marriage to Osmond is to encourage him to practice his artistic ideas, but she recently discovered that Osmond does not have any ideas, but he has Dark thoughts and that he married her for her wealth only, that is, he cares about material matters only without any social moral values. James sheds light on moral and aesthetic values, and he believes that art is one of the moral values, but the aesthetic relationship is not linked to the moral relationship. That in the novel, art was not a pillar associated with morality, unlike the character of Isabelle, who believed that art was linked to morals (James highlights that the character of Isabelle is the same in terms of art). So Isabelle did not notice this because she chose to travel to the ancient world and the art of the witch, and she believed that morals also existed among the inhabitants of the ancient world. (*James 1881*)

Freedom and Independence

Freedom in a woman's life is a very important thing, which is what she tries to achieve in her life, as Isabelle does. Isabelle did not really want anyone to restrict her freedom. In the beginning, although the suitors Casper and Lord Warburton were wealthy men, she did not accept them and was afraid that she would lose her freedom later, so she chose her freedom and independence. Mrs. Merle was a woman who hated Isabel so much that she did not like her good, so she planned to destroy her personal freedom by marrying Osmond. Isabel trusted that Osmond would provide her with a decent life, but the exact opposite happened and she could not exercise her freedom again. Isabelle is an independent woman as she departs from America for Europe to explore an ancient world that she will only soon realize was just how corrupt it was. Isabelle defied all social expectations and imagined that she would be obedient and dependent on men, and there would be no barrier to her doing so. Through her journey, many suitors come to her who have high social power and are obscenely rich. Despite Isabelle's ambition and the defense of her freedom, she married a man who did not give her freedom and independence. In the novel, Isabelle is determined to prove her personal freedom first to herself and then to the world. Although Isabel refuses to marry Lord Warburton and Caspar Goodwood, she finds her unmarried status better in terms of her independence as her goal is freedom and independence. When Isabel married Osmond, she believed that he was not showing off his social power or the wealth he possessed, and she finally realized that marrying Osmond was sacrificing her freedom and personal independence. She even shocked her peers by marrying Osmond because he restricted her personal freedom. In fact, Isabelle ignores any warnings from her peers about Osmond's vulgar and decadent personality. (*GradeSaver, n.d.*)

Isabelle believes that her marriage to Osmond is for the sake of achieving his fake noble goals, which were only for his personal gain. The artifice of Osmond's marriage to Isabelle was orchestrated by Madame Merle, that degenerate woman who destroyed Isabelle's life through her hidden plot against Isabelle, as she conveyed Osmond's image to Isabelle as a moral, noble, and wealthy person, and that he seeks to give her a stable life with independence and freedom. Isabelle did not give up, as she accepted the reality of her marriage to Osmond, and it was the biggest decision she made in her life, although she was a victim under his hand, but she respected her husband because of her moral commitment. Therefore, she expresses her freedom by rejecting the opinions of others from marrying Warburton and Caspar Goodwood because the principle of freedom and independence are the most important to her in life. As Isabelle works to make up for the lost sense of freedom, she loses her priorities and gradually begins to destroy them. Although she married without control, she did not marry freedom. It is evident in the theme of independence and freedom that what women really want is to make their own decisions. Many of the women James portrays have dreams and plans, but none of them materialize and he represents her in the character of Isabel. The main obstacle in the matter of independence and freedom may be men or social pressure, as is the case with the character Isabelle, as she was unable to obtain her freedom and independence after marrying Osmond, because this marriage was a major obstacle in her way. The image of a woman is not based on one woman like Isabelle, but rather it reveals to many different women, as Henry presents the situation of women in general and how they are deprived of their most basic rights, as in issues of freedom and independence. The theme of ethics in the novel *The Portrait of a Lady* constitutes a large space in Isabelle's life, because the choice of moral values has a great impact on her life, but there are some obstacles that have happened to her. Isabelle's life and the inhabitants of the new world are interested in it, but the arts and the social status that European society and vulgarity in the society of the old world were very important to them did not care in any way in morals. Isabelle was distraught at the idea of being considered a candidate for adoption after her aunt took her away from her home where she had no parents: "I am so fond of my freedom" (p. 19). (Ash, 2022)

On the other hand, Isabelle's newly acquired wealth brings her greater freedom, however problematic, so Isabelle believes that she is now freer than

ever, yet she is afraid of the burden of great responsibility that complete freedom entails. Believing she is free to choose her own destiny, she follows this principle of freedom throughout the rest of the novel, surrounded by constant worry about the use she will make of her freedom, which she never doubts. It can be said that Isabelle's previous character follows the example of her aunt, who was an independent woman with a strong will, and Madame Merle, who knew the art world better, but lacks their experience and power of judgment, and thus becomes entrapped. (*GradeSaver, n.d.*)

The Dangers of Wealth

Wealth represents the main pillar at the beginning of the novel, as it provided great opportunities for many characters in the novel, for example, wealth provided the character of Casper and Lord Warburton with social strength, prestige, and prestige, in addition to the charisma that they possess, as wealth affects them greatly. On the other hand, in the beginning, Isabelle was dreaming of multiple ways by using her money in an ethical way to achieve the things she wanted to deal with. However, wealth is considered dangerous because Isabelle did not know how to use that wealth to face the social risks that are in her way. Through her generous self she will be able to achieve luxurious lifestyles. Isabelle is flattered by the prospect of achieving her newfound wealth through her financial gift. Isabelle becomes a victim at the mercy of cunning: Madame Merle, who plans to marry Isabelle to Osmond in order to obtain her wealth and has lied to her that Osmond is a rich and noble person as she succeeded in persuading Isabelle to marry Osmond. Isabelle realized that she had fallen into a big problem and that she would not be able to get rid of her because of her marriage to Osmond, and that he married her for her money only, the material gains and the fake luxuries that represent the old European world, where her wealth led her to a dark and harsh pillar and she could not control her money as she was doing in her homeland the American world and on the other hand She realized that Osmond was a real tough character. Despite her cousin Ralph Touchet's intentions to save her from Osmond's ill intentions by giving her financial independence, his family's money helped bring her down. Osmond is a Machiavellian figure because he only cares about money and himself and this .posed a threat to Isabelle's life

Psychological Realism

This novel *The Portrait of a Lady* is psychological and focuses specifically on the inner world of any character. Where there are a lot of conflicts that have been affected by the harsh social reality. James sheds light on psychological realism rather than social realism because he has focused in the novel on the internal motives in the human mind instead of focusing on society. In the novel, which may be a psychological novel, it focuses mainly on Isabelle's awareness, as she is an intelligent, energetic, and ambitious woman, and she seeks to achieve her freedom and personal independence. On the other hand, Isabelle lived her childhood without a mother, and her father raised her, but in an informal way, or it may be random, as this affected in a way Big on her delicate psyche. This formed in her psyche that women should obtain freedom and independence instead of the social traditions formed by society. The novel *The Portrait of a Lady* gives a major view of the human mind. Social reality greatly affects the psyche of an individual. Although James was not interested in social reality, he wanted to know the impact of social motives on the psyche of the individual's mind. In any case, Isabelle refuses to marry suitors because she believes that this will affect her psyche and restrict her freedom, which she has sought to achieve since childhood. In addition, through her marriage to Osmond and because of Merle's deception, she discovered that she had become his second wife, which greatly affected her miserable psyche, as she was unable to exercise her freedom and independence again. Therefore, Isabelle felt that she had made a big mistake in her marriage to Osmond, because that had affected her psyche a lot. Because of the conflicts between the old world and the new, Isabelle fell victim to the old world society. On the other hand, Isabelle lived a difficult childhood without her mother, and because of her father's neglect, her childhood became harsh. When Isabel left for the old European world, she had many ambitions to discover that magical world, and she did not know what crises await her because of her marriage to Osmond. So it will find her with Osmond, but that did not happen, and he never loved his wife, and the feelings of marriage that she felt towards Osmond were a big problem that happened to her. It's clear that Isabelle isn't afraid to let others know how she feels, no matter how bad the behaviors. (Nazari (Pooyandeh, 2022 &

Henry James seems to take the conservative view on Isabel's struggle between reason and emotion to save Isabel's virtue through restraint and good judgment through her marriage, which perhaps surprisingly becomes a turning point in the novel. (*Forster :163*)

Idealism

Idealism is also an important theme in a novel *The Portrait of a Lady*, especially in many of the characters. This novel may be ideal because the character of Isabelle seeks to obtain women's rights such as freedom or independence, etc., and she did not succumb to the feelings of marriage that she experienced and did not take into account the opinions of others, so she is an ideal character in the novel *The Portrait of a Lady* and very loyal and loves to help and this made the novel distinguished by the idealism that James also focused on because of the pure character of Isabelle. On the other hand, the character of Osmond in the novel, who sees himself as an ideal person because he enjoys a social status through his material possessions, that is, he sees himself as a perfectionist to the extreme, but this is a dangerous thing because he is not particularly perfect, but he is represented as an important figure in European society. (*Tanner, 34*)

Love, Betrayal and Lying

The novel *The Portrait of a Lady* some people were as honest as Isabel and her cousin Ralph, Isabel was a pure honest woman who loved everything real and had no such bad quality as lying because she was instinctively true to people and to herself in particular. Isabelle is honest with everyone and loves to help others wholeheartedly without any impurities in her way. Even her honesty with Osmond was genuine, unlike her cousin Ralph, whose love was sincere, but which she rejected in order to preserve her freedom. On the other hand, there are characters who are not honest enough, such as Madame Merle, Aunt Touchet and Osmond, who deceived Isabelle with their fake sweet feelings and that Osmond is a noble and brave person, but the opposite happened, Osmond is a bad person and a liar, he lied to Isabelle because he was previously married. And he has a daughter named Pansy, and then Isabel realizes she's been tricked by Merle and Osmond and that was pretty scary. The heroine of the novel feels betrayed and deceived by the people she trusted. A novel *The Portrait of a Lady* most of which revolves around lies and betrayal. Deception is always characteristic of relatives, as Aunt Touchet and her friend Madame Merle also had a reason for Isabelle's unhappy life. A novel *The Portrait of a Lady* is a tragic because of the betrayal and lies that Isabelle was exposed to and helped destroy her life. So the young heroine is trapped in marriage by a devious fortune hunter and his ex-lover; .Loyal lovers remain faithful to her all the time

In the novel *The Portrait of a Lady* there is nothing that indicates romance in love because this topic is not very clear and it is less realistic than other topics. Love here is cruel, possessive, frustrating and pessimistic. Isabelle did not get the feelings of love from her husband, Osmond, although at first Isabelle rejected the feelings of marriage that she wanted, but she finally married Osmond because she thought that he would love her greatly, but the opposite happened. Isabelle did not feel any feelings of love towards Osmond, and she regretted a lot because of this failed marriage. When she traveled to the European world, she thought that she would find someone who would support her and love her, despite the suitors offering her, headed by her cousin Ralph, but she rejected them all and chose to marry Osmond, which was done by deceiving Madame Merle to Isabelle, meaning that she did not choose him in reality, but because of Madame Merle and her deception. She succeeded in marrying Isabelle to Osmond (*Salami*,:52)

On the other hand, Isabelle loves Osmond, but unfortunately he doesn't love her. Osmond's lack of affection and love affects his relationship with Isabel. Both Madame Merle and Osmond betray Isabel in a hidden way without Isabelle realizing that Merle betrays her as a good friend and her husband Osmond betrays her as a lover. As Isabel has betrayed herself in the novel because of this marriage, she resists marriage because she realizes that it will restrict her freedom, that she betrays herself by surrendering to marry Osmond, and that she fell victim under the betrayal of Merle and Osmond. So James portrays a real lady" at the end, a woman who started out with lofty aspirations for the freedom " gained by remaining celibate and independent and then taken from her by marrying the wrong man. However, a troubled marriage opens her eyes to the realities of the world, and it is this newfound awareness that gives her knowledge and experience of the world that her former self may not have experienced. (Nazari & Pooyandeh, 2022)

Conclusion

In short, In a novel *The Portrait of a Lady* it turns out to be a novel filled with many broad themes and focusing primarily on women's rights in the ancient European world. This novel generally deals with its heroine, the ambitious and active Isabelle, but upon her departure to the old European world she became socially restricted, far from freedom and independence, and this is what James means in observing women's rights, as he sheds light on the struggle between the individual and society, freedom and independence, betrayal, lies, and even fake love. And so on, that is, Isabelle represents all women who defend their lost rights, and even women must have a position in which they are equal with men in the old European world, from whose harsh traditions Isabelle suffered and felt remorse because of her satisfaction that the European world is a magical and artistic world, and on the other hand European society controls women, especially the poor, so they deceive her and take away her money, as happened with the ambitious young American woman, Isabelle. Isabelle's quest is deeper and broader. She is a woman of strong and uncompromising convictions. She has no family responsibilities. And above all, her unexpected inheritance. However, the story is a defeat for her aspirations, and the quest for personal freedom destroys Isabel Archer. Sadly in the end, Isabel Archer decides to marry Gilbert Osmond, a man who offers himself to her seemingly without a system to preserve her freedom. She justifies her marital decision to Ralph and is initially amused by the fact that Osmond treats her with great respect and despises the usual values in life such as the pursuit of wealth, success, and fame

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