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HENRY JAMES

THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY

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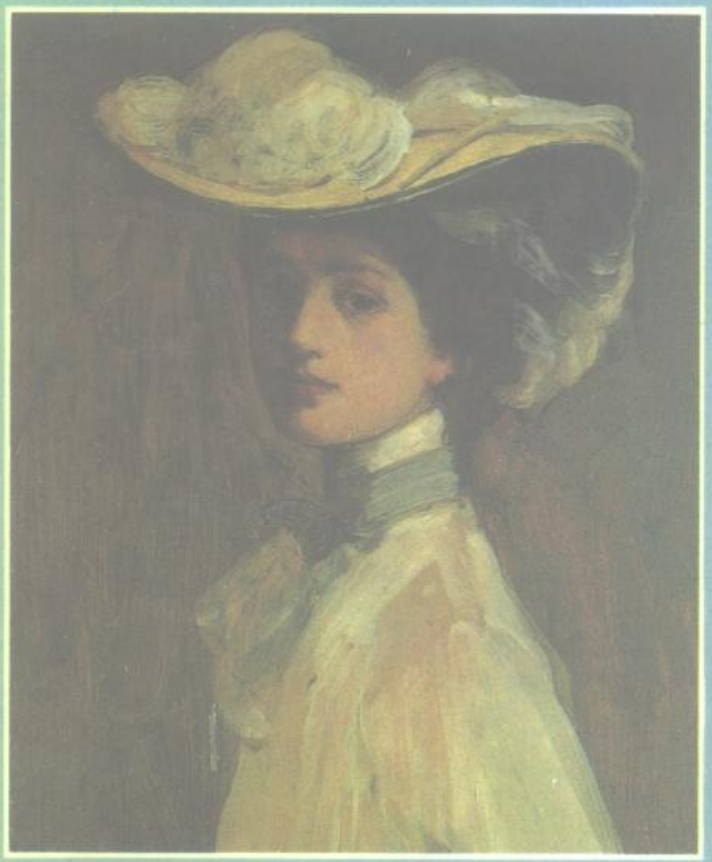

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THE WORLD'S CLASSICS

HENRY JAMES

The Portrait of a Lady

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
GRAHAM GREENE

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学生英语文库出版说明

中国人学英语的进程，可以说大致有三个境界。第一个境界是要依靠本族语(对大多数人来说是汉语)明的或暗的帮助来学习英语，如依靠汉语讲解、注释，口头、笔头、心头的翻译，英汉词典以及其他用中文编写的参考书等等来领会英语。第二个境界是能够通过英语学习英语，如读英文注释，听英语讲解，使用英英词典，阅读英文原著参考书等等，亦即能借助浅近的英语学习艰深的英语，并进而直接从英文书刊、英语讲话中吸收英语知识，掌握英语规律。第三个境界是能在英汉两种语言系统之间建立联系(不是个别孤立词语的对号)，最后达到能在两种语言中间自如地来回转换的境地。

以上三种境界，虽然可能有交叉或平行，但是大体上可以代表由低到高的三个阶段。代表第一个境界的阶段，可以尽量缩短，有人甚至主张跳过或绕开。第三个境界严格说已经属于翻译专业修养的范围。唯有第二个境界是英语学习的中心。尽早达到这一境界，是学习成功的要诀。英语学习者在入门阶段结束之后，就应当逐步学会读原文著作，听原声讲话，使用英英词典，阅读原著参考书，敢看爱看原版书刊。一句话，要日夕涵泳于英语之中，养成通过英语学英语的能力、爱好、信心和习惯。

经验证明，阅读译本看似省力，实际常有雾里看花之憾；钻研原著，起初不免吃力，但是唯有如此，才能识得庐山真面目。文学作品是这样，一般语文参考书也是这样。从研究外国文化的目标着想，必须立志精通外语；从学习外语的方法着眼，应当早读多读原文著

作。

因此，多读精选的英语原著，是精通英语的一个最重要的途径。**学生英语文库**的出版，就是为了给中级以上的学习者提供一部分这样的基本书籍。

收入**学生英语文库**的都是英语国家著名出版社所出的有价值著作，在世界上享有盛誉。其中有关于语言的，也有关于文学的；有教程和读物，也有参考书和工具书。每一种都是针对我国学习者的需要精选，并根据最新版本影印的。

学生英语文库中的书籍，除一两种教程酌加中文注释和参考译文外，其余都是英语原著的翻版。这些著作，绝大多数都是屡经修订再版，或年复一年地重印，成了各国英语学习者和使用者案头、架上常备之物。所收文学作品，都是名著杰作；在英语国家是家弦户诵，在其他国家是一切英语和文学爱好者所不可不读的。熟读这些作品，既有助于掌握英语的精髓，又可深入了解英语国家的社会历史文化背景。

学生英语文库第一辑和第二辑约20种，定于近期陆续和读者见面。以后还将逐步扩充选目。我们希望这个小小文库能成为我国广大英语学习者的良师益友。

本书内容介绍

本书是英籍美国作家亨利·詹姆斯(Henry James 1843—1916)最优秀的作品之一,以细腻的心理描写见称,被认为是英美文学的上乘之作。内容叙述一个聪明美丽的美国穷姑娘伊莎贝尔·阿切尔随姨妈杜歇夫人来到英国,深得姨父大银行家杜歇先生的欢心,表兄拉尔夫也爱上了她。拉尔夫知道自己身患不治之症,不可能与伊莎贝尔结合,但他希望看到她幸福,便劝说父亲分出一半家产让她继承,使她经济独立,可以自由择偶。美国企业家古德伍德渡洋前来追求伊莎贝尔,英国贵族沃伯顿爵士也向她求爱。伊莎贝尔对两人虽有好感,但都没有轻许。一次她到意大利去,不幸落入工于心计的默尔夫人的圈套。经默尔夫人撮合,伊莎贝尔贸然嫁给了一个貌似高雅脱俗的美国艺术爱好者奥斯蒙德。但是不久她就发现丈夫不过是一个平庸浅薄、贪鄙好色的小人,是默尔夫人的情夫,他还把两人私生的女儿潘西伪称是前妻所遗,以掩盖他和默尔夫人始终保持的暧昧关系。伊莎贝尔受此打击,痛苦万分。她本可摆脱这种处境,因为古德伍德和沃伯顿仍旧爱恋着她。但是对潘西的同情使她放弃了离开丈夫的念头。

作者小传

詹姆斯(Henry James 1843—1916)是美国小说家、散文家和文学评论家。他生于美国一个富裕家庭，自幼受到良好的教育。1862年入哈佛法学院，但兴趣却在文学方面。1864年起为《北美评论》等刊物撰稿。他的小说技巧娴熟，偏重人物内心描写。1869年，他赴欧洲游历。在英国时，听说他所钟爱的表妹去世，十分悲伤，于是终身不娶。他在《贵妇画像》(1881)和《鸽翼》(1902)等小说中把他的钟爱之情移注在女主人公身上。

经过游历，他认为欧洲比美国更适合于文学创作，决定移居欧洲。先在巴黎住了两年，此时他认识了屠格涅夫、龚古尔兄弟、左拉、都德和当时尚未发表作品的莫泊桑。1876年起，他定居伦敦。

他的成名之作是中篇小说《黛西·密勒》(1879)，而杰出的长篇小说则是《贵妇画像》。在这部作品中，作者把女主人对其周围各种人物的认识过程作了细致的心理描写。80年代他还发表了《波士顿人》和《卡萨玛西玛公主》两部社会小说。1891年作者把小说《美国人》(1877)搬上舞台，获得成功。随后他开始写戏，但都失败了。20世纪初，作者连续发表《专使》、《鸽翼》、《金碗》三部小说，但文体日趋晦涩，多象征性形象，对西方社会的生存模式做了探讨。他对政治和社会缺乏深刻认识，偶有涉猎，也反映出他的保守观点。对上流社会虽认识较深，且多持批判态度，对下层人民则所知甚少。此外，他还写了许多文学评论及游记。颇具创见，很有价值。晚年被牛津大学、哈佛大学授予学位，还当选为国家文艺研究机构成员。1915年入英

国籍，英国授予他勋章．詹姆斯于 1916 年 2 月逝世．一般评论家认为他是意识流作家的先驱、现代派小说评论的鼻祖，又是伟大的散文家及文体家．

INTRODUCTION

'THE conception of a certain young lady affronting her destiny'—that is how Henry James described the subject of this book, for which he felt, next to *The Ambassadors*, the greatest personal tenderness. In his wonderful preface (for no other book in the collected edition of his works did he write a preface so rich in revelations and memories) he compares *The Portrait of a Lady* several times to a building, and it is as a great, leisurely built cathedral that one thinks of it, with immense smooth pillars, side-chapels, and aisles, and a dark crypt where Ralph Touchett lies in marble like a crusader with his feet crossed to show that he has seen the Holy Land; sometimes, indeed, it may seem to us too ample a shrine for one portrait until we remember that this master-craftsman always has his reasons: those huge pillars are required to bear the weight of Time (that dark backward and abysm that is the novelist's abiding problem): the succession of side-chapels are all designed to cast their particular light upon the high altar: no vista is without its ambiguous purpose. The whole building, indeed, is a triumph of architectural planning: the prentice hand which had already produced some works—*Roderick Hudson* and *The American*—impressive if clumsy, and others—*The Europeans* and *Washington Square*—graceful if slight, had at last learnt the whole secret of planning for permanence. And the subject? 'A certain young woman affronting her destiny.' Does it perhaps still, at first thought, seem a little inadequate?

The answer, of course, is that it all depends on the destiny, and about the destiny Henry James has in his preface nothing to tell us. He is always something of a conjurer in these prefaces: he seems ready to disclose everything—the source of his story: the technique of its writing: even the room in which he settles down to work

and the noises of the street outside. Sometimes he blinds the reader with a bold sleight of hand, calling, for example, *The Turn of the Screw* 'a fairy-tale pure and simple'. We must always remain on our guard while reading these prefaces, for at a certain level no writer has really disclosed less.

The plot in the case of this novel is far from being an original one: it is as if James, looking round for the events which were to bring his young woman, Isabel Archer, into play, had taken the first to hand: a fortune-hunter, the fortune-hunter's unscrupulous mistress, and a young American heiress caught in the meshes of a loveless marriage. (He was to use almost identically the same plot but with deeper implications and more elaborate undertones in *The Wings of the Dove*.) We can almost see the young James laying down some popular three-decker of the period in his Roman or Venetian lodging and wondering, 'What could I do with even that story?' For a plot after all is only the machinery—the machinery which will show the young woman (what young woman?) affronting her destiny (but what destiny?). In his preface, apparently so revealing, James has no answer to these questions. Nor is there anything there which will help us to guess what element it was in the melodramatic plot that attracted the young writer at this moment when he came first into his full powers as a novelist, and again years later when as an old man he set to work to crown his career with the three poetic masterpieces *The Wings of the Dove*, *The Ambassadors*, and *The Golden Bowl*.

The first question is the least important and we have the answer in Isabel Archer's relationship to Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove*: it is not only their predicament which is the same, or nearly so (Milly's fortune-hunter, Merton Densher, was enriched by the later James with a conscience, a depth of character, a dignity in his corruption that Gilbert Osmund lacks: indeed in the later book it is the fortune-hunter who steals the tragedy, for Milly dies and it is the living whom we pity): the two women are identical. Milly Theale,

if it had not been for her fatal sickness, would have affronted the same destiny and met the same fate as Isabel Archer: the courage, the generosity, the confidence, the inexperience belong to the same character, and James has disclosed to us the source of the later portrait—his young and much-loved cousin Mary Temple who died of tuberculosis at twenty-four. This girl of infinite potentiality, whose gay sad troubled letters can be read in *Notes of a Son and Brother,* haunted his memory like a legend; it was as if her image stood for everything that had been graceful, charming, happy in youth—'the whole world of the old New York, that of the earlier dancing years'—everything that was to be betrayed by life. We have only to compare these pages of his autobiography, full of air and space and light, in which the figures of the son and brother, the Albany uncles, the beloved cousin, move like the pastoral figures in a Poussin landscape, with his description of America when he revisited the States in his middle age, to see how far he had travelled, how life had closed in. In his fiction he travelled even farther. In his magnificent last short story, *The Jolly Corner,* Brydon, the returned expatriate, finds his old New York house haunted by the ghost of himself, the self he would have become if he had remained in America. The vision is pursued by the unwitting Brydon from room to room until finally it is brought to bay under the fanlight in the hall and presents a face 'evil, odious, blatant, vulgar'. At that moment one remembers what James also remembered: 'the springtime of '65 as it breathed through Denton streets', the summer twilight sailing back from Newport, Mary Temple.

'In none of the company was the note so clear as in this rarest, though at the same time symptomatically or ominously palest, flower of the stem; who was natural at more points and about more things, with a greater sense of freedom and ease and reach of horizon than any of the others dreamed of. They had that way, delightfully, with the small, after all, and the common matters—while she had it with those too, but with the great and rare ones over and above; so that she was to remain for us the very figure and image of a felt interest in

life, an interest as magnanimously far-spread, or as familiarly and exquisitely fixed, as her splendid shifting sensibility, moral, personal, nervous, and having at once such noble flights and such touchingly discouraged drops, such graces of indifference and inconsequence, might at any moment determine. She was really to remain, for our appreciation, the supreme case of a taste for life as life, as personal living; of an endlessly active and yet somehow a careless, an illusionless, a sublimely forewarned curiosity about it: something that made her, slim and fair and quick, all straightness and charming tossed head, with long light and yet almost sliding steps and a large light postponing, renouncing laugh, the very muse or amateur priestess of rash speculation.'

Even if we had not James's own word for it, we could never doubt that here is the source: the fork of his imagination was struck and went on sounding. Mary Temple, of course, never affronted her destiny: she was betrayed quite simply by her body, and James uses words of her that he could as well have used of Milly Theale dying in her Venetian palace—'death at the last was dreadful to her; she would have given anything to live', but isn't it significant that whenever an imaginary future is conceived for this brave spontaneous young woman it always ends in betrayal? Milly Theale escapes from her betrayal simply by dying; Isabel Archer, tied for life to Gilbert Osmund—that precious vulgarian, cold as a fishmonger's slab—is deserted even by her creator. For how are we to understand the ambiguity of the closing pages when Isabel's friend, Henrietta Stackpole, tries to comfort the faithful and despairing 'follower' (this word surely best describes Caspar Goodwood's relationship to Isabel):

'"Look here, Mr. Goodwood," she said; "just you wait!"

'On which he looked up at her—but only to guess, from her face, with a revulsion, that she simply meant he was young. She stood shining at him with that cheap comfort, and it added, on the spot, thirty years to his life. She walked him away with her, however, as if she had given him now the key to patience.'

It is as if James, too, were handing his more casual readers the key to patience, while at the same time

asserting between the lines that there is no way out of the inevitable betrayal except the way that Milly Theale and Mary Temple took involuntarily. There is no possibility of a happy ending: this is surely what James always tells us, not with the despairing larger-than-life gesture of a romantic novelist but with a kind of bitter precision. He presents us with a theorem, but it is we who have to work out the meaning of *x* and discover that *x* equals no-way-out. It is part of the permanent fascination of his style that he never does all the work for us, and there will always be careless mathematicians prepared to argue the meaning of that other ambiguous ending, when Merton Densher, having gained a fortune with Milly Theale's death, is left alone with his mistress, Kate Croy, who had planned it all, just as Madame Merle had planned Isabel's betrayal.

'He heard her out in stillness, watching her face but not moving. Then he only said: "I'll marry you, mind you, in an hour."

' "As we were?"

' "As we were."

'But she turned to the door, and her headshake was now the end. "We shall never be again as we were!" '

Some of James's critics have preferred to ignore the real destiny of his characters, and they can produce many of his false revealing statements to support them; he has been multitudinously discussed as a social novelist primarily concerned with the international scene, with the impact of the Old World on the New. It is true the innocent figure is nearly always American (Roderick Hudson, Newman, Isabel and Milly, Maggie Verver and her father), but the corrupted characters—the vehicles for a sense of evil unsurpassed by the theological novelists of our day, M. Mauriac or M. Bernanos—are also American: Mme Merle, Gilbert Osmond, Charlotte Stant. His characters are mainly American, simply because James himself was American.

No, it was only on the superficial level of plot, one feels, that James was interested in the American visitor;

what deeply interested him, what was indeed his ruling passion, was the idea of treachery, the 'Judas complex'. In the first novel he ever wrote, *Watch and Ward*, James dealt with the blackmailer, the man enabled to betray because of his intimate knowledge. As he proceeded in his career he shed the more obvious melodramatic trappings of betrayal, and in *The Portrait of a Lady* melodrama is at the point of vanishing. What was to follow was only to be the turning of a screw. Isobel Archer was betrayed by little more than an acquaintance; Millie Theale by her dearest friend; until we reach the complicated culmination of treacheries in *The Golden Bowl*. But how many turns and twists of betrayal we could follow, had we space and time, between *Watch and Ward* and that grand climax of betrayal!

This, then, is the destiny that not only the young women affront—you must betray or, more fortunately perhaps, you must be betrayed. A few—James himself, Ralph Touchett in this novel, Mrs. Assingham in *The Golden Bowl*—will simply sadly watch. We shall never know what it was at the very start of life that so deeply impressed on the young James's mind this sense of treachery; but when we remember how patiently and faithfully throughout his life he drew the portrait of one young woman who died, one wonders whether it was just simply a death that opened his eyes to the inherent disappointment of existence, the betrayal of hope. The eyes once open, the material need never fail him. He could sit there, an ageing honoured man in Lamb House, Rye, and hear the footsteps of the traitors and their victims going endlessly by on the pavement. It is of James himself that we think when we read in *The Portrait of a Lady* of Ralph Touchett's melancholy vigil in the big house in Winchester Square:

'The square was still, the house was still; when he raised one of the windows of the dining-room to let in the air he heard the slow creak of the boots of a lone constable. His own step, in the empty place, seemed loud and sonorous; some of the carpets had been raised, and whenever he moved he roused a melancholy echo. He sat down in one of the armchairs; the

big dark dining-table twinkled here and there in the small candle-light; the pictures on the wall, all of them very brown, looked vague and incoherent. There was a ghostly presence as of dinners long since digested, of table-talk that had lost its actuality. This hint of the supernatural perhaps had something to do with the fact that his imagination took a flight and that he remained in his chair a long time beyond the hour at which he should have been in bed; doing nothing, not even reading the evening paper. I say he did nothing, and I maintain the phrase in the face of the fact that he thought at these moments of Isabel.'

GRAHAM GREENE

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