

世界经典文学作品赏析(英汉对照)



Henry James's THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY

Vartkis Kinoian

亨利·詹姆斯的

贵妇画像



外语教学与研究出版社



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HENRY JAMES (1843-1916)

LIFE. Henry James is probably the outstanding American novelist and stylist. If he is not alone in that rank, he is accompanied by only three or four others, such as Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, and perhaps Faulkner. Even among those, who represent the best in American literature so far as novelists are concerned, James does seem to stand out even if only on the basis of his prodigious lifetime of writing. James's writing career extended from the late 1860's to the first two decades of the present century; he was without question the first American novelist to truly bring his work into the mainstream of world literature. This is not to say that there were not great works in American literature before James's major novels, but it is to say that James made the American novel something more than the product of an American. He made it an art form, a work as sophisticated as the well-written poem, and his works rank with the outstanding writers not only of America, but also of Europe.

The facts of James's life are best seen in relation to his work, for James lived a quiet life and devoted himself to literature as a profession and as a way of life. The following is a brief summary of some of the important dates, but the next section ("Periods in James's Fiction") views James's works as the primary material for understanding him. The student should know at least the following: Henry James was born on April 15, 1843, in a house on Washington Square in New York City. James in his autobiography later told of the impressions he had of life because of the humanity he would observe in that respectable section of the great city. Henry's father, Henry

James, Sr., was a well-known figure in intellectual circles. He had inherited his wealth and spent much of his time in cultured activity. The novelist's older brother, William, became famous as a philosopher, psychologist, and professor at Harvard University, and the brothers remained close, as their correspondence shows, throughout their lifetimes. Henry James Sr. believed that his children should be exposed to the culture and life of Europe as a basic part of their life, so he took his sons there when Henry was still an infant. On their return from their first trip, they lived in New York again, but also stayed in Albany. In 1855 they returned to Europe for three more years of education, some in school, some at the directions of tutors, and some led by the father, in Geneva, London, and Paris. During 1858-1859 the family stayed in Newport, Rhode Island, a very fashionable resort at that time, where Henry and William studied painting with John La Farge, a well-known artist. In 1859-1860, however, they were in Europe again, this time in Geneva and Bonn, Germany. In 1862, James entered the Law School at Harvard, while William entered the scientific school at the same university. In that same year, Henry sustained some mysterious injury that kept him out of the Civil War. Conjecture has it that the injury was to his back. Around 1865 James began publishing his sketches, critical reviews, and stories, in such magazines as the famous *Atlantic Monthly* and the *North American Review*. It was just a year before this time that the young Henry James had decided on writing as his profession. The student should understand that James's decision was not an idealistic, romantic outburst, but a reasoned and mature commitment to writing as a career. In 1869 James went to Europe; and although he returned to America on several occasions, one can say that from that year on James was a resident of the European continent. Most students of American literature see James's expatriation as a pilgrimage in reverse of the normal pattern; it was a move, one

must understand, made by an artist in order to give himself the proper perspective from which he could continue with his craft. James lived for the most part in London, but he spent some time in Paris, Rome, and other European cities. In 1915, although he was unmistakably an American in thought and art, James became a British subject in protest against American neutrality during that time of the First World War. James died in February, 1916.

PERIODS IN JAMES'S FICTION. Much more complete a view of James as a writer comes from looking at the stages in his long and fruitful writing career. F. W. Dupee in *Henry James* breaks that career into the following periods:

1. **1870's:** This is James's idealistic phase. He is learning his craft and developing his themes. The works are really not complicated, and characters are clearly drawn without too much ambiguity or complexity. Still James achieved in this early period some of his most memorable characters, such as Christopher Newman in *The American* (1877) and Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). Other important early works are *Daisy Miller*, 1879; *The Europeans*, 1878; and *Washington Square*, 1881.

2. **1880's:** James in this period became more realistic. he began to deal with more complicated matters such as social institutions and political issues. Some important works are *The Princess Casamassima*, 1885; *The Bostonians*, 1886; and *The Tragic Muse*, 1887.

3. **Late 1880's and Early 1890's:** At this point, James turned to writing for the theatre with noticeably bad luck. He was humiliated on the night of the opening of his play *Guy Domville*, when the audience was vile to him. An interesting note is that a young critic,

George Bernard Shaw, was at that performance.

4. 1890's: During this time James started tackling the problem of evil-evil in the sense of strong characters and their relationship to innocent victims. It was during this period, because James was constantly experimenting to develop his technique, that the reputation of James as a difficult writer arose. His longer, more complicated sentences became his standard type of writing. The important works are *The Pupil*, 1891; *What Maisie Knew*, 1897; and *The Turn of the Screw*, 1898.

5. 1900's: F. O. Matthiessen, a critic, gave this first decade of the twentieth century the name "The Major Phase," and the title is apt. James in this period, with an enormous burst of energy, wrote three major novels: *The Ambassadors*, 1903, but completed in 1901; *The Wings of the Dove*, 1902; and *The Golden Bowl*, 1904. These are James's maturest efforts; they are comp'ex, massive, and difficult novels, but they are among the best in our language. It was during this period that James began editing his own novels and writing his "Prefaces," which are essays on the problems in writing his works and studies of the novel as art, for the New York edition of his works.

6. Final Phase: James left two unfinished works at his death: *The Sense of the Past*, 1917; *The Ivory Tower*, 1917.

MAJOR THEMES IN JAMES'S FICTION. Like all writers, James is concerned with the human situation, interpreting characters and life. When one refers to the major themes of a particular writer, he is thinking of those subjects and preoccupations that persist and appear in many, if not most, of his works. The critic R. P. Blackmur, in the

Literary History of the United States, distinguishes three themes in James's fiction: the "international theme," the theme of the artist in conflict with society, and "the theme of the pilgrim in search of society." One can see that society is basic to James's works; he is constantly evaluating what one society maintains as its values, and how these values affect groups and individuals. Many times he contrasts that particular society with the activities and mores of another society. Basically, the two societies that persist in his works are those of America and Europe.

Two dominant images emerge, therefore, in the fiction:

The Innocent: James poses usually an innocent figure. The person is not stupid, not unintelligent. What James means by an innocent person is one who has not been touched by deep experience in worldly matters. These innocents are eager for life and they usually see life in others as an object for their own desires. Usually, in a James novel, these intelligent and eager creatures are corrupted and spoiled by the sophisticated ones, in whom the innocents think that the virtues they would like reside. The innocents are candid and human. They have strength and respond with deep conviction when they see their ideals corrupted. They are almost always intelligent, and they naturally, without affectation, understand good and evil, right and wrong. The sophisticated ones prey on these innocents, because they substitute experience in the world for natural decency. However, the successes of the experienced are hollow. The strong figures in James are the natural good ones.

The International Theme: Most of the things said about the heroes and heroines of a Jamesian work apply to this basic theme that James mastered and matured. The international subject is the

study of the American abroad. These Americans are unaware of the conventions and formalities of Europe; they make mistakes, they have deficiencies in tact and polish; but they have freedom, innocence, and grace, and these more than make up for their lack of experience. James contrasts the two societies very carefully; the American is not yet matured and is awkward because he does not know how the society he is in expresses itself. He knows that there are deeper and lasting values in the society of Europe, but his natural way is usually in conflict with these values. Europe, on the other hand, does not have the vitality and youthfulness of the American world. Europe is a matter of convention, that is, formal responses in social situations. Every move, every act, is deliberate and committed in an established way. In James's last works, Europe does seem to represent an ideal; but the innocent, vital American remains a serious threat to the established order.

If one will examine in the following pages Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, he will see the fullest early Jamesian examination of the international theme and the problem of innocence among James's earlier works. This work does look forward to James's later, more complicated and difficult style, but it still presents the essential ideas inherent in these two themes.

THE JAMESIAN NOVEL. Henry James looked upon the novel as a work of art; in the truest sense of the word "art." One can say James was one of the first writers to think of the novel in this way. James did not use the novel as a social document or as a forum for his philosophy. To James, the novel is a form complete in itself. Admittedly, he is difficult to read. The following is a synopsis of what one can expect to find in his works: *First*, a Jamesian novel is not a vehicle for something else. The story, plot, and dialogue are

complete within the work itself. *Second*, in a James novel, there is always what James referred to as the "central consciousness," that is, a mind and person through whom the story is being presented to the reader. James is always conscious of how the reader is hearing and seeing his story. Basically, he stays away from the omniscient narrator except for occasional comments. The omniscient narrator means the point of view of the author in telling the story. He knows all the characters and what they are thinking and doing. James usually attempts to tell the story from the point of view of a character in the work. In *The Aspern Papers*, James tells the story from the point of view of the first-person narrator. In *Daisy Miller*, the story is seen through the mind of Winterbourne. The reader can note there that the story is never seen from Daisy's point of view. The story is about how Daisy is seen by others, especially by Winterbourne. The reader should understand that James's dominating technical device is *point of view*: the eyes, ears, and mind of the character from whom the story is told to the reader. The reader should read *The Portrait of a Lady* with this in mind. *Third*, the reader soon realizes that in James's novels there are rarely, if ever, plain ornaments. Dialogue is never just plain talk; it is always moving the plot forward. Description always establishes a scene so that one can understand the direction of the work. Scenes are always full of meaning in relation to other things in the novel. *Fourth*, one can summarize all the above by saying that a Jamesian novel is always organic, all parts being in relation to the whole. Nothing, no character, plot, story, scene, dialogue, description—nothing is isolated. All parts are related.

JAMES'S CRITICISM ON THE NOVEL. During his writing career James wrote many reviews, essays, and articles on writers and their works; but he made an outstanding contribution to the study of the novel in two separate parts of his critical writings.

1. From 1907 to 1917 there was issued a collected edition of Henry James's works. Usually this edition is referred to as "The New York Edition" by James scholars. For this collection, James selected the works, chose to leave some of his less successful works out (although some of these, such as *The Bostonians*, are considered highly now), revised passages in the works, and for each volume wrote a critical preface. These prefaces contain some of the most sophisticated discussions of the art of the novel in all literature. Usually, in each preface James tried to explain how he came upon the story, what he referred to as the "germ." Then James explained what possibilities he saw in the germ and the problems he was confronted with in developing the novel. In many cases James pointed to outstanding devices and techniques; in many other cases he pointed out some of the mistakes he felt he had made. There is a discussion of the preface to *The Portrait of a Lady* below. For example, in that preface Henry James discussed the character of Henrietta Stackpole, among other things, and he apologized for leaving her incomplete in the novel. These essays are surely among the most important documents on prose fiction, for they give an insight not only into the mind of a great writer, but they also reveal the art of the novel.

2. In September, 1884, James published in *Longman's*, a magazine, an essay known as "The Art of Fiction." It was written in reply to a lecture given by a Walter Besant, a Victorian novelist and historian. Besant's lecture, "Fiction as a Fine Art," has been forgotten except by literary scholars, but James's essay has remained one of the most important studies on the art of fiction. One must realize that James was a forerunner of the present thought that the novel can be looked upon as a serious work of art. Some of the more important aspects of the essay are as follows: 1. "The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life." He goes on to say that

the "novel is history." 2. "The only obligation to which in advance we may hold a novel. . . is that it be interesting." James then adds that the ways to make a novel interesting are innumerable.

3. "A novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life; that, to begin with, constitutes its value, which is greater or less according to the intensity of the impression."

4. James agrees that a novel cannot be written without a deep sense of reality, but the reality must come from an awareness of the extent of experience. In a famous metaphor, James explains experience: "Experience is never limited. . . ; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spiderweb of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of the consciousness, and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue."

5. James refers to the novel as a "living thing." In other words, it is organic. (See above under the Jamesian novel.)

6. According to James, there can be no distinction between character and incident. These are complements to each other.

7. Finally, James states one of the most quoted critical ideas of the essay: "We must grant the artist his subject, his idea, his *donnée*: our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it."

There are many other items in both the "Art of Fiction" and the "Prefaces," but the student should be aware that most of the modern terms we use about the novel, the criticism that we apply to the novel, the serious manner in which we view the novel-these and other ideas had their most serious first statement in the criticisms of Henry James.

THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY (1881)

INTRODUCTION. Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* is one of the great novels in American literature. It ranks with such works as *The Scarlet Letter*, *Moby Dick*, and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in the nineteenth century, and with such works as *An American Tragedy*, *A Farewell to Arms*, and *The Sound and the Fury* of the twentieth century. It is also considered one of the great novels in the English language and is placed beside such accomplishments in English literature as *Tom Jones*, *Clarissa*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Bleak House*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Middlemarch*, among others.

Like all great works of literature, *The Portrait of a Lady* demands careful reading by the student in order that he get the full taste of its many delights. It is not a novel of exciting action, nor does it have adventure in the sense that we know it today. It is not a work that is based on simple truths, nor does it give up its message without careful attention to detail. It certainly is not a work that can be hastily read and appreciated, but it is a work rich in detail, meaning, significance, and creation. Nearly every student of literature is called on to read it at least once in his career as a student, and nearly every intelligent reader has realized that Henry James's novel is one of the special accomplishments of a very great writer.

The particular things that a reader should pay attention to are the following: First, the reader should carefully note the introduction of each of the characters, for the novel is built on the nuances and the

inner thoughts of people as they are living in the human situation. Character is most important. Of course, the central character in the novel is Isabel Archer, and most, if not all, of the novel is concerned with her. Second, the reader should pay attention to passages where the author is interpreting thoughts and actions and words. Henry James usually has a very special reason for all his comments, which he freely makes throughout the novel. Usually, these comments are made from the point of view of a particular character. Thirdly, the reader must always be alert to the full meaning of dialogue. Many of the most important elements in the plot are given to the reader through dialogue. For example, the reader will find on listening to Madame Merle and a young man named Edward Rosier that Isabel Archer has made a poor choice for a husband and that her married life is unhappy. James will not make a direct statement, but he will reveal important elements as one character speaks to another. Finally, a reader should pay attention to descriptions, for they set the mood and establish the setting. The settings always reflect the people. For example, Rome is seen through the eyes of the characters, not as a set description for a stage set.

With these few elements in mind, the careful reader can easily understand and feel the full nature of *The Portrait of a Lady*.

SHORT SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL. Isabel Archer was brought to Europe by her aunt, Mrs. Touchett, who wanted to give her niece the opportunity to develop in the cultural climate of the Continent. Mrs. Touchett met her niece four months earlier in Albany, New York, where Isabel had been living with her grandmother since her father had passed away. Isabel was an immediate success at Garden-court, the estate of Mrs. Touchett's husband, Mr. Daniel Touchett, a wealthy, but now ill, retired banker. Her cousin Ralph liked her very

much and recognized in her a freshness and intelligence. Also present on the day of Isabel's arrival at Gardencourt was a neighboring nobleman, Lord Warburton, who fell in love with the young lady at first sight.

Very shortly after she had arrived in England, Isabel received a letter from a friend, Henrietta Stackpole, who was a reporter for the *New York Interviewer* and who was in England writing a series of articles for her newspaper. Mr. Touchett, at his niece's request, invited Henrietta to visit them, which she promptly did. Henrietta told Isabel that she had been in the company of Mr. Caspar Goodwood on her voyage to Europe. Mr. Goodwood was a young man who wanted very much to marry Isabel and who had been refused by her on the very day that Isabel met her aunt in Albany. Very soon, Isabel received a note from Caspar, in which he asked her the privilege of seeing Isabel for a short time.

At the moment that Isabel was folding the note, Lord Warburton came to Isabel in the garden, quickly declared his love for her, and proposed marriage. Isabel knew that Lord Warburton was a great personage, but she also knew that she herself wanted to travel and see the world so that she could experience life. She also knew that she would have to reject the proposal of Lord Warburton. At the suggestion of Henrietta, Isabel, her friend, and Ralph Touchett went to London. There Isabel was visited by Caspar Goodwood, who insisted that he could not accept her answer not to marry him and asked her to reconsider, which she refused to do.

The trip to London was cut short when Ralph received a telegram that his father was gravely ill at Gardencourt. Isabel and Ralph left almost immediately. When they arrived there, Isabel met Madame

Merle, a long-time friend of Mrs. Touchett's. Isabel was impressed with the worldly, cultured, composed figure of Madame Merle, and the two became intimate friends. Meanwhile, Ralph, in one of his last interviews with his father, convinced the dying man to change his will at the last minute and leave Isabel with half of the very large estate that Ralph himself was to inherit. Because he liked Isabel, and for his son's sake, Mr. Touchett agreed to his son's plan, which was to provide Isabel with enough money so that she would be independent and would have the opportunity to do what her mind dictated. Very soon afterwards, Mr. Touchett died.

Within two weeks after the death of her husband, Mrs. Touchett sold their London home and took Isabel to Paris, where she introduced her niece to her continental friends, American expatriates now living in Europe. Among these was a Mr. Edward Rosier, a young man who knew Isabel when she was in Europe with her father and when she was quite a young girl. Isabel and Ned spent some time together, but soon Mrs. Touchett announced that she was heading for Italy and asked that Isabel accompany her. On their way to Florence they saw Ralph and finally settled in the Touchett house, the Palazzo Crescentini, in Florence.

In the same city, Madame Merle went to Gilbert Osmond, an American who had been living in Italy for most of his life. Osmond had a sixteen-year-old daughter who had been brought up in a convent in Rome. Madame Merle told Osmond about Isabel and explained that she wanted him to try to marry her. At first indifferent, Osmond finally met Isabel through Madame Merle and immediately began to act the part of a gentleman and a suitor. Isabel was quickly charmed by Osmond, especially by his manner, his intelligence, his taste, and his distinct character. Isabel's friends sensed that Isabel was drawing