

American Literature & Culture
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Mod 01 Lecture Number 05
Henry James: The Portrait of a Lady – Chapter 1 to 20 continued (Lecture 5)

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(Professor – student conversation starts)

Professor: So when we meet for the next class I want you to come having read

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Professor: The Art of Fiction. Now The Art of Fiction is an essay by Henry James which is about

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Professor: art of writing a novel. So this is something that I suggest that all of you come having read it. It's freely available on the net. You won't have any problem accessing it The Art of Fiction. Henry James was also one of the foremost literary critics and therefore his importance or significance of his position in American Literature, in English Literature because he is one of the premier critics, literary critics as well. He has written prolifically on the art of writing, how a work of art should be constructed and how it should be judged. He has written several hundreds of essays on literary criticism. He has written several hundreds of literary reviews, how a work of... after all what's the function of criticism? We judge a work of art. So that's what he has been, he did and that's what his, that's why we are more interested in Henry James than any other writer of his generation.

We are talking about, London as a setting, setting in Henry James but before that I will again refer to Henry James and his interest in characterization

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Professor: as we have been talking about. Characters are more important. Character is destiny in Henry James and one key feature is; I don't know if you have come across this feature in whatever you have read of *The Portrait of a Lady* that how characters talk to each other, how they communicate with each other. See they talk a lot; they talk and talk and talk a lot. There are lengthy, I mean there is a particular passage where you find three paged monologue

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Professor: by Madame Merle. She talks and talks and talks about how she views the entire arrangement how she, you know about her own life, Isabel Archer's admiration of Madame Merle and how Madame Merle advises the younger girl on how to go about with her life. So there are three pages, just one character talking. And it is not just random talk but characters intellectualize. This was one of the seminal features of his characterizations.

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They are intellectuals. They are able to intellectualize. They are shorn of sentimentality, emotionalism that was so prevalent in nineteenth century novel. In this way he is one of the foremost modernist. That is what we are, we have been talking about this trait of Henry James from the beginning. Remember modernism, interiority, psychological understanding of characters, we keep going back to these factors again and again. How they, he intellectualizes and one of the difficulties of reading Henry James is the way, the extent to which he intellectualizes his characters.

Because people generally are not used to, they read a novel more for entertainment. Of course Henry James also wrote many of his novels in serialized forms. The one reason why he is not so popular today as compared to, let's say Jane Austen or Charles Dickens is because the way his characters intellectualize. Every decision or every act or every behavior, every attitude, every feeling is discussed and intellectualized, Ok. In this way he was very much influenced by the Europeans, the European writers we have already talked about who are the influences? Remember the very first class. No, don't turn the pages. You should remember by now.

Student: Ibsen

Professor: Yes?

Student: Ibsen

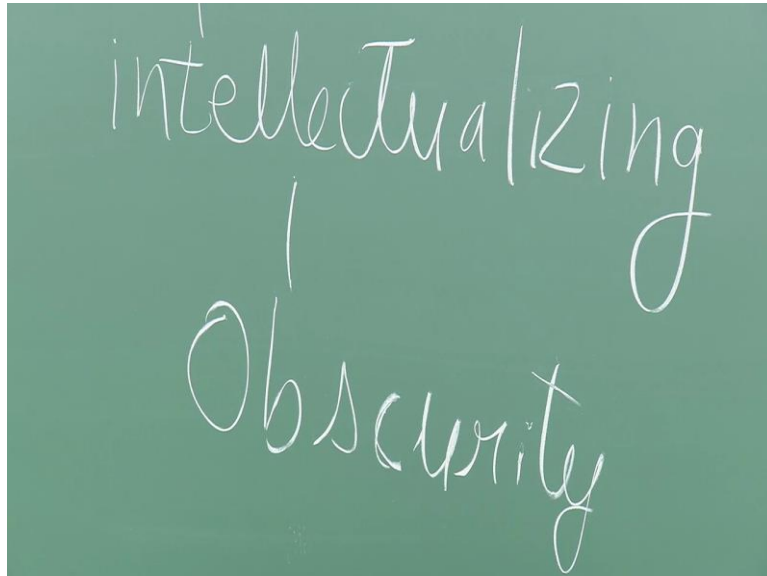
Professor: Ibsen, yes but Ibsen is a dramatist. The novelists, who are the novelists?

Student: George Eliot

Professor: George Eliot, yes Balzac, Flaubert Ok and also Turgenev, Dostoyevsky remember all these names we have been talking about and what kinds of writers are these? They are the writers of psychological reality and, and people who have, who are instrumental in turning the so-called realistic novel into more, in a, steering it more into the realms of modernism. So

those are the authors who influence, therefore the so-called obscurity, why is he so difficult to understand? And also the so-called slowness of Henry James, why do we find, why we find

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Professor: the pace lacks many a time in a Henry James novel, because people talk a lot. They comment on themselves.

So I am just reading, do you have access to the preface, yeah please can you look at it, where he says at one point Preface to The Lady. I have always fondly remembered

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Professor: a remark that I heard fall years ago from the lips of Ivan Turgenev in regard to his own experience of the usual origin of the fictive picture. It began for him almost always with the vision of some person or persons, what do you understand? I will move on

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Professor: who hovered before him...

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Professor: soliciting him, as the active or passive figure, interesting him and appealing to him just as they were and by what they were. He saw in them, in that fashion, as disponibles, do you get that? No?

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Professor: You didn't get that?

Preface, which page could it be for you, not the first, you have to scroll down a bit...saw them subject to the chances, the complications of existence, and

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Professor: saw them vividly, but then had to find for them the right relations, those that would most bring them out; to imagine, to invent and select and piece together the situations most useful and favorable to the sense of the creatures themselves; what is he saying?

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Student: Characters play a role (())

Professor: Characters, so first of all a writer should have a vision of the kinds of people he wants to write about. So it is not like this is a plot. I am more interested...many a times writers will tell you in creative writing classes. This is something very often people will tell you, think of the broad outline. What you want to write about. Ok that was not the case with Henry James. A character comes. Ok, and this is the advice that Turgenev gave; that to him, that think of a person and then build, how would this kind of a person act in such kind of a situation? Now who is the most interesting character in *The Portrait of the Lady*; most likeable, lovable, interesting?

Student: Ralph

Professor: Ralph, Ok why did you like Ralph so much?

Student: He is a very down-to-earth

Professor: Ok

Student: He is a kind of (()) sort of, for Isabel

Professor: So you have a kind of relatedness with Ralph Touchett; that this is how a reasonable, sensible person would respond to someone like Isabel, Ok or to the situation or to the surroundings. Now what, what does Henry James do here? Ok, yeah, fine so Ralph Touchett is one of the most likeable characters. He is selfless. One of the reasons we like him so much is because he knows he is a dying man. Is he, is he a dying man? He suffers from a certain ailment. Ok he has weak lungs, perhaps.

His father is also dying, the banker, his father has been ill for a very long time, right? Ok so Isabel walks in, this setup from America to England. Remember these people are also Americans. But they have been in England for decades together and the wife, now this so called, Ralph's mother and Mr. Touchett's wife, Isabel's aunt, she is the one who is instrumental in bringing Isabel from America, Albany which city does she come from?

Student: Albany

Professor: Yes, Albany Ok, Isabel is brought from Albany to England. Do you remember, have you read the novel? Yes, Ok because some of you look quite blank to me. She is brought from there to this, but these people have been in England for a very long time, Ok. So you have a, did you find it interesting that Mrs. Touchett spends substantial amount of her time in Europe. Why?

Student: (())

Student: She is separated from her (())

Professor: Not exactly, not at all

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Student: She chooses to spend most of her time...

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Professor: And therefore here contact with Madame Merle

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Professor: and old Europe. Most of the time, she is in Europe

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Professor: but why, why this kind of separation?

Student: She puts her own investments which are not at all related to her husband.

Professor: So don't you find it very interesting that we are talking about late nineteenth century where women are given that sort of independence? So in that way Henry James anticipates the so called feminist revolution. Ok, a woman, she is not legally separated from her husband at all, right, she is not but her husband has financially supported her in such a way that she can set up an independent establishment in Europe, right?

Ok so she is able to sustain on her own and she is the master of her own destiny and comings and goings. She has the right to bring anyone who she wants, her late sister's daughter to the household and she tries to, you know, fix her up with certain people and all, in England and all, that English society and all. She has that kind of, so what are we talking about; movement between continents and a single woman. She is not separated but she has the choice to live independently and she has her own means to survive.

Don't you think that's something very revolutionary that James is talking about? It may not appear revolutionary to you now but think of those times. A woman being in her age at her age being to be able to travel so much, being able to interact with foreigners of all sorts and then having, being so independent that she doesn't even need, she just wants to come once in a while and look after the establishment in England. Otherwise no, she lives on her own. She is, she can survive and manage very well on her own. Husband is suffering from, not from because of separation from his wife, definitely no, is it a sort of loveless marriage?

Student: Yeah

Professor: So it is a loveless marriage but it's a marriage. So you don't break a marriage, you stay married; yeah because divorce was not an option. Socially speaking, woman can stay separately from her husband still being married, Ok; it may be a loveless marriage. I am just giving you the social context, Ok also the time of Industrial Revolution, it is also the time of Women's Liberation, education and all those movements happening in America, in Europe, Ok but divorce was not an option. When Isabel gets into a loveless marriage, absolutely out of choice and she decides to stick to, I mean, I am just I am being you know, this is a spoiler. I am giving you what happens next. So she enters into this marriage with whom?

Student: Gilbert Osmond

Professor: Gilbert Osmond, Ok now Gilbert Osmond and her marriage, that's another setup altogether but then she stays married with him although she realizes very early on that, this is not going to work very well for her, this is not going to work out very well for her but she stays married. What is, what kind of a social situation Henry James is talking about? What characters are these? If characters are so important to him, what sorts of characters are these? Ok these things are, yeah he is interested so there are two things that are very essential, let us understand, in Jamesian universe, money, Ok and things that money brings along. So what does money bring? Rukma, what would you do if you have, you know, 700 million dollars today, what would you do with that?

Student: Travel

Professor: Ok, so money brings travel, some kind of physical mobility? It also leads towards social mobility. So that's a time when people were social aspirants, aspiring to move socially from one class to another, Ok. Americans could do that because it's a new world.

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Professor: Could Europeans do that?

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Professor: Not as freely, Ok. So Europe is seen as a dying civilization. Perhaps that is what he is trying to draw our attention to, a dying man Ralph Touchett, and our heroine first of all comes into contact with this kind of a family; very nice, very lovable people. Mr. Touchett, a dying old man, Ralph Touchett, a dying young man, Ok and Mrs. Touchett living in a loveless dying marriage. All Europe and in walks this very young, very fresh wide eyed kind of a girl, Ok and also Lord Warburton, what does he represent? Nobody likes him.

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Professor: Ashmita any brownie points for Lord Warburton, yeah?

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Professor: And there is a passage in the novel where Ralph Touchett goes on and on about what kind of a woman would refuse Lord Warburton, Ok, so can't you find any redeeming features in him? What does he represent? Yeah? Ok, English nobility and what else?

Student: Sentimental (()) Revolution that is taking place, how the nobility suddenly realize that

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Student: they are dying and they (())

Professor: Does he say that? Yes

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Professor: therefore his political aspirations, so are there? He wants to join politics very actively. Right there is a reference there. He talks about this. He wants an intelligent kind of a wife and he wants intellectual kinds of conversation because he has political aspirations. Now why, because he is very well aware that he is also, his is a dying tribe. Lord Warburton is definitely not dying but English aristocracy; we are living in that point of civilization where aristocracy is dying, yeah new social order is emerging.

Ok and therefore people like Lord Warburton; they know that very soon, they will be like relics of the past. So they need someone more young, more dynamic, more full of fresh ideas and therefore the person like Isabel Archer. Ok so everything is dying, decaying and she represents a ...old Europe dying, decaying and withering away where as you get this young person who is full of energy, vitality.

How does her aunt describes her in the beginning? You know there is a scene where Ralph Touchett says that, how did you get this very charming

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Professor: very lovely creature? Where did you get her from? As if she is an object.

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Professor: Mother, you have just come in and you have brought this very charming creature with you. How did you find her? It's like she is a toy or a piece of art somewhere and mother brought her home. Ok and what does she say?

I am on chapter five now. Chapter five please.

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Professor: Chapter five, a couple of pages down,

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Professor: mother is asking

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Professor: “Do you think her so very pretty?” and Ralph Touchett says “Very pretty indeed; but I don’t insist upon that. It’s her general air of being someone in particular that strikes me. Who is this rare creature, and what is she? Where did you find her, and how did you make her acquaintance?” Are they related? Yes

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Professor: Yes, they are related and he is talking about her,

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Professor: his cousin in terms as if

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Professor: how did you become acquainted with this creature? So you can see that perhaps there is very little mobility, Ok and very little interest but in Americans there is still some kind of curiosity and willingness to move

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Professor: and what does the mother say? "I found her in an old house at Albany"; almost like a fairy tale, right? In an old house like sleeping beauty, "sitting in a dreary room on a rainy day, reading a heavy book and boring herself to death. She didn't know she was bored, but when I left her no doubt of it she seemed very grateful for the service. You may say I shouldn't have enlightened her--I should have let her alone. There's a good deal in that, but I acted conscientiously; I thought she was meant for something better", for than just reading books.

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Professor: Ok so what sort of a character emerges of Isabel?

Student: (())

Professor: Are you sure?

Student: (()) think so

Professor: This is what she implies

Student: She doesn't know what she is missing. She could do better than just sitting and reading books.

Professor: Ok, but she is definitely reading books. Ok

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Professor: and this, for women

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Professor: of that era, this is again, now this is Henry James' kind of a woman, Ok who reads heavy, may be some German philosophy, Kant and Hegel who knows? Those are heavy books. Because she is definitely not reading a magazine or Harper's Bazaar's column or

serialization of some David Copperfield, Ok she is definitely reading a heavy book and she doesn't even realize that how boring it is for a young woman to just spend her time reading books. So in a way, I did her a big favor, I told her that get up and look at the world. So what character is it? What sort of a character is it?

Student: Benevolent

Professor: Louder please

Student: Benevolent

Professor: You are talking about Mrs. Touchett; I am talking about Isabel's character. She doesn't know what is good for her

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Professor: but she is also intellectually inclined. At one point, I don't know exactly which chapter or where it comes

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Professor: but I have been reading the novel recently again, re reading it and it occurs that Isabel is a kind of woman very few men would dare to approach, Ok. Because they feel that in order to approach her in Albany, it's a small town, one has to be prepared with something. Now what does it mean? It is not enough that you are young and you have substantial amount of wealth and fortune, that's not enough for her. When you go and try to strike a conversation you have to be prepared. What does it mean?

Student: (())

Professor: She is intellectually intimidating, Ok.

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Student: (()) Armenian or someone, a foreigner will be better than someone from their circles because nobody in their circle is intellectually stimulating.

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Professor: Well, isn't that very interesting? It is good you brought it up Rukma because there is a point where she says, I can't tell you exactly which chapter, yeah chapter eighteenth, chapter eighteenth; this is exactly what you are talking about.

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Professor: Now we have been talking about what an impression Madame Merle creates on Isabel. So we are already into that

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Professor: Madame Merle and Isabel, chapter eighteen, right? Are you there, a couple of pages down?

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Professor: And Isabel inclined to rage herself in the last category, range herself in the last category. Madame Merle had thick, fair hair...got it, Madame Merle had thick, fair hair...got it, alright, arranged somehow classically like a Greek or Roman goddess, and as if she were a bust. You know what is a bust, you know very statuesque figure. Isabel judged--a Juno or a Niobe; so these are ancient classical figures, goddesses, and large white hands, of a perfect shape, a shape so perfect that their possessor, preferring to leave them unadorned, wore no jeweled rings. Isabel had taken her at first, as we have seen, for a Frenchwoman; Ok, but extended observation might have ranked her as a German--a German of high degree, perhaps

an Austrian, a baroness, a countess, a princess. It would never have been supposed she had come into the world in Brooklyn.

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Professor: Now what is it say, what does it suggest about the Europeans and the Americans, the dichotomy?

Student: (())

Professor: Very common place, right

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Professor: not exciting enough

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Professor: not romantic enough, yeah but Europe, it signifies class, breeding, sophistication, elegance. They are almost on a pedestal. She looks like a bust to her. Why? Has she been reading too much? Has she experienced life first hand? What I am trying to say is that has she experienced life first hand in a very limited sort of way? Ok, it is all bookish, so whatever, even heavy books, Ok they are after all books. They are not real experiences. Caspar Goodwood I think had never read a book, or at least a book of this sort.

Ok, what sort of a man is Caspar Goodwood? What, I mean you think of him and whatever little you have seen of him, do you think he is the book reading type? No. Ok.

Student: Business and

Professor: ok

Student: He is realistic and involved in like practical matters and

Professor: So very practical

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Professor: and do you think he is someone like a representative American man

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Professor: as opposed to people like Lord Warburton or Gilbert Osmond? In what way, I mean do you think he is virile, in your face, a muscular, strong, Ok strong in a very earthy sort of way, yeah? Ok what sort, like he is a kind of man who would like, fix up a thing or when things are crumbling and yes? He is not complicated at all.

Student: He is straight forward.

Professor: He is straight forward American, just like this straight forward young woman, young American woman. So characters are

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Professor: this is how;

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Professor: this is what Henry James does so this is a common motif, it is a common theme in all his novels. You know you take a bunch of people, some of them are Americans, some of them are Europeans, pit them against one another. Americans are always, you know, they fix a certain kind of pattern and there is, Europeans are always like archetypal Europeans, they have these ideas, the old, crumbling, representatives of an old crumbling civilization. Ok so, and for an innocent American, European is someone who is always on the pedestal. That's the kind. Anything you would like to say at this stage? Any comment?

Student: Is Henry James romanticizing this dying, decaying nature of Europe or is he just dismissing it as of decaying or...?

Professor: He is pitting the two against each other, Ok so what happens when

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Professor: innocence comes in contact with a dying civilization

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Professor: young vibrant civilization as symbolized by Isabel

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Professor: and old, decaying civilization as symbolized

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Professor: by Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond. Ok.

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Student: Innocent who's trapped in the really confusing world of dying Europe, that's where it goes wrong to her, because she kind of chooses the Old order...?

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Professor: Ok, that is very interesting

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Professor: because we will come back to that, why him? Why does she choose him of all the people? Ok, so, therefore I wanted you to read the first 30 chapters very thoroughly because all the keys or all the clues to her character will be given in the first 30 chapters, how she interacts with people and how she behaves with people and then what makes her choose the man who is definitely not for her, but why does she choose him. Is she, you know, sign of masochistic kind of choice, and then and staying in that marriage.

Ok, so there is a scene in chapter 15, chapter 15, please go to that

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Professor: This is the point where she has already refused Lord Warburton's proposal. Ralph confronts Isabel and asks her, what had you in mind when you refused Lord Warburton? Ok and what does she say? And then he continues “What was the logic--the view of your situation--that dictated so remarkable an act?” “I didn’t wish to marry him--if that’s logic.” “No, that’s not logic. What was it you said to yourself? “And said is italicized. "You certainly said more than that.”

You just didn't say to yourself I don't want to marry him but you refused him

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Professor: and you must have said something. Do you think here it is not just the question of a girl exercising the choice but Lord, Ralph Touchett is also asking her to justify and intellectualize the choice? So there is a discussion.

When Elizabeth Bennett declines, who is that, not Darcy, the other, the clown Mr. Collins?

Student: Yes

Professor: Is there lot of justification? Do people come and ask?

Student: Yeah, he says, fashionable ladies first say no and then

Professor: No, does someone ask Elizabeth

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Professor: Bennett, perhaps her mother and her friend also Charlotte, Ok but is it like this? What was the logic, what choices dictated your choice, Ok, what were you thinking, is it... so thought is important. What the mental processes are extremely important in Henry James. It is not like I didn't like him. I thought he is a fool and I refused him. That is what Elizabeth says. That's how she justifies that he is just not my type in other words. This is not what I want, a comfortable house and a family, not with this guy, would rather not marry at all. Ok, but here there is a lengthy exchange between these two cousins why did you refuse this. It is not like, I want you to marry him, but just give me a sufficient, convincing explanation of what were you thinking.

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Professor: “Why do you call it a remarkable act? That’s what your mother thinks too.” “Warburton’s such a thorough good sort; as a man, I consider he has hardly a fault. And then he’s what they call here no end of a swell. He has immense possessions, and his wife would be thought a superior being. He unites the intrinsic and the extrinsic advantages.”

Ok, now nobody talks about Mr. Darcy like this. Why did you refuse him? He unites the intrinsic and the extrinsic qualities; although he does. But Jane Austen is definitely into all that because she was not a literary critic. But here look at the choice of words.

“I refused him because he was too perfect then. I’m not perfect myself, and he’s too good for me. Besides, his perfection would irritate me.” “That’s ingenious rather than candid, as a fact you think nothing in the world too perfect for you.” “Do you think I’m so good?” “No, but

you're exacting, all the same, without the excuse of thinking yourself good. 19 women out of 20, however, even of the most exacting sort, would have managed to do with Warburton. Perhaps you don't know how he has been stalked." "I don't wish to know. But it seems to me that one day when we talked of him you mentioned odd things in him."

I will skip a few lines. "I think not. I don't understand the matter, and I'm not conscious of any mission of that sort. You're evidently disappointed. You'd have liked me to make such a marriage." "Not in the least. I'm absolutely without a wish on the subject. I don't pretend to advise you, and I content myself with watching you--with the deepest interest."

And what is this interest? I am going to watch you? She misunderstands for a moment. She says oh, so you are not unhappy that I refused him. Are you interested in me? The touch of vanity in her; that every man who sees her is going to propose to her.

"Are you thinking of proposing to me?" "By no means. From the point of view I speak of that would be fatal; I should kill the goose that supplies me with the material of my inimitable omelettes."

Ok, so she is that goose. She is going to be a supplier of omelettes which are inimitable. What kinds of omelettes is she going to produce? Definitely not!

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Professor: Oh, that's an outrage. I am going to observe you and I am going to observe what kinds of omelettes would...

Student: Choices

Professor: Yeah, the choices yeah, you are an interesting goose. I am not going to kill, you know, killing the goose that?

Student: Laid the golden eggs

Professor: Lay the, yeah and that the whole story is over. Once if I marry you, where is the excitement here? I have to watch you what sort of choices or decisions you are, someone like you is going to make, that's important.

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Professor: "What" and this is next, "I use that animal as the symbol of my insane illusions." hen, goose, that animal is my insane illusions. "What I mean is that I shall have the thrill of seeing what a young lady does who won't marry Lord Warburton."

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Professor: Ok, so you know, after this, if your standards are raised so high, then I have to see, yeah, who are you going to end up with?

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Professor: `That's what your mother counts upon too," "Ah, there will be plenty of spectators!" Now you are kind of a figure that you are going to be watched with lot of interest. So far we were not; we were just assuming this is a regular nice girl who is going to do very well for herself by getting a very nice husband. Very well placed and when Lord Warburton proposes and you refuse then you are an interesting character; before that, not really. But now there will be lots of spectators for you. It has become like, you have become a performance for us. You are the entertainment.

And this is how she is referred to throughout. The people are going to look at her. The kinds of choices she is, don't you think character is important now? Yes, it is not just the plot but what sort of the character refuses, why and then what will you do? So an extremely intellectualized because we are going to watch you and understand your mental process that goes on

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Professor: that go on

Student: (()) that Ralph was mooting for Lord Warburton?

Professor: Not really

Student: But doesn't he say that (())

Professor: You want really to

Student: Better than (())

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Professor: Of course and she can't.

Student: Yeah, and Henrietta thinks that of Caspar

Professor: Caspar, yeah.

Student: Because she is from America

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Professor: so he is...

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Professor: The better man, yeah.

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Professor: Because she also knows him; and see as we have been talking about Caspar Goodwood, Caspar Goodwood represents everything that is all American masculinity. Ok, he is of that kind of, so Lord Warburton is aristocratic, slightly you know he has political ideas and I was just talking about two important themes in Henry James recurring always, money and marriage. Ok so what, these people want lot of monies, Henry James doesn't find anything wrong with money so he is not one of those socialist kind of writers who think that money is tainted, money is the root cause of all. Money gives you freedom according to Henry James. If you don't have money, that's the trouble.

Major cause of trouble in life is lack of money and then second theme is lack of a suitable partner or if you have a partner who is not so suitable, then how to get rid of that. So how to find a proper match, how to get married, how to stay married and if marriage is not working out, how to get out of that marriage so marriage and money is important. Ok. If you leave him, what happens to money part of your life, financial part of your life, what money does she bring along, what money does he bring along with him? So money and marriage, those are the central concerns in all his works.

The other day I was talking to you about a short story which is not exactly a short story but it is a novella; I am sure you know Literary Jones? Novella is not exactly a little less than novel and little more than a short story. So it is called Washington Square. Washington Square, you see places are important. Settings are important. So Washington Square; and Washington Square is about a very wealthy young girl Catherine who is an only child. She is the only daughter, only child of a very wealthy single parent.

Her mother died in childbirth, father grows her hating her because he believes, he blames her for causing the death of the mother. Ok, so he just resents the presence of this little girl and it so happens that she is also a very, an extremely plain looking girl. Ok, she has no physical beauty to speak of. Ok so there are two reasons to be dismissive of her. She caused the death of her mother and she is also so plain looking.

So there no young man of any standing would ever be interested in her. That's what father thinks. Except for your money, if at all someone comes forward, it can't be because of you. You are not intelligent enough, you are not witty enough, you are not charming enough. Definitely you are not pretty. So why would anyone be interested? And this thought is constantly drilled into the girl's mind, that you are not good enough for anyone. So how would a child like this grow up?

Student: No self esteem

Professor: No self-esteem, total lack of self esteem. She thinks she is not good enough and then one day, an extraordinarily handsome young man starts paying her attention and the father says, of course you know, he is penniless and he wants your money. Yeah, he has no job. I have done a background check, Ok so I know he cannot stick to a job and he doesn't

even want to do a job, take up a job. All that he wants is marry, you know, a woman of substance, hook up with a woman of substance and live off her.

And that's what I mean; he got a fool in you otherwise look at him, and look at yourself. Ok look at this man, you know, an example, walking talking example of a Greek God, Ok he is so beautiful to look at, and look at yourself. Why do you think anyone like him would be interested in you, if not for your money because he has a background like, he doesn't work, he is not trained to work, he will only live off you so I forbid this alliance. Ok, I know it will break your heart because this is the first and the last time you get any attention from any man. So he says all these things to her.

But still you are better off without him because he is a gold digger, a fortune hunter or so. Let him go. And she refuses. She actually believes that he loves her. And she goes to him. And he says that, all those pretty things that men like him say like I will die without you and things like that and I know you and because of your social possession your father, obviously thinks very ill of me but I am not the sort. So she says, Ok let's prove it. My father is definitely going to disinherit me after this. But let's elope. And he says, Ok fine. And she leaves home at night and suitcase packed and all and she goes to this particular point.

Washington Square is the street where their house is, Ok they have this enormous mansion, you know all these long winding staircases and beautiful house and you know, it is extremely wealthy setup and she goes in the middle of the night with just one suitcase and there is no sign of that young man. Literally he has ditched her at the altar. Ok so he doesn't turn up. She comes back and the father is there and he says, Oh so you are back. Now she is doubly tainted. Ok so you are ugly, you are silly and now you have lost your morals too because you are the kind of girl who can just elope. And you have been ditched by a man, a scoundrel like that because after all, what have you got now to offer? That's your worth.

After that, father also, he is getting old and he starts falling ill very frequently and he dies. She falls into all this money. Ok what does all this, I mean I am not going to give you, give away the end now. If you are interested in the story so far, do read it. Ok, what is at the center of the story, what are the two themes? Money and marriage and, money and marriage and also, third thing that is again a very recurring thread that runs through all his works; betrayal,

Ok human betrayal, Ok. So you never know what sort of life Henry James must have had that these things are so important.

There is always a character who the central character seems to trust implicitly and that's the character, the Judas complex. Did I talk about the Judas complex at the beginning of the presentation, yes, that Judas complex. Ok there is always a character who is going to betray you. Perhaps that's what Henry James had seen people going through that and he is, this is something that is constantly featured in, featured in all his books.

I will give you another example. It's called *The Wings of Dove*; I think I have referred to this also, *The Wings of Dove*. Now what's it about? It's about two English lovers, a man and a woman, they are very much in love, true love and they want to marry, and the only problem is lack of money. They don't have enough money to start a family or to set up a house (()) and you need money. That's, Henry James is very clear about it, you need money, alright. Now what do they do?

So in walks this young American woman, Ok and very pretty, extremely wealthy. She befriends this English lady. and this English woman finds out that this young American woman has a heart condition and she is gradually dying. Now what could be the solution here? What kind of setup, now you tell me the story, what could have happened?

Make the lover fall in love with this dying woman and then what will happen? They will end up getting married. She is anyway going to die soon, one year, two years how does it matter? She is going to die soon, Ok. Her condition is totally beyond cure. She is going to die and then what happens, they are going to get all the money. Ok, perfect setup and this young woman, she will get happiness for two years or so, because everyone knows she is dying so no one is interested in her anyway.

So she will. Her dying years would be good. So aren't we doing a favor to everyone concerned? That's the idea. And this best friend, so called best friend, she plots for her lover and this young woman to get married. They do get married, Ok and somehow this secret comes out that this woman is involved with her husband in some way, has been involved and

they knew about her condition that she is going to die and this American woman, she realizes that she has been betrayed, yeah and what does she do? What should she do?

OK, that's perhaps a modern woman would do. Ok, leave everything to charity, yeah. She doesn't, she just dies away leaving everything in his name. She realizes; she understands what is happening, she knows after my death, my husband is going to marry my best friend who has betrayed me. She is a very nice person and she thinks Ok I got few months with him where I felt that I was; someone has really loved me, because he was very affectionate towards her.

He pretended but he was also good to her and that's her way of thanking them. And she leaves all her money. And that's the dilemma. Can these two people, can life ever be the same for these two people after getting this money? They got what they wanted. He is free, she is free, they have the money. And that's the plot, Ok. They know; they know it very well. They know that she knew. So there is nothing. See everything is very open. But then, what sort of a writer does he come across now? Marriage, money, yes, betrayal, yes; but what is the overall picture? Human psychology,

Student: Relationships

Professor: Relationships which is there in everything but do you think there is a strong moral center here? Yeah and what is that moral center?

Student: Not really good or bad but sort of gray shade like people are not, things are not necessarily give and take. There are certain areas where

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Student: you can't actually justify the acts of the character.

Professor: Yeah there are, good. There are so things

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Professor: There are, so things are not always black and white. It's not just plain give and take. Ok, there are certain gray areas; there are certain boundaries which shouldn't be crossed. Ok just because you know she is going to die, so let her die but don't take advantage of her, that's the idea.

Student: (()) We know who is on the wrong here

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Student: and who is right.

Professor: Yes

Student: There is still

Professor: Yes,

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Professor: there is still good people, you see.

Student: An element of (())

Professor: They are just human frailty. So

Student: By taking care of her and her last days, he has been a good friend

Professor: Yeah, the so-called anti-hero

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Professor: in Washington Square, he may not necessarily be an embodiment of gray character. He is a blackguard. He is anyways a worthless, useless man. Ok, but what about her father, Ok who always acts as if whatever I am doing, it is for your own good? Ok, I am protecting you from the big bad wolves of the world outside but is he really doing that? Is that the way to raise a daughter? Yes and the father is a very good man. He is a doctor by profession, he has saved several lives. He has done many good things in life. He is involved with lots of charities and all; he is a very nice person. Ok but there is, you know, deep down in every human heart, there lurks some kind of evil hardness and that's what he is concerned about. So good people but somehow in a situation where the worst come out. Ok, so that same thing happens here also, in The Wings of Dove.

Ok now Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond, now what are their motives?

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Professor: And I continue when Ralph Touchett tells her “Ah, there will be plenty of spectators! We shall hang on the rest of your career.”

Now what is this? Your career, the same one where he is having discussion with, is it chapter 18? Chapter 15 sorry, chapter, no we are talking where he calls her a goose and he is going to, yeah, 15. Chapter 15, Ok.

“Ah, there will be plenty of spectators! We shall hang on the rest of your career.” Got it? “I shall not see all of it” why, he is anyway, he accepts his death.” but I shall probably

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Professor: “see the most interesting years.”

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Professor: Ok and you are going to, you know whatever next 5, 4, 5 years you are going to, and I am going to live for, Ok, those would be the most interesting years of your life also. Because you are going to make some choice, some kind of a choice and let's see, what are those choices?

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Professor: "Of course if you were to marry our friend you would still have a career--a very decent, in fact a very brilliant one." Who is this friend? Warburton," But relatively speaking it would be a little prosaic."

Now we are again, he has the key to her character, don't you think? Lord Warburton is such a straight choice, any woman would say yes to him, especially a woman like you who has so, ,

you know, well-matched, perfect couple, toast of London society and it would be so prosaic, what a dull choice, such a predictable choice. Ok

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Professor: but a person like you is unpredictable and that's the interest so that is what Henry James is telling us.

Beauty lies, interest lies when characters make unpredictable choice, In any, do you think a Jane Austen novel would end with Lord Warburton proposing and Isabel Archer accepting and they live happily after, ever after, Ok, predictable and no, interesting choice would have been, interesting plot, twist would have been if Elizabeth Bennet turns down Darcy and ends up with Wickham. Ok, there the foolish, the most foolish of all sisters, she elopes with Wickham but then that is expected na. Yeah, that's how the fool would behave. A smart girl wouldn't. Ok, but when a smart girl ends up with a villainous, thoroughly wicked, evil guy, that's the twist. So yeah

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Professor: but relatively speaking it would be little prosaic. So prosaic is predictable, unromantic, totally unimaginative, not unimaginable but unimaginative, yeah. This was expected. "It would be definitely marked out in advance; it would be wanting in the unexpected. You know I'm extremely fond of the unexpected," I like things which are unpredictable and now that you've kept the game in your hands I depend on your giving us some grand example of it." You have to, now give a grand example. You are the act now. And we are the spectators.

"I don't understand you very well but I do so well enough to be able to say that if you look for grand examples of anything from me I shall disappoint you." "You'll do so only by disappointing yourself and that will go hard with you" Ok, yeah, she says "There are other things a woman can do." She need not marry at all. There are so many things. "There's nothing she can do so well. But you're of course so many-sided." "If one's two-sided it's enough," "You're the most charming of polygons" Ok, now there is a structure, he gives her a figure, you are a polygon, you are not just a three dimensional figure, there are so many sides to you. "You want to see life--you'll be hanged if you don't, as the young men say." "I don't think I want to see it as the young men want to see it. But I do want to look about me." "You want to drain the cup of experience."

Now what does it mean? Drain the cup of experience, see lot more of the world that's true for all of us,

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Professor: many of us but drain the cup of experience?

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Professor: but drain the cup of experience? Exhaust all kinds of experiences, it is not like whether she is willing only for the happy experience or she is pining only for the charming sides of life like a Jane Austen heroine, again I keep coming back to her, she wants to experience life with all its ups and downs and the good and the ugly . We had talked of it in Goethe when we were talking of, when we were doing Faust. I want to experience it all. Doctor Faustus, Marlove's Doctor Faustus, he wants to get the best, yeah the wisest, the most intellectual, he wants to be the most intellectual person on the world, the most beautiful woman Helen of Troy, that's not what Goethe's Faust seek. Yeah, he wants to experience life. That's what our heroine is accused of doing.

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“You want to see, but not to feel”. “I don’t think that if one’s a sentient being one can make the distinction. I’m a good deal like Henrietta. The other day when I asked her if she wished to marry she said: ‘Not till I’ve seen Europe!’” That’s Henrietta... “I too don’t wish to marry till I’ve seen Europe.” “You evidently expect a crowned head will be struck with you.” That is synecdoche na, yeah, crowned head, some king would marry you. “No, that would be worse than marrying Lord Warburton.” “No, I don’t wish to touch the cup of experience. It’s a poisoned drink! I only want to see for myself.”

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Professor: Well she is now, don't you think now that they are dealing with metaphysics and over-intellectualizing the whole thing? Ok and going into, getting into the realms of obscurity. Ok, this is what Henry James is all about. This is how he constructs his plot, Ok, so intellectualize too much, think too much. Discuss too much and what does it all lead to, nothing. Yeah, it is just that this is a young woman who really doesn't, she knows what she doesn't want but does she know what she does want? She doesn't know.

Student: Ralph has figured her better than she knows herself.

Professor: True

Student: (()) Everyone is looking at her.

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Student: They all think she doesn't know what she wants.

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Professor: Yeah, but isn't that true? She really doesn't know and people try to figure her out. But that's true in all Henry James' novel, where people try to, people just don't have conversations. People try to figure each other out. People try to read each other's minds. And delve deep into their psyches. It's not just enough that they know the basic motivations and the justification of choices and all. They want to probe into the psyche of other people, therefore this kind of dialog.

And then one of the last lines in the same chapter

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Professor: “You’ve told me the great thing: that the world interests you and that you want to throw yourself into it.” Her silvery eyes shone a moment in the dusk. “I never said that.” “I think you meant it. Don’t repudiate it. It’s so fine!” “I don’t know what you’re trying to fasten upon me, for I’m not in the least an adventurous spirit. Women are not like men.” “No, women rarely boast of their courage. Men do so with a certain frequency.”

Student: She is disagreeing with everything he says about her.

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Student: He will say this is how you are and she will disagree and she will, sort of argue herself in a circle and then he will say something else and she will disagree.

Professor: Yes, so

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Professor: she seems to disagree with Lord Warburton, with Caspar Goodwood and Ralph Touchett, people who mean well; but what happens when she comes in contact with Madame Merle? And she starts falling in line with everything that Madame Merle says. So she agrees. So she has sort, no I also want to, at this point I want to ask you what's her background. I mean we know that she was found in Albany, by this quirky aunt of hers and she is found reading and she is her late sister's daughter, Mrs. Touchett's late sister's daughter, who was the father?

Yes, father is sort of Bohemian for those period, for those times. Ok, he was a sort of intellectual; he was also a kind of person who was non-conformist in a different way. May be one of the early transcendentalists

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Professor: Ok, must have lived in a community, just we want to construct the, her ancestry. Perhaps she is one of those...she doesn't have that burden of conventionality. Anyway she is an American, so it is not, she doesn't have history in her DNA, she doesn't have the burden of her past in the DNA, on top of it, she also, she was also raised by a set of parents who were quite unconventional, and her father who read a lot and who was not very conventional of, most conventional of all fathers and then he also gambled away whatever he had. So the girls were raised more or less in, you know, in genteel poverty as they say. Ok, they did not have

much to throw about but that didn't affect their self esteem at all, Ok. They had their other things and pursuits and interests so they were brought up in a certain...they were not, they never travelled. They never went out of the small town but for Isabel, books were her window to the world. Ok, that's how she gained her experience and perhaps now that she has got the opportunity, she wants to explore the world. That could be a... Do you think there is a bit of gambler in her? Yeah

Student: She is looking at her (()) somebody who will satisfy her needs of big (()) free of spirit

Professor: Yes

Student: Which she says she claims she is non-adventurer.

Professor: Yeah, she claims that she is a non adventurer, but deep down we understand it is not like she is not ready to marry. She does marry and she turns down Caspar Goodwood once more.

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Professor: He says I will come back.

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Professor: He comes back. But then again he is refused. And then she finds Gilbert Osmond, and then there is marriage.

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Professor: Madame Merle and Isabel, conversation between them, “That’s very crude of you. When you’ve lived as long as I you’ll see that every human being has his shell and that you must take the shell into account. “. Do you get that; chapter 19. “That’s very crude of you. When you’ve lived as long as I you’ll see that every human being has his shell and that you must take the shell into account. By the shell I mean the whole envelope of circumstances.”

Now don't you think this is again being very obscure? Envelope of circumstances and a shell and every human being has a shell of circumstances, Pragma do you get that? Yes.

There's no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we're each of us made up of some cluster of appurtenances. What shall we call our 'self'? Again this is very German philosophy; "the self", very European? Women talking of the concept of self would, so what makes a self, what makes the, an authentic self? Ok and they are talking about that. Where does it begin, where does it end? It overflows into everything that belongs to us--and then it flows back again. I know a large part of myself is in the clothes I choose to wear. I've a great respect for things Ok, so the things define me. So if you suppose I ask you to define yourself, so I know a large part of myself is in the clothes I choose to wear. I've a great respect for things. One's self, one's expression of one's self and one's house, so these are the things that define people like Madame Merle; the clothes, house, Ok , one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps--these things are all expressive.

Again we are getting in the realm of German philosophy, it's expressiveness of objects. We choose objects to express ourselves, the kind of clothes, the house, the car we drive Ok in today's culture. So now this is old Europe talking?

Professor: Do you think there is something of old Europe here? Why?

Student: Because it is not only talking about individuality, it is talking of how you can't really be separate from anybody else.

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Professor: Things, Ok, there is no question of inner subjectivity, Ok or the words we use, you know, agency, your own agency, your own authenticity. These things don't fail. Lionel Trilling has written a seminal book called Sincerity and Authenticity. I am going to do soon, you were talking about, is there going to be theory for this course, yeah plenty of it. So Lionel Trilling talks about, he has given us a seminal book, Sincerity and Authenticity, two distinct terms although we may often use them interchangeably. He is very sincere and therefore authentic. Do you think?

Student: Talking about self

Professor: One woman expresses herself only in terms of extrinsic setups.

Student: I was asking

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Student: all these are materialistic aspects.

Professor: Yes

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Student: Instead of two women, if it were two men, would they be talking about self in terms of things?

Professor: May be, but in Henry James perhaps yes, an American male, he would be talking about, yeah.

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Professor: So Caspar Goodwood pitted against Gilbert Osmond,

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Professor: I am sure if you write an imaginary conversation between them they would be talking like this. Although Caspar Goodwood is no intellectual, he cannot articulate himself in these, in such terms. Gilbert Osmond, why does he impress Isabel so much? He has nothing. Ok he is very clear about that. He has nothing but he has lot of charm. He has lots of sophistication; he has the burden of that Old Order. But that's not just, I mean she is not so, such a superficial person that she falls for the first man who carries a burden of European history. It's not, that's not the reason, we will come to that soon.

Student: Talking about let's say, power, or status, at the end of the day, it is still the result of money. And that way it doesn't make it that much different from the objects that Madame Merle talks about. It's all still the result of money.

Professor: Let me continue.

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Professor: This was very metaphysical, now they are into the realms of metaphysics, not more so, however, than several observations Madame Merle had already made. Isabel was fond of metaphysics, but was unable to accompany her friend into this bold analysis of the human personality. "I don't agree with you.". See here also she doesn't agree. Ok. "I think just the other way. I don't know whether I succeed in expressing myself, but I know that nothing else expresses me." So I am not clothes, or house or furniture or books. I am me.

"Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me." Just because I have money, doesn't necessarily mean that's the measure of me. Ok, I am much more than that. "Everything's on the contrary a limit, a barrier, and a perfectly arbitrary one. Certainly the clothes which, as you say, I choose to wear, don't express me; and heaven forbid they should!" "You dress very well," Madame Merle lightly interposed. "Possibly; but I don't care to be judged by that. My clothes may express the dressmaker, but they don't express me. To begin with it's not my own choice that I wear them; they're imposed upon me by society." I live by certain conventions, therefore I dress. I dress well because perhaps I can afford but that doesn't necessarily define me. They don't express me. "Should you prefer to go without them?" Madame Merle enquired in a tone which virtually terminated the discussion.

What can you answer to that? How can you answer to that? But what is this?

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If we are talking about the metaphysics of it, the obscurity of conversation, now see don't you think this is a very intellectual conversation? Do you think Elizabeth and James Bennet would have this kind of conversation? What defines you, what is myself, what expresses you, the things that I have...they will only talk about, yes, pretty clothes, beautiful houses, carriages, she may not get carried away by those things. It is not the only thing but if you have those things, all the more better, Ok that's the thing. So, that's the end of your quest, that's the end of your journey. You have it and you are happy. But you know, what happens when you have a conversation like this? So would you rather go without your clothes? What do clothes here indicate? Social standing also social conventions

Ok, so the idea is that all of us carry certain codes. We are bound by certain codes and conventions. And certain kinds of set of so-called social conventions and conduct which cannot just be thrown aside or cast aside so we are bound by these things. So according to Madame Merle, that although you may try to ex, be yourself, but in spite of that whatever freedom you want to choose to express yourself, whatever way you want to express your freedom and you want to express your authenticity etc, you are still a part of this society, you are still, you still have to continue living in this particular society so these things have to be considered, the house, the furniture, the society you keep. These are important parts of any personality, any questions or comments?

So the concept that money brings along a certain degree of freedom, yes it does Ok but at the same time, you can't let go off conventions also. Freedom is there; and that's new America. Ok, and let's also assume that, you know, you see how was this money coming to America, to the American society.

Well the Old Order, the European Order was crumbling, Ok because it was a feudal kind of society and feudalism, as you know, by that period in history, it was already crumbling. Ok, what did the Americans symbolize? Hard work, freedom, democracy, anyone...the American Dream, the Great American Dream, industry, yeah, free labor, free capital Ok, capital-less society so it was not, people were not constrained by the fact of their birth or ancestry, anyone can by hard work, by industry, by determination, by education, again you have to think of The Great Gatsby.

The idea was that anyone can come up in life, Ok, so the Old Order versus the New Order and that was at the core but then again Henry James is not, you know Fitzgerald was still to come and he is at the (()), somewhere there. He is still; he belongs to that period where people started questioning certain established orders so they weren't accepting anything. Yeah, so he is still there where Europe is crumbling, by the time of Fitzgerald, we already know The American Dream has its Achilles' heels but during the time, by the time of, till the time of Henry James, American Dream was still something to cherish, something to look for. So that's the period in literature and history, any comments?

And this is what he says about London. We are talking about his notebook entry, the other day we were talking about how he talks about London and city and he continues, Oh yes, the United States, a country without a sovereign, without a code, without a nobility, without an army, without a church or clergy, without a diplomatic service, without a picturesque peasantry, without palaces or castles or ruins, without a literature, without novels, without cathedrals, without sport, without fox hunting or country gentlemen , Ok and this is what he sees America as. Ok, all these, all this results in their naive, naiveté and their innocence, Ok. All these things are not there.

So London, although European, a part of Europe as you were pointing out yesterday, it still represents everything that is very pleasant, which is so un American and he is ready to live in

England because he changed his citizenship to British citizenship, Ok because of all these things. Ok and because these are his personal thoughts and although in his works we come a slightly different theme, the corrupt versus the innocent American but personally he thought very highly, he regarded London very highly and London as a breath of fresh air, amidst Europe, Ok. Although it may be Europe but London is London, Ok this is what we will continue with when we look at how Isabel viewed London. Alright, so let's end here today
(Professor – student conversation ends)