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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ENVIRONMENT AND  
THE CHARACTERS IN HENRY JAMES' *THE PORTRAIT OF A  
LADY***

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**YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ**

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T.C.  
SÜLEYMAN DEMİREL ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ

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## ÖZET

### HENRY JAMES'İN *BİR KADININ PORTRESİ* ADLI ROMANINDAKİ ÇEVRE KARAKTER İLİŞKİSİ

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Danışman: Doç. Dr. Betüre MEMMEDOVA

Bu çalışma, Henry James'in *Bir Kadının Portresi* adlı romanındaki çevre ve karakter ilişkisini incelemektedir. Bu roman, çevre ve karakter arasındaki karmaşık ilişkisiyle bilinir. "Çevre" terimi, hem fiziksel hem de sosyal çevreyi bünyesinde barındırır. Yazar, çoğunluğu Amerikalı göçmen olan ve Avrupa'da yaşayan karakterlerinin nasıl yeni çevrelere uyum sağlamaya çalıştıklarını gösterir. Uyum süreci adaptasyon dereceleri kişiden kişiye değişmesi yönüyle can yakıcıdır. Karakterler, olumsuz şekilde Avrupa toplumunun etkisine maruz kalırlar. Her ne kadar Amerikan kimliklerini devam ettirmeye çalışsalar da, gerçekte tam tersi olur. Henry James, bir kişinin karakterinin mimari, hava durumu ve mevsimlerden oluşan yeni çevresinden oldukça etkilendiği inancındadır. Bu, insanların konut ve o konut içinde yaşayan insan arasındaki ilginç yakın etkileşimdir. Aynı zamanda, şehirlerin de büyük önemi vardır. Bu tez, çevrenin karakterlerin kişiliklerini değiştirmedeki rolünü ayrıntılı şekilde araştırmaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra, tez yazarın realizmi, bazı sembolik betimlemeleri ve karakterlerle olan ilişkilerini de ele almaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Henry James, *Bir Kadının Portresi*, Çevre ve Karakter, Hava Durumları, Eski ve Yeni Dünya

## ABSTRACT

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE CHARACTERS IN HENRY JAMES' *THE PORTRAIT OF LADY*

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This study explores the relationship between the environment and the characters in Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*. It is a novel known for the intricate relationship between the environment and the characters. The term "environment" includes both the social environment and the physical one. The writer shows how his characters who are mostly American expatriate living in Europe strive to get adapted to their new environment. The process is painful in that the degree of adaptation changes from character to character. The characters are exposed to the impact of European community mostly in a negative way. No matter how much they try to maintain their American identity, the reality turns out to be against it. Henry James is convinced that a person's personality is strongly affected by his new environment which includes architecture, weather, and seasons. This is surprisingly close interaction between the dwelling and the people who live in them. The cities are also of great importance. The thesis explores in detail the role of the environment in changing the characters' personality. Besides, the thesis deals with the writer's realism, some symbolic representations and their relationship with the characters.

**Keywords:** Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, Environment and Character, The Weather Conditions, The Old and The New World

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>POL</b>	The Portrait of a Lady
<b>H. James</b>	Henry James
<b>Mme Merle</b>	Madame Serena Merle
<b>G. Osmond</b>	Gilbert Osmond
<b>p.</b>	page
<b>Ibid.</b>	Ibidem
<b>qtd.</b>	quoted
<b>ed.</b>	editor

# CHAPTER I

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis deals with the relationship between the environment and characters in H. James' *The Portrait of a Lady*. In this novel, it could be seen clearly that there is a correlation between these two.

The thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter concentrates on the technical knowledge of this thesis; the subject of this study, the purpose and the significance of the study, methodology, the review of literature and limitations.

The next chapter will focus on the role of realism in depicting the environment and some symbolic representations in the novel. Chapter three of this thesis will discuss the social and physical environment, the architecture that H. James created. All topics discussed in this work will be examined in relation to *POL*\* by Henry James.

*POL* is the longest and most popular novel of H. James; which is considered his masterpiece. It was published firstly as a serial in *The Atlantic Monthly* which is an American magazine founded in Boston and *Macmillan's Magazine* which is a monthly British magazine in 1880-81. In 1881, it was published as a book.

The novel is the story of a young, beautiful, smart, and curious American girl. She is very fond of her independence, so she prefers a life-journey rather than marriage. Both the reader and characters in the novel expect that she will not lose her liberty forever. However, unexpectedly, she makes a bad marriage and becomes the victim of Machiavellian\* characters; Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond.

*POL* has also a great importance in terms of the analysis of human consciousness and adaptations from the "New World" to the "Old World". The adaptation process of the characters is observed by the reader clearly, especially the protagonist of the novel, Isabel

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\* From now on, *The Portrait of a Lady* will be abbreviated as *POL*.

\* One who follows the principles developed by Niccolò Machiavelli. His full name is Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli. He lived from 1469 to 1527. He was an Italian diplomat, philosopher, historian, humanist and writer. Some of his works are his best known book *The Prince*, *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livy* and *Discourse on Pisa*. Machiavellian characters try to succeed in their goals by using cunning, scheming, and immoral methods. All means are good for Machiavellian characters.

Archer adapts to the Old World which is shaped by the society. Thus, H. James completes “the portrait of a lady.” Isabel Archer succeeds in being a lady.

At first, the thesis explores how our characters are affected by their social environment. Especially, their social environment has a great influence in shaping the personality of the characters. Thus, we see that our past is very important and we do not realize that our past is inseparable from our future. H. James is keenly aware of the power of social environment and he shows how Isabel’s individuality succumbs to traditional civilizations of Europe.

As well as the social environment, the physical environment is also very powerful. Considering H. James’ interest in topographical descriptions, it is not surprising that he goes further aiming to show the effect of the place on the characters. The effect of the physical environment could not be realized by the reader immediately but every ambiance in *POL* is prepared by the author on purpose and meticulously. Every character finds him/her in an environment which is suitable for her/his mood and the physical environment foreshadows the future events.

Moreover, H. James arranges all outside things to create an atmospheric effect. The countries, the houses and even the weather are chosen for the reader to share the same feelings with the characters. H. James manages his aim perfectly, since her characters help him to do it. In short, H. James successfully achieves the objective correlative\* that is he has the reader share his feelings towards the place.

With the character’s impressions, we become aware of many various perceptions. H. James in his preface of *POL*, uses architectural terms when defining fiction. To him, fiction is like a house which has “not one window, but a million”<sup>1</sup>. H. James warns us to be attentive since this work must be read from several angles to be understood well. Later, he elaborates on the term fiction as follows:

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\* The term "objective correlative" was first used by The American Painter Washington Allston about 1840, later, T. S. Eliot made it popular and revived it in an essay on *Hamlet* in the year 1919. It symbolizes or objectifies a particular emotion and that may be used in creative writing to evoke a desired emotional response in the reader.

<sup>1</sup> Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, Collector’s Library, China, 2004, p.15. All the quotations given from *The Portrait of a Lady* will be made from this copy and they will be shown with the page number alongside them.

[...] each of them stands a figure with a pair of eyes, or at least with a field-glass, which forms, again and again, for observation, a unique instrument, ensuring to the person making use of it an impression distinct from every other. He and his neighbours are watching the same show, but one seeing more where the other sees less, one seeing black where the other sees white, one seeing big where the other sees small, one seeing coarse where the other sees fine. (16)

As H. James points out there are million pairs of eyes watching the same show. One reader perceives more, the other perceives less. One of these eyes belongs to us, thus we observe *POL* from a different angle; an environmental angle. The thesis emphasizes that there are many environmental relationships in H. James' immortal novel.

### **1.1. The Subject of the Study**

It is an undeniable reality that there is a correlation between the characters and the environment in a well-executed novel. The thesis examines the relationship between the characters and the environment in the novel. The environmental factors display psychological moods of the characters and the forthcoming events.

In the novel, the author puts the characters into scenic background but the adaptation process of the characters changes from character to character. The environment gains a great importance and influences the characters.

Most characters of *POL* are American expatriates. H. James wants the reader to see how these American expatriates lose their American identities. They squeeze between the "New World" and the "Old World".

We could see all these things clearly thanks to the environmental tools. For this reason, the thesis demonstrates to what degree the outside world, the social environment, the architectural descriptions match up with the moods of the characters. The role of realism in depicting the environment will also be dealt with.

### **1.2. The Purpose and the Significance of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to reveal the effect of the outside world on the characters in Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*. We hope that this study will be an inception for further studies on the relationship between the character and the

environment. The fact that there is not enough research about the topic makes our study useful and informative for other researchers.

### **1.3. Methodology**

In this study, the eclectic approach will be employed; among them a text-based and symbolic approaches predominate. The relationship between the environment and characters will form the major axis of the study.

### **1.4. The Review of Literature**

Numerous articles concerning our topic have been studied. Besides these articles, lots of sources related to the topic have been examined. Some of these sources are as follows: Olga Zhdanova in her master thesis, “Life–Journeys: a Feminist Reading of Henry James’s *The Portrait of a Lady* and Olha Kobylanska’s *The Princess*”, she claims that the protagonist Isabel’s life was foretold by the houses H. James built in *POL*. This master thesis provides the reader with a deeper insight into the novel.

In her thesis, Olga Zhdanova considers that “a human being exists only through his/her relationships with others and is trapped by his/her belongings by his/her desire for belongings; therefore, the space – milieu, environment, and surroundings may manipulate person’s life.”<sup>2</sup>

According to her thesis, Isabel Archer does not think she will change one day wherever she goes due to her belief in her American identity. Isabel’ journey starts from New York to some European countries and it ends in Italy, Rome.

Olga Zhdanova claims that houses set the scene and also they show us the rotation of events. Also her thesis reveals that Isabel loves dark places like her grandmother’s house. For this reason, Isabel does not stay at Gardencourt for a long time. Thus, she looks for new houses in Italy, she likes Osmond’s villa since it is a gloomy place.

In her article “‘There are Plenty of Houses’: Architecture and genre in *The Portrait of a Lady*”, Elizabeth B. Machlan mentions that there is a triangulation of

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<sup>2</sup> Olga Zhdanova, “Life–Journeys: a Feminist Reading of Henry James’s *The Portrait of a Lady* and Olha Kobylanska’s *The Princess*”, Master Thesis, Yeditepe University, Istanbul, 2010, p.30.

architecture, literature, and experience in *POL*, so we should be cautious about the houses in the novel.

According to the same author, H. James creates the architectural metaphors in *POL* for the reader. Thus, the reader will understand and interpret the actions better. She even compares houses and portraits:

If a portrait implies a framed, immobile image, architecture suggests movement through space, habitation as opposed to enclosure. Houses, unlike portraits, can be seen from all sides, while doors and windows imply interiors that portraits can not provide. A house is also always more than a work of art. While aesthetic conventions allow us to classify different genres of architecture, they tell us nothing about the "character" of a house, its history, or who dwells there.<sup>3</sup>

Elizabeth B. Machlan means that every house in *POL* has a meaning and whoever looks at it sees different things. Although nobody likes Isabel's grandmother's house, Isabel likes it very much.

D. C. D. Pocock, in "Place and the Novelist" asserts that most novelists in their writings show the correlation between the character and the environment. Thus, the reader could think place as people, and people as place.

In "Overlooking the International Cultural Values in *The Portrait of a Lady*", Inma S. McElvaney states that H. James' travels and short-term dwellings both in the USA and Europe supplied him with detailed information about cultural differences for his works.

The thesis examines Isabel's process of adaptation in terms of cultural change. According to Inma S. McElvaney, Isabel's independence, self-reliance can help her in Europe. For this reason, she is deceived by some villain characters. Although Ralph, Henrietta, and her aunt warn her and even the author signals with some outside element about the danger, she turns a blind eye to the reality and does what she wants.

A number of articles on realism in the novel have also been read and used. In his article "Henry James and the Limitations of Realism", Donald Emerson states that Henry

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<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Boyle Machlan, " 'There are Plenty of Houses': Architecture and Genre in *The Portrait of a Lady*", *Studies in the Novel*, Volume 37, number 4 (Winter 2005), the University of North Texas, 2005, p.395.

James ideas about realism changed in course of time. At first, H. James approved of realism but later, he thought that idealism accompanies realism. For this reason, he was attracted by Turgenev's technique. He could blend ideal beauty and harsh reality.

### **1.5. Limitations**

There are many articles, books, and theses about Henry James and *The Portrait of a Lady*, but we have to state that finding enough resources became difficult for the present thesis. Though the novel is open to many discussions we only have focused on the interrelationship between the environment and the characters. It is interesting to note that this subject continues to confuse many scientific minds. The question whether heredity is more effective than the environment is still on the agenda.

## CHAPTER II

### 2. REALISM AND SOME SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATIONS

#### 2.1. Henry James' Realism

Realism is a literary movement started against Romanticism in the late nineteenth century. This movement emerged in France but if we give more specific time in English literature, “[...] this movement coincided approximately with the ‘Victorian era’, a period ruled by Queen Victoria (1837-1901) which meant the height of the British Empire and the Industrial Revolution.”<sup>4</sup>

The first influence on the birth of realism is the development in science, the other is positivism which

is a view of scientific methods and a philosophical approach, theory, or system based on the view that, in the social as well as natural sciences, sensory experiences and their logical and mathematical treatment are together the exclusive source of all worthwhile information.<sup>5</sup>

This movement changed the writers’ thinking mode. “In a general sense, realism refers to the representation of characters, events, and settings in ways that the spectator will consider plausible, based on consistency and likeness to type.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, a realist writer tries to make characters, events, environment and other things believable to the reader.

The subject of realism was defined by some critics as follows: “Realism has been chiefly concerned with the commonplaces of everyday life among the middle and lower classes, where character is a product of social factors and environment is the integral element in the dramatic complications.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, realism does not deal what there

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<sup>4</sup> “English Realism: The Victorian Era (1837-1901)”, <http://literatureinenglishunican.blogspot.com/2009/12/english-realism-victorian-era-1837-1901.html>, (18.10.2011).

<sup>5</sup> “Positivism”, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Positivism>, (18.10.2011).

<sup>6</sup> “Realism and Henry James”, [http://www.neabigread.org/teachers\\_guides/handouts/washingtonsquare/washingtonsquare-handout3.pdf](http://www.neabigread.org/teachers_guides/handouts/washingtonsquare/washingtonsquare-handout3.pdf), (17.10.2011).

<sup>7</sup> “Realism, in Literature”, <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/realism>, (19.10.2011).



should be, it deals what there is. Ideally, in realist works, there should not be exaggerated lives, characters or environmental factors. So much so that, realist writers think emotions deceive people, for that reason reality should be given without changing. However, realist writers treat reality in the world in a different way.

Honoré de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens), Ernest Hemingway, Leo Tolstoy, Jane Austen, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, George Eliot, William Dean Howells, Edith Wharton, and Henry James are distinguished realists not only in French and English literature but also in world literature.

Each of them treated the notion “reality” in their own way. However, Henry James was very different in his style of writing from all those above. Donald Emerson points out H. James’s different perspective on realism as a literary movement:

James’s views of realism, and his own practices as a writer, changed so considerably during the half-century of his creative life time that one must distinguish three periods. These are merely a convenience of discussion and are sufficiently marked by James’s departure for permanent European residence in 1875 and the failure of *Guy Domville*, 1895.<sup>8</sup>

The most effective period in his literary life is absolutely his departure for Europe. “He wrote from a perspective that allowed him to contrast American society with that of Europe by contrasting the people’s ideas.”<sup>9</sup> With his residence in 1875, “he was entering a great productive period; criticism would become subordinate to his prolific writing of fiction; his associations with the French realists would heighten his interest in technical problems.”<sup>10</sup> Henry James was very critical of early Victorian authors and their works:

In fact his year in Paris, in 1875-76, had revived in him a vivid sense of that busy world of fictional theory in a land where he had always felt almost as much at home as in England. He was well aware that realism had not triumphed in England, in any case, as his strictures against certain unrealistic tricks by Dickens and Trollope suggest; and

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<sup>8</sup> Donald Emerson, “Henry James and the Limitations of Realism”, *Collage English*, National Council of Teacher of English, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Dec., 1960), p.161.

<sup>9</sup> Influence of Realism on Literature”, <http://www.free-researchpapers.com/dbs/a10/eqw184.shtml>, (01.06.2012).

<sup>10</sup> Donald Emerson, “Henry James and the Limitations of Realism”, *Collage English*, National Council of Teacher of English, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Dec., 1960), p.162.

his attitude to his immediate English predecessors can be disdainful even when he is striving to be appreciative.<sup>11</sup>

Henry James was influenced by his “new homes” and their intellectuals, he and other realists accepted the existence of the relationship between environment and characters.

Although ‘realism’ is ‘realism’, no matter what the continent, there was a difference between the approach of a French writer, such as Flaubert, and his American counterparts, men like James and Twain. What all had in common was the general idea of realism concerning the environment of the characters. How the individual characters survived in the world that surrounded them was an important aspect of realism.<sup>12</sup>

However, H. James managed to create his own style. Questions like “what makes his realism different” are likely to arise. “American writers used the locale or the ‘setting’ in which the characters were placed as a kind of ‘character’ itself. In literary realism, however; the setting/environment almost took on a life of its own...having a direct influence on the individual characters.”<sup>13</sup> We could think of the environment as a character as well and it has a huge effect not only on characters but also on the flow of events.

While many early realists avoided tragic situations, James placed his characters in circumstances that did not always end happily. James reacted against the predictable plotlines in which virtue was rewarded and evil punished by novel’s end. As one of the pioneers of literary realism, he believed characters should be created without idealization and that settings and situations must be portrayed as faithfully to real life as possible.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> George Watson, “The Lost Prophet of Realism”, *The Sewanee Review*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Vol. 96, No. 3 (Summer, 1988), p. 485-486.

<sup>12</sup> “Henry James and Realism”, <http://en.allexperts.com/q/Literature-697/Henry-James-realism.htm>, (18/09/2011).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Realism and Henry James”, [http://www.neabigread.org/teachers\\_guides/handouts/washingtonsquare/washingtonsquare-handout3.pdf](http://www.neabigread.org/teachers_guides/handouts/washingtonsquare/washingtonsquare-handout3.pdf), (17.10.2011).

H. James is a brave experimenter. The traditional “happy end” is not characteristic of his novels, which is the case in most Victorian novels. Another distinctive writing style of H. James is that he penetrates into the minds of his characters. Thus, the reader could jump into characters’ minds, see their inner worlds, and perceive their real feelings.

Henry James...perhaps because of the influence of his brother William the psychologist...went a step further. His partial emphasis was on ‘psychologist realism’. James penetrated the inner consciousness of his major characters, such as Daisy Miller, and he gave the same kind of attention to Isabel, in ‘The Portrait of a Lady’.<sup>15</sup>

Henry James brings the inner worlds of his characters to light realistically using not only their consciousness and the narrator’s comments but also the skilful description of the environment and their impact on the characters. We, readers, seem to be wandering at Gardencourt with Isabel and Lord Warburton, when Isabel sees the manor of Touchetts, for the first time. Later, she takes us wherever she goes. The environment is much more than a setting:

James is realistic, because he used the environment or the social setting to have a strong influence on the characters. He went even further than other realists, by showing how that ‘outside world’ affected the consciousness [minds] of his main characters. In ‘Portrait’ the emphasis on Isabel and her view of the social setting or the environment ...and the pressures placed on the individual.<sup>16</sup>

The social environment creates strong pressures on the individuality of Isabel Archer. Not only the social environment but also the settings, the environment and landscapes in *POL* affect the characters and the readers as well. In the novel, the narrator helps the effect of the environment on the reader. Henry James states the narrator’s aim:

The narrator of The Portrait of a Lady, for instance, remarks that Isabel “would be an easy victim of scientific criticism if she were not intended to awaken on the reader’s part an impulse more tender and more purely expectant” (91)

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<sup>15</sup> “Henry James and Realism”, <http://en.allexperts.com/q/Literature-697/Henry-James-realism.htm>, (18/09/2011).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Michael Kearns clarifies Henry James's words: "The narrator's purpose, clearly, is to engage readers' emotional faculties equally with the analytical, not so that we uncritically admire Isabel but so that we share her experience."<sup>17</sup>

Actually, the reader is not the main concern of H. James since he is aware of that there are many various perceptions in "the house of fiction". He rightly argues that

"The house of fiction," as he put it in the preface to The Portrait of a Lady, has "not one window but a million," noting the diversity of readers and their interpretations; and at each window "stands a figure with a pair of eyes, or at least with a field-glass, which forms, again and again, for observation, a unique instrument, insuring to the person making use of it an impression distinct from every other."<sup>18</sup>

With this metaphor of H. James, we learn his views on realism. This "house" consists of many windows and every reader has a pair of eyes. Each reader perceives differently according to their knowledge, psychology, humour and experience: The millions "are watching the same show, but one seeing more where the other sees less, one seeing black where the other sees white, one seeing big where the other sees small, one seeing coarse where the other sees fine."<sup>(16)</sup>

H. James also accepts his guidance role in fiction, but he avoids affecting the reader. In the preface of *The Spoils of Poynton*, he explains the reason for his guidance by comparing life and art. James E. Miller, Jr argues that

The artist derives from life ("I live, live intensely and am fed by life"), but he also *makes* life—in the sense of giving shape and meaning to what is in essence formless and meaningless. If thus it may be said that reality must leave its stamp on the novel, it may equally be said that the novel in turn shapes or creates reality—through the personal perspective of the novelist.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Michael Kearns, "Henry James, Principled Realism and the Practice of Critical Reading", *College English*, National Council of Teachers of English, Vol. 56, No. 7 (Nov., 1994), p.770.

<sup>18</sup> George Watson, "The Lost Prophet of Realism", *The Sewanee Review*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Vol. 96, No. 3 (Summer, 1988), p. 490.

<sup>19</sup> James E. Miller, Jr., "Henry James in Reality", *Critical Inquiry*, The University of Chicago Press, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Spring, 1976), p. 591.

The artist or the novelist uses diverse forms and techniques to reflect the reality. As mentioned above, the environment, narrator, landscapes, and even consciousnesses of characters help to reflect the reality. Henry James' characters "are defined by the world in which they live and the social requirements of their society. James's brand of realism explores the psyches of characters grappling with complex social and ethical situations."<sup>20</sup>

Henry James makes this subject clear in *POL* with the help of his villain character; Gilbert Osmond:

[...] from time to time you got one of a quality that made up for everything. Italy, all the same, had spoiled a great many people; he was even fatuous enough to believe at times that he himself might have been a better man if he had spent less of his life there. It made one idle and dilettantish and second-rate; it had no discipline for the character, didn't cultivate in you, otherwise expressed, the successful social and other 'cheek' that flourished in Paris and London. 'We're sweetly provincial,' said Mr Osmond, 'and I'm perfectly aware that I myself am as rusty as a key that has no lock to fit it. (356-357)

According G. Osmond, Italy spoiled him and if he had not stayed there so long, he could have been a better man. Both Italy and its citizens have a great influence on the character.

Physiognomy\* also plays a significant role in the novel. "Physical description underscores a character's essential personality and provides the reader with clues about his or her temperament. The reader can always expect actions and responses."<sup>21</sup> In the novel, Isabel is also aware of the power of physiognomy. Her consciousness makes this explicit for the reader:

No one certainly had on any occasion so held her as this little thin-lipped, bright-eyed, foreign-looking woman, who retrieved insignificant appearance by a distinguished manner and, sitting there in a well-worn waterproof, talked with striking familiarity of the

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<sup>20</sup> Realism and Henry James",

[http://www.neabigread.org/teachers\\_guides/handouts/washingtonsquare/washingtonsquare-handout3.pdf](http://www.neabigread.org/teachers_guides/handouts/washingtonsquare/washingtonsquare-handout3.pdf) , (17.10.2011).

\* A theory that the mental and emotional characteristics of an individual could be determined from physical characteristic. For more information: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physiognomy>.

<sup>21</sup> Realism and Henry James",

[http://www.neabigread.org/teachers\\_guides/handouts/washingtonsquare/washingtonsquare-handout3.pdf](http://www.neabigread.org/teachers_guides/handouts/washingtonsquare/washingtonsquare-handout3.pdf) , (17.10.2011).

courts of Europe. There was nothing flighty about Mrs Touchett, but she recognised no social superiors, and, judging the great ones of the earth in a way that spoke of this, enjoyed the consciousness of making an impression on a candid and susceptible mind. (62)

The physiognomy of Caspar Goodwood also attracts Isabel's notice. In fact, his appearance reflects his character.

He was tall, strong and somewhat stiff; he was also lean and brown. He was not romantically, he was much rather obscurely, handsome; but his physiognomy had an air of requesting your attention, which it rewarded according to the charm you found in blue eyes of remarkable fixedness, the eyes of a complexion other than his own, and a jaw of the somewhat angular mould which is supposed to bespeak resolution. (71)

Physical characteristics of him; "stiff", "his physiognomy had an air of requesting your attention", "blue eyes of remarkable fixedness" display his mental and emotional characteristics. In the following chapters, his determination stands out.

Physiognomy of Henrietta also reflects her completely. Her physical characteristics are given in detail, thus the harmony between her physical appearance and her humour will be seen distinctly.

She was a neat, plump person, of medium stature, with a round face, a small mouth, a delicate complexion, a bunch of light brown ringlets at the back of her head and a peculiarly open, surprised-looking eye. The most striking point in her appearance was the remarkable fixedness of this organ, which rested without impudence or defiance, but as if in conscientious exercise of a natural right, upon every object it happened to encounter. It rested in this manner upon Ralph himself, a little arrested by Miss Stackpole's gracious and comfortable aspect, which hinted that it wouldn't be so easy as he had assumed to disapprove of her. She rustled, she shimmered, in fresh, dove-coloured draperies, and Ralph saw at a glance that she was as crisp and new and comprehensive as a first issue before the folding. From top to toe she had probably no misprint. She spoke in a clear, high voice - a voice not rich but loud [...]. (132)

H. James was also aware of the significance of proper names and he named his characters according to their mental and emotional characteristics. In almost all Victorian novels, the names of the characters reflect their personality.

The author attributes meanings to the names. For instance; the names of Pansy, Mme Merle, Countess Gemini are very suggestive.

“Pansy” is the name of a garden flower which is “a kind of violet (*viola tricolor*), especially for the hybridized varieties in gardens. The name is from the French *pensée*, ‘thought’; in Spanish it is called *pensamiento*, in Italian *viola del pensiero*.”<sup>22</sup>

In the novel, Pansy always wants to gather flowers and she is attracted by them:

'Yes, she looks sound.' And the young girl's father watched her a moment. 'What do you see in the garden?' he asked in French.

'I see many flowers,' she replied in a sweet, small voice and with an accent as good as his own.

'Yes, but not many good ones. However, such as they are, go out and gather some for *ces dames*.'

The child turned to him with her smile heightened by pleasure. 'May I, truly?' (321)

If the meaning of Pansy is “thought”, we see a character being devoid of thought. However, pensiveness often suggests a dreamy, often somewhat sad or melancholy concentration of thought, so H. James chooses an appropriate name for his character. Pansy might seem to be a slave to her father’s wishes but we do see her realization of her true situation. Her begging Isabel to come back from England and her determination not to marry Warburton show her realization.

Besides Pansy, Countess Gemini and Mme Merle have meaningful names which suit their characteristics. Actually “Gemini” is a constellation in the Northern Hemisphere. It also refers to the sign of the zodiac which relates to the period of 23 May – 21 June, or a person born during this period. They are also called *Twins*. E. Harolson and K. Johnson think that “Gemini” suggests false doubleness or duplicity, and Mme Merle’s surname connotes “blackbird” in French.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Michael Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2007, p.150.

<sup>23</sup> E. Harolson and K. Johnson, *Critical Companion to Henry James: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*, Facts on File, the United States of America, 2009, p. 392.

Just as Marcus described V. Woolf as a ‘guerrilla fighter in a Victorian skirt’<sup>24</sup>, so we can call Henry James as a guerrilla fighter in Victorian trousers. Some critics claim H. James as a Victorian writer. Unlike the Victorian novel writers, he criticizes the conventions of the society. Also, he does not judge his characters and leave everything to the reader. Especially, in *POL*, he does not aim at moralization; G. Osmond and Mme Merle are not punished by the author. Even we see that our innocent characters suffer more than the villain ones. That’s why Henry James is really beyond Victorian age.

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<sup>24</sup> “Virginia Woolf - Guerilla Fighter in a Victorian Skirt”, <http://exagminations.tripod.com/id35.html>, (13.03.2012).



## 2.2. Some Symbolic Representations in *POL*

In *POL*, there are some critical symbols. These symbols are too important to ignore them. They are hidden in the novel so masterly that without paying attention to them, it is very difficult to understand the meaning of the actions thoroughly.

### 2.2.1. Light and Darkness

“Light is traditionally linked with goodness, life, knowledge, truth, fame, and hope, darkness with evil, death, ignorance, falsehood, oblivion, and despair.”<sup>25</sup> H. James uses “light” and “darkness” symbols and they cover all the meanings we have mentioned above.

One of the most important chapters of *POL* is undoubtedly Chapter 42. In this chapter, we see that Isabel goes out of “darkness” into “light”. In other words, she reaches an epiphany. She philosophizes about her situation, her decisions that she made before and many other things.

After he had gone she leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes; and for a long time, far into the night and still further, she sat in the still drawing-room, given up to her meditation. A servant came in to attend to the fire, and she bade him bring fresh candles and then go to bed. Osmond had told her to think of what he had said; and she did so indeed, and of many other things. (569)

The servant comes to attend to the fire and this action of the servant symbolizes Isabel Archer’s awakening. When the fire rises, all memories of Isabel revive. Osmond wants Isabel to think of what he had said and she meditates on many things especially, on their marriage. Osmond’s advice helps Isabel to realize unexpected things:

This mistrust was now the clearest result of their short married life; a gulf had opened between them over which they looked at each other with eyes that were on either side a declaration of the deception suffered. It was a strange opposition, of the like of which she had

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<sup>25</sup> Michael Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2007, p.115.

never dreamed - an opposition in which the vital principle of the one was a thing of contempt to the other. (571-572)

At last, she accepts that she had deceived herself with her own imagination. At the moment, she can see her husband completely like “a full moon” (574), she realizes that “she had mistaken a part for the whole” (574).

Like the symbol “light”, James uses the symbol “shadows” in the same chapter as well. The reader can see the terror which darkness created in Isabel’s mind. As the shadows gather, Isabel feels herself giving way to despair:

Then the shadows had begun to gather; it was as if Osmond deliberately, almost malignantly, had put the lights out one by one. The dusk at first was vague and thin, and she could still see her way in it. But it steadily deepened, and if now and again it had occasionally lifted there were certain comers of her prospect that were impenetrably black. These shadows were not an emanation from her own mind: she was very sure of that; she had done her best to be just and temperate, to see only the truth. They were a part, they were a kind of creation and consequence, of her husband’s very presence. (572-573)

The shadows cause despair for Isabel, all her hopes run out and hopelessness covers her thoroughly. For Isabel, this feeling is not unfamiliar since she had seen the same shadows before when she met Mme Merle for the first time.

“Darkness” is also used by H. James many times in the novel. One of the impressive ones is seen in the description of Isabel and Osmond’s house. The house is “the house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation. Osmond's beautiful mind gave it neither light nor air [...]” (578). Here, “darkness” reflects Isabel’s renunciation. She had lived between those four walls ever since; they were to surround her for the rest of her life. (578)

### 2.2.2. The Dying Gladiator

The statue of the Dying Gladiator\* in Chapter 28 is linked to Lord Warburton. Like the statue, Lord Warburton is also heavy hearted. Isabel refuses Lord Warburton's marriage proposal many times and this makes him very sad. He desponds but cannot endure seeing another man around Isabel, so he comes to say good-bye to her:

[...] where he stood before the lion of the collection, the statue of the Dying Gladiator. She had come in with her companions, among whom, on this occasion again, Gilbert Osmond had his place, and the party, having ascended the staircase, entered the first and finest of the rooms. Lord Warburton addressed her alertly enough, but said in a moment that he was leaving the gallery. 'And I'm leaving Rome,' he added. 'I must bid you goodbye.' (413)

Three men in the novel are wounded by the protagonist Isabel Archer: Caspar Goodwood, Ralph Touchett and Lord Warburton. However, the only one is shown as the Dying Gladiator. Alfred Habegger also questions why Lord Warburton is chosen as the statue:

The jilted-suitor aspect became Goodwood; the dying-soldier aspect turned into Warburton the Dying Gladiator. What remained was the sickly spectatorial dependency on a heroine, and this, the heart of the matter, evolved into Ralph. If Isabel's manly suitors often seem wooden and unfelt, that is because their segments of the original material were outside the orbit of James's knowledge, interests and experience. The only part that was inside was what went into the richly imagined Ralph.<sup>26</sup>

They do not seem "wooden" or "unfelt". On the contrary, all suitors of Isabel suffer a lot because of the love which they feel for Isabel. The readers have pity on the hopeless lover Caspar Goodwood, the sick cousin Ralph, and even on Lord Warburton.

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\* The Picture of the Dying Gladiator can be obtained from this website, <http://public.wsu.edu/~campbell/amlit/james7.html>, (30.04.2012).

<sup>26</sup> Alfred Habegger, ed. Albert Gelpi, *Henry James and the "Woman Business"*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2004, p.168.

### 2.2.3. Tea cups

For Mme Merle, her tea cups are very precious objects. G. Osmond takes one of them and watches over it. This small object means many meanings in it. While Mme Merle cannot see the crack on the tea cup, G. Osmond realizes it. Mme Merle always hinders herself from seeing the reality of the events. G. Osmond speaks out saying: 'You always see too much in everything; you overdo it; you lose sight of the real. I'm much simpler than you think.' (701)

The crack on Mme Merle's cup represents the reality of life and the crack wants to remind that she deceives herself in terms of happiness. Through the novel we understand that Mme Merle pretends to be happy but in fact, she is not. She is far away from her daughter Pansy. Mme Merle cannot hear the word "Mummy", and the fact that her daughter does not love her makes her really feel miserable. Victoria Coulson also accepts the coffee cup as a sign:

Madame Merle's cracked coffee cup is one of many 'real' objects which adorn her Roman apartment, yet we have no difficulty in accepting it as a *sign*, not merely of Serena Merle's fashionable collection of *bibelots*, but of a whole sphere of flawed happiness and disappointment and betrayal.<sup>27</sup>

There are many meanings and revelations behind the inanimate objects in the novel. From person to person, the degree of understanding the novel as a whole changes. Some of these symbols carry traditional meanings, like "light" and "darkness"; others carry different meanings suiting the characters' lives.

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<sup>27</sup> Victoria Coulson, *Henry James, Women and Realism*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2007, p.12.

## CHAPTER III

### 3. THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE CHARACTERS

#### 3.1. The Relationship between the Environment and the Characters in H. James' *The Portrait of a Lady*

In Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*, there is a strange relation between the the environment and the characters. Bearing this in mind if we read the book again, we feel this psychological and realistic bond between the characters and the environment. Such a mutual interplay is very common because "personality development occurs by the ongoing interaction of temperament, character, and environment."<sup>28</sup> It means that whenever a person is concerned, the connection with environment is indispensable.

The term "Environment" in this thesis will encapsulate the topics like social surroundings, landscape, geographical places, weather conditions, climate and buildings. All the things mentioned above are more or less linked to characters in terms of their temper and their behaviour. Also, using these elements, the writer prepares atmosphere for his characters and future events.

In addition, Henry James begins his novel *POL* with a tea ceremony, so, in this way, the writer covers scenic background and then puts his characters one by one on it. At the same time, H. James magnetizes the reader into this prepared setting:

Under certain circumstances there are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea. There are circumstances in which, whether you partake of the tea or not - some people of course never do - the situation is in itself delightful. Those that I have in mind in beginning to unfold this simple history offered an admirable setting to an innocent pastime. (31)

This introduction makes up both a pleasant ambiance and also "James introduces one of the novel's major symbols and one of its central themes: the 'ceremony' of

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<sup>28</sup> "Personality Development", <<http://www.answers.com/topic/personality-development>> (01.02.2012).

tea.”<sup>29</sup> Victoria Coulson defines the scene using the oxymoron “amiable prevarication”: “those readers who chide James for amiable prevarication might assume that this leisurely opening constitutes an expansive self-indulgent piece of set decoration, bathed in a sunlit inconsequentiality.”<sup>30</sup> In the tea ceremony, the protagonist of the book, Isabel is wanted to be taken as an object by men. Fortunately; she refuses to drink tea and proceeds getting to know these new men and this new place around her.

'You must sit down - you must have some tea,' he observed to his wife's niece.

'They gave me some tea in my room the moment I got there,' this young lady answered. 'I'm sorry you're out of health,' she added, resting her eyes upon her venerable host. (48)

According to Victoria Coulson, H. James uses tea ceremonies and tea cups in the book as symbols for domestic phenomena. V. Coulson gives many references to tea from the book and she sees a close interaction between the tea and women. Pansy Osmond always wants to make tea for domestic appropriation and Pansy also attracts Lord Warburton while she is standing by the tea table. We can meet more examples like these in Victoria Coulson's book *Henry James, Women and Realism*.<sup>31</sup>

From the very beginning, H. James achieves his goals by creating an impeccable social occasion. As the writer states, there are no women who will spoil this small feast:

From five o'clock to eight is on certain occasions a little eternity; but on such an occasion as this the interval could be only an eternity of pleasure. The persons concerned in it were taking their pleasure quietly, and they were not of the sex which is supposed to furnish the regular votaries of the ceremony I have mentioned. (31)

Furthermore, getting such a start, H. James wants to make his character's feelings more perceptible for his readers. Since, “the way that the setting is described can also show the inner feelings of a character.”<sup>32</sup> Also, before the protagonist appears, the setting is described, so we feel Isabel's excitement, happiness and interest. This

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<sup>29</sup> Victoria Coulson, *Henry James, Women and Realism*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2007, p.113.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 113-116.

<sup>32</sup> “Setting”, <<http://serc.sogang.ac.kr/erc/Literature/Setting.htm>>, (02.02.2012).

scene suggests something positive to call. When Isabel appears, the atmosphere becomes enriched in excitement and fun. Furthermore, the narrator shows the impact of the environment on the other characters in the novel.

### **3.1.1. Social Environment**

As mentioned before, many elements have influences on characters. Someone's upbringing, social involvement and interactions build people's personalities. Particularly, "the social environment refers to how people and communities behave, their relationships, education and occupation, and the conditions in which they live."<sup>33</sup>

For many years and even today, the impact of social environment has been argued and no one could deny its role on character. However; there are two subject confusing psychology researchers' minds about the degree of influence of environment and heredity on shaping personality.

Research by psychologists over the last several decades has increasingly pointed to hereditary factors being more important, especially for basic personality traits such as emotional tone. However, the acquisition of values, beliefs, and expectations seem to be due more to socialization and unique experiences, especially during childhood.<sup>34</sup>

It is commonplace that heredity is more dominant than environment in shaping one's personality. Nevertheless, the heredity of H. James' characters is not the subject of our thesis. The environment in which our some important characters were raised and lived is much more emphatic.

The first and the biggest part of social environment is upbringing style of children. "Child rearing practices are especially critical"<sup>35</sup> because when an infant is born, it is shapeless yet. According to English philosopher John Locke:

[...] children are not innately bad but, instead, are like a "blank tablet," a tabula rasa. Locke believed that childhood experiences are important in determining adult characteristics. He advised parents to

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<sup>33</sup> "Social Environment", <<http://www.environment.gov.za/soer/reports/gauteng/Chapter%204%20Social%20Environment.pdf>>, (02.02.2012).

<sup>34</sup> "Personality Development", <<http://www.answers.com/topic/personality-development>> (01.02.2012).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

spend time with their children and to help them become contributing members of society.<sup>36</sup>

In order to understand a character better, we should consider him/her as a whole. For this reason, we will deal with some important characters from *POL* by Henry James with regard to their upbringing, their education and their social interactions. In this way, we could understand how their current and future decisions, behaviour, temper are interconnected with the past.

### 3.1.1.1. Isabel Archer

and this prayer I make,  
Knowing that Nature never did betray  
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,  
Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
From joy to joy: for she can so inform  
The mind that is within us, so impress  
With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,  
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,  
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all  
The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb  
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold  
Is full of blessings.<sup>37</sup>

-William Wordsworth

Isabel Archer, the protagonist of *POL*, comes into view as a young, beautiful, self-confident, intimate and an independent girl in the second chapter of the book. It should be noted that nothing about her past is known to the reader until to Chapter 1. Mary Schriber emphasizes H. James' deep insight into the society's role in women's life:

No American novelist of the nineteenth century better understood the complexities of women's place in society than Henry James. No novel of James's more successfully captures the influence of society

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<sup>36</sup> "The History Of Child Psychology", <http://www.essortment.com/history-child-psychology-21036.html>, (03.02.2012).

<sup>37</sup> "Nature never did betray The heart that loved her", <http://www.shmoop.com/tintern-abbey/stanza-6-lines-111-159-summary.html>, (03.02.2012).



on the development of a woman's consciousness than *The Portrait of a Lady*.<sup>38</sup>

In *POL*, H. James also deals with Isabel's change process in a new society. But firstly, we should know about every aspect of our character's life. For this reason, H. James introduces Isabel's childhood in Albany to the reader for discovering her character in the Chapter 3:

There was a constant coming and going; her grandmother's sons and daughters and their children appeared to be in the enjoyment of standing invitations to arrive and remain, so that the house offered to a certain extent the appearance of a bustling provincial inn kept by a gentle old landlady who sighed a great deal and never presented a bill. Isabel of course knew nothing about bills; but even as a child she thought her grandmother's home romantic. (55)

Interestingly, Isabel and her sisters do not have much knowledge about money and accounting because of their upbringing. In the past, her father and grandmother did not teach her and her sisters home economics. This could be seen as something of little but the importance of upbringing is undeniable:

'How much money do you expect for it?' Mrs Touchett asked of her companion, who had brought her to sit in the front parlour, which she had inspected without enthusiasm.

'I haven't the least idea,' said the girl.

'That's the second time you have said that to me,' her aunt rejoined. 'And yet you don't look at all stupid.'

'I'm not stupid; but I don't know anything about money.'

'Yes, that's the way you were brought up - as if you were to inherit a million. What have you in point of fact inherited?'

'I really can't tell you. You must ask Edmund and Lilian; they'll be back in half an hour.' (60)

We see that Isabel is still like a little girl. Although she is a grown-up one, she does not know the real world. To be able to understand the reason for that, education at

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<sup>38</sup> Mary S. Schriber, *Isabel Archer and Victorian Manners*, <http://sdu.summon.serialssolutions.com/tu-TU/search?s.q=Isabel+Archer+and+Victorian+Manners>, p.441.

that time should be revised. *The Mother's Assistant and Young Lady's Friend*\* gives ample information about the education of girl in the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

In this busy working world, women, and especially young women, seem, by common consent, to be entitled to more of the leisure and holiday of life than any other class. They are the lilies for whom others are content to toil and spin. Fathers and mothers seem willing to take labor and forethought upon themselves, to exonerate their daughters from the heavy burthens of life. Brothers set their faces bravely against the world, and struggle for fortune, that their sisters may never know a care. It is true that effort is required of them in their school-days, but it is not generally in kind or degree such as painfully to tax either mind or body; and when school is done with, if the circumstances are moderately easy, the young females of a family are generally left to employ a large portion of their time and their faculties very much as they please.<sup>39</sup>

According to the same magazine, the only thing that families cared for as regards as girls was their leisure. Isabel's father does the same for his daughters and he keeps his daughters out from difficulties of life:

It had been a very happy life and she had been a very fortunate person - this was the truth that seemed to emerge most vividly. She had had the best of everything, and in a world in which the circumstances of so many people made them unenviable it was an advantage never to have known anything particularly unpleasant. It appeared to Isabel that the unpleasant had been even too absent from her knowledge, for she had gathered from her acquaintance with literature that it was often a source of interest and even of instruction. Her father had kept it away from her - her handsome, much-loved father, who always had such an aversion to it. It was a great felicity to have been his daughter; Isabel rose even to pride in her parentage. (67)

Isabel does not feel disturbed about lack of a formal education; moreover, she regards herself to be lucky. She does not know anything unpleasant and she only learns everything from the books that she reads. Elizabeth Sabiston in her article "The Prison of Womanhood" points out Isabel's conflict:

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\* The education of girls was of special interest to readers of *The Mother's Assistant and Young Lady's Friend*, especially since the magazine was aimed at young women, as well as adults. "Love of Nature" from the magazine emphasizes a theme important to 19th-century parents: girls shouldn't learn "worldliness" along with everything else, August 1853, p. 58, <http://www.merrycoz.org/articles/LOVNBATUR.HTM>, (05.02.2012).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

She is the victim not only of the conflict between herself and the external world, but also of a tension between opposites in her own character: an idealism uninformed by knowledge of reality, and particularly of evil; a thirst for experience coupled with fastidiousness and a tendency to surrender to outside forces.<sup>40</sup>

Social environment involve upbringing as well as education. Education is as important as one's upbringing style. Virginia Woolf could not go to school but she thought that school "provides a 'standard of comparison,' she was never 'able to compare... [her] gifts and defects with other people's.'"<sup>41</sup>

Virginia Woolf did not have a chance like Isabel. She always wanted to go to school but in the nineteenth century in England, the education of girls was in the background:

[...] Virginia was not afforded the opportunity to attend school like her brothers. This wasn't unusual for the time, but it was something Virginia never quite seemed able to forget. Despite becoming perhaps one of the most intelligent writers of the Twentieth Century, Virginia Woolf always thought of herself as ill educated.<sup>42</sup>

Although Virginia Woolf and Isabel Archer lived in the same period, the environment around them was different. While educating girls was not important in England at that time, it had more significance in America.

Isabel is sent to a Dutch House for her primary education but she protests the rules of the school. Thus, her father lets his daughter drop school when she wants it. At home, Isabel continues her education in her grandmother's library. She does not have a guiding person, for this reason she is "guided in the selection chiefly by the frontispiece" (56), and this becomes her habit. Strangely enough, she views many things from her superficial point of view. For example; she sees Madame Merle, Gilbert

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<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth Sabiston, "The Prison of Womanhood", *Comparative Literature*, vol. 25, no. 4, (Autumn; 1973), p.336.

<sup>41</sup>Betty A. Sichel; "Who is Isabel Archer?", *Long Island University* ,Stable URL: [http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/eps/PES-Yearbook/93\\_docs/SICHEL.HTM](http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/eps/PES-Yearbook/93_docs/SICHEL.HTM), qtd in Susan Douglass Franzosa, "Authoring the Educated Self: Educational Autobiography and Resistance," *Educational Theory* 42, no. 4 (Fall 1992): 395, (26.11.2010).

<sup>42</sup> "Virginia Woolf", <http://www.sparknotes.com/biography/woolf/summary.html>, (06.02.2012).

Osmond as she wants to see them. Later, she recognizes one of her mistakes that she has made:

It was because she had been under the extraordinary charm that he, on his side, had taken pains to put forth. He was not changed; he had not disguised himself, during the year of his courtship, any more than she. But she had seen only half his nature then, as one saw the disc of the moon when it was partly masked by the shadow of the earth. She saw the full moon now - she saw the whole man. She had kept still, as it were, so that he should have a free field, and yet in spite of this she had mistaken a part for the whole. (574)

Having gained many experiences, she realizes her mistakes. We could conclude that lack of proper education contributes to her poor decisions in life. Isabel's educating herself through novels in a library cannot be enough for her to make true decisions.

For a person's environment, the most important section belongs to the community she/he is part of it. In other words, people around a person have a big influence on his/her character. In *POL*, social interaction is so noticeable that a close look reveals the importance of social interaction. Isabel and her sisters grow up among people who do not read any books and do not care about the education of children and their moral values. They become very independent. The telegram of Mrs. Touchett, "Changed hotel, very bad, impudent clerk, address here. Taken sister's girl, died last year, go to Europe, two sisters, quite independent"(42) tells us about the first striking feature of her niece. Isabel also attaches some characteristics of herself to her social environment:

She was very critical herself – it was incidental to her age, her sex and her nationality; but she was very sentimental as well, and there was something in Mrs Touchett's dryness that set her own moral fountains flowing. (101)

After going to Europe with her aunt Mrs. Touchett to gain an experience, her change is not as expected. Her new environment does not help her development. In her article, "Who is Isabel Archer?" Betty A. Sichel claims that her cousin Ralph, Mr. and Mrs. Touchett do not contribute much to Isabel Archer's development.

Her Aunt thought that a visit to Gardencourt, to Paris to purchase clothes, and to Florence was sufficient. Ralph thought that providing Isabel with a fortune would be sufficient. They were all wrong. An education requires other more important components. An education requires others who care for and contribute to one's development. Isabel Archer did not have any of these others. It was no wonder that her education misfired.<sup>43</sup>

Neither of them, nor Isabel herself, ever mentions her education. It is not even being mentioned. But again, her all previous surroundings change and willingly or unwillingly, she changes substantially towards the end of the novel; she even accepts her own change:

'He'll soon give you a chance', said Henrietta. Isabel offered no answer to this assertion, which her companion made with an air of great confidence.

'He'll find you changed,' the latter pursued. 'You've been affected by your new surroundings.'

'Very likely. I'm affected by everything.' (150)

Like Isabel, her cousin Ralph also changes despite all his father's efforts. Mr. Touchett wants his son to receive his education in America in order not to lose his American identity. However, Mr. Touchett's wish does not come true because after going to the University of Oxford, Ralph forgets his American education and becomes English enough.

[...] by sending the boy home for his education. Ralph spent several terms at an American school and took a degree at an American university, after which, as he struck his father on his return as even redundantly native, he was placed for some three years in residence at Oxford. Oxford swallowed up Harvard, and Ralph became at last English enough. (73)

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<sup>43</sup> Betty A. Sichel; "Who is Isabel Archer?", *Long Island University*, Stable URL: [http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/eps/PES-Yearbook/93\\_docs/SICHEL.HTM](http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/eps/PES-Yearbook/93_docs/SICHEL.HTM), Quoted in Susan Douglass Franzosa, "Authoring the Educated Self: Educational Autobiography and Resistance," *Educational Theory* 42, no. 4 (Fall 1992): 395, (26.11.2010).

When Ralph returns to England, he again puts his English identity on him. This shows that with the social environment, the character changes together. Both Ralph's social and physical environment change, so he has to adapt to a new environment.

In effect, social environment includes more than one term; upbringing, education, sex, age, nationality, the community, income level. Our protagonist, Isabel could be understood if she is taken as a whole. Thus, we have analyzed her from a few angles. We have seen that from her past to the present, her social surroundings are in a relationship with the character. In fact, it is her surroundings that shape her and make her what she is at the end of the novel.

### **3.1.1.2. Madame Merle**

Madame Merle is another expatriate who is the most beautiful example for the impact of the social environment on the characters in the novel. With her physical and social environment, she undergoes a big change as well. Mme Merle is so much affected by her new environment that she loses her American identity. Physiognomy, speeches and behaviours of Mme Merle do not reflect her own community.

'You don't think I disturbed Mr Touchett then?' the musician answered as sweetly as this compliment deserved. 'The house is so large and his room so far away that I thought I might venture, especially as I played just - just *du bout des doigts*.'

'She's a Frenchwoman,' Isabel said to herself; 'she says that as if she were French. 'And this supposition made the visitor more interesting to our speculative heroine. (245)

We see that Mme Merle changes so much that Isabel cannot understand Mme Merle's nationality at their first meeting. She uses French phrases in her speech abundantly. Therefore, Isabel supposes Mme Merle was French but she understands later she is an American when she says:

'That's very well; we're compatriots.' And then she began to play.

'Ah, then she's not French,' Isabel murmured; and as the opposite supposition had made her romantic it might have seemed that this revelation would have marked a drop. But such was not the fact; rarer

even than to be French seemed it to be American on such interesting terms. (246)

Mme Merle claims that every human being has a shell. Thus, we should take this shell into account. The shell contains our house, furniture, dressing styles, the books we read and other things. There are so many surroundings around us that we cannot count.

'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. 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"? 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! One's self - for other people - is one's expression of one's self; and one's house, one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps - these things are all expressive .' (283)

All these things represent our “self”, and we can know people from people’s surroundings. H. James in his book aims to show that everything that belongs to people helps us to know people better.

### **3.1.1.3. Gilbert Osmond and the Countess Gemini**

Gilbert Osmond is one of the most important characters of H. James. He strikes the readers of *POL* deeply but in a negative way. It does not take long for the reader to see him as the incarnation of evil. Since he is a villain man and more interestingly, he harms people not physically but psychologically, destroying their spirit.

His profound intelligence allows him to shape other people – Pansy, Madame Merle, Isabel – almost without them realizing that he’s doing it. In the case of Madame Merle, his victim doesn’t see how much he has worked upon her until it’s far too late, and she feels as though he’s crushed her soul. If this were a comic book and he were actually a legitimate super-villain (as perhaps he’d like to be), he wouldn’t have any flashy powers, like super-strength or whatever – oh, no, Osmond would totally have dangerous mind-control capabilities.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> “Gilbert Osmond”, <http://www.shmoop.com/portrait-of-a-lady/gilbert-osmond.html>, (16.03.2011).

It is really eye-catching that Mr. Osmond and his sister, the Countess Gemini carry some similar features. Like Osmond, the Countess does not care what others think of her. She is so easy-going that she puts into words this:

It was at his house in Florence; do you remember that afternoon when she brought you there and we had tea in the garden? She let me know then that if I should tell tales two could play at that game. She pretends there's a good deal more to tell about me than about her. It would be an interesting comparison! I don't care a fig what she may say, simply because I know you don't care a fig. You can't trouble your head about me less than you do already. (730)

The Countess Gemini is not regarded as clever as Mr. Osmond but in fact, she is very intelligent. She analyses everything in her mind her own way. She discovers the forbidden relation between Mr. Osmond and Mme Merle. She is aware of their illegitimate child, Pansy. She has been watching them all her life: "I've watched them for years; I know everything -everything. I'm thought a great scatterbrain, but I've had enough application of mind to follow up those two" (730).

All these things discussed above are partially linked to both their heredity and their social environment. Growing up in the same environment also clarifies the reason of their likeness.

[...] in the 1980s, a researcher named Robert Plomin published a surprising paper in which he reviewed the three main ways psychologists had studied siblings: physical characteristics, intelligence and personality. According to Plomin, in two of these areas, siblings were really quite similar.<sup>45</sup>

As Robert Plomin has said above, G. Osmond and his sister have been raised in the same environment by the same mother. So, they have some common personality. The effect of this is stated in the book:

Her mother, who had bristled with pretensions to elegant learning and published descriptive poems and corresponded on Italian subjects with the English weekly journals, her mother had died three years after the

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<sup>45</sup> Alix Spiegel, "Siblings Share Genes, But Rarely Personalities", <http://www.npr.org/2010/11/18/131424595/siblings-share-genes-but-rarely-personalities>,(08.02.2012).



Countess's marriage, the father, lost in the grey American dawn of the situation, but reputed originally rich and wild, having died much earlier. One could see this in Gilbert Osmond, Madame Merle held - see that he had been brought up by a woman; though, to do him justice, one would suppose it had been by a more sensible woman than the American Corinne, as Mrs Osmond had liked to be called. She had brought her children to Italy after her husband's death, and Mrs Touchett remembered her during the year that followed her arrival. She thought her a horrible snob; but this was an irregularity of judgement on Mrs Touchett's part, for she, like Mrs Osmond, approved of political marriages. (386)

He marries Isabel aiming to benefit from his marriage. Mr. Osmond wants a marriage hold on expediency rather than love and he shares with Mme Merle his conditions for marriage:

Is she beautiful, clever, rich, splendid, universally intelligent and unprecedentedly virtuous? It's only on these conditions that I care to make her acquaintance. You know I asked you some time ago never to speak to me of a creature who shouldn't correspond to that description. I know plenty of dingy people; I don't want to know any more. (333)

In terms of social environment, G. Osmond is surrounded by foreign people and culture. He is brought up by his poet and writer mother. Possibly; Osmond's artistic talent comes from his mother. More or less, everything and everyone in his life are connected with him.

#### **3.1.1.4. Pansy Osmond**

Pansy Osmond is Mr. Osmond's only beloved daughter. We should state that Pansy is the most striking character of *POL* in terms of social environment.

"Nature versus nurture"\* debate arises again when we have Pansy as the main part of this activity. In contrast to her mother and father, she has a good spirit. It cannot be explained by nature because her parents are far from being role models for her.

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\* The nature versus nurture debate concerns the relative importance of an individual's innate qualities versus personal experiences in determining or causing individual differences in physical and behavioural traits. The phrase "Nature versus nurture" in its modern sense was coined by the English Victorian polymath Francis

However, everyone seeing Pansy for the first time thinks her as an angel. For instance, “at her first meeting with Pansy, Isabel, who is not yet involved in the fate of Gilbert Osmond's daughter, observes that there is something not quite natural about Pansy”<sup>46</sup>. Even a woman who is fond of her liberty, such as Isabel is affected by her innocence.

Even the little girl from the convent, who, in her prim white dress, with her small submissive face and her hands locked before her, stood there as if she were about to partake of her first communion, even Mr Osmond's diminutive daughter had a kind of finish that was not entirely artless. (353)

Unlike Osmond, Pansy is a completely submissive, decent and an innocent girl. As her father has stated, she is “a little convent flower” (354). Osmond wants her daughter to grow up in a convent. Thus, she would be far away from this real bad world. Alfred Habegger describes as follows: *The Portrait's* convent is not so much a female refuge from worldly pressures as an indoctrination center that does the work of willful tyrants, in Pansy's case transforming an irregularly conceived child into a model girl-woman.<sup>47</sup>

Edwin Sill Fussell asserts that “unlike Isabel Archer, and very like Henry James, Gilbert Osmond is a consummate master of Catholic *tone* (but Henry James is a consummate master *of him*).”<sup>48</sup> For this reason he sends his daughter to a convent for her education. Edwin Sill Fussell also continues his speech “if Osmond is a Catholic he is a very bad one. Perhaps he is only a Catholic-monger,[...]”<sup>49</sup> Even in terms of religion, he only thinks of himself:

'Oh, I don't quarrel with your system; I've no doubt it's excellent. I sent you my daughter to see what you'd make of her. I had faith.'

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Galton in discussion of the influence of heredity and environment on social advancement. See for a detailed information <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nature\\_vs\\_nurture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nature_vs_nurture)>, (16.03.2011)

<sup>46</sup> Marjorie Perloff, “Cinderella Becomes the Wicked Stepmother: The Portrait of a Lady as Ironic Fairy Tale”, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 23, No. 4 (Mar., 1969), University of California Press, p. 421.

<sup>47</sup> Alfred Habegger, *Henry James and the “Woman Business”*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2004, p.158.

<sup>48</sup> Edwin Sill Fussell, *The Catholic Side of Henry James*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2008, p.142.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

'One must have faith,' the sister blandly rejoined, gazing through her spectacles.

'Well, has my faith been rewarded? What have you made of her?' (322)

Pansy becomes after Osmond's own heart and she is ready to do whatever his father wants. "Pansy emerges from this careful cultivation as the supreme success of Osmond's life – a perfect work of art, uninfluenced by anyone but him – innocent, beautiful, and shockingly mindless."<sup>50</sup> She even does not cross the line that her father has drawn. While seeing Isabel off, she stops at the door and says: "I may go no further. I've promised papa not to pass this door" (433).

Our "little convent-flower", Pansy's all world is her father, sisters in the convent. She knows nobody else. As discussed above, her social and physical environment is restricted with all these things. Only when she comes out of the convent, she begins to observe quietly the people around her and acquires ideas of her own, though not explicitly but implicitly.

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<sup>50</sup> "Pansy Osmond", <http://www.shmoop.com/portrait-of-a-lady/pansy-osmond.html>, (16.03.2011).

### 3.1.2 Physical Environment

The main starting point of our thesis is to show the relation between the physical environment and characters. There is an intense tie between characters and the physical environment in *POL*.

How social environment has an influence on characters, physical environment also has the same power. There is a science field named Environmental Psychology which “deals with behaviour in relation to the physical environment. The physical environment includes material objects, plants, animals and human beings.”<sup>51</sup> The places, countries, and even buildings in which people live are linked to characteristics of people. Normally, in *POL*, the readers completely feel effects of those places. Not only places affect characters but also places are shaped according to characters’ moods by the author. In his article, “Place and the novelist”, D. C. D. Pocock also asserts this relation in the abstract:

Novelists in their autobiographical and imaginative writings illuminate various aspects of the mutual inter-action between man and environment. Early or home place, with its formative and restorative qualities, has at the same time an ambiguity such that it exists in dialectical relationship to subsequent place. In the symbiotic relationship between man and environment, place may be considered as people, and people as place.<sup>52</sup>

In English literature, according to D. C. D. Pocock “during the second quarter of the nineteenth century the novelist's pen began more fully to depict particular localities, thereby giving rise to the genre of the English regional novel.”<sup>53</sup>

The 1883 book, *Portraits of Places* contains the writer’s topographical essays of his travels in Italy, France, and England during 1876–1882. For Henry James, the description of physical environment is very significant. He describes countries, people living there, culture, and their impressions on him. In *POL*, there are the same countries; but for this time, countries, buildings, cultures and their impressions on characters are so

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<sup>51</sup> “Environmental Psychology”, V. George Mathew, Ph.D., <http://www.psychology4all.com/environmentalpsychology.htm>, (17.03.2012).

<sup>52</sup> D. C. D. POCOCK, “Place and the novelist”, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Blackwell Publishing, New Series, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1981), p. 337.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, qtd in P. Bentley, (1941) *The English regional novel* (London); K. Tillotson, (1954) *Novelists of the 1840s* (London).

harmonic that without taking them into consideration it is difficult for the readers to realize that coherence. Thus, in the following chapter, some countries, regions, buildings in the book will be examined.

### 3.1.2.1. The Old and the New World

Most of Henry James's novels are set in Europe, and most bulk of *POL* also takes place in Europe. Leon Edel in his biographic book, *Henry James*, explains Henry James is interested in the differences between the Old World and the New One. And according to Leon Edel, it is Henry James' travels since his childhood has caused this.

As he traveled, he gradually became aware of the theme that was to be central to his writings: he observed his journeying fellow-Americans in hotels and pensions, captured their sense of dislocation while trying to imbibe foreign culture; he studied particularly the itinerant American families with passive mothers and undisciplined children, and noted the absence from their lives of any standard of culture and behavior. These were the shortcomings of American innocence. On the other hand James was not blind to certain other aspects of life abroad; it is striking how often the adjective "corrupt" precedes the word "Europe" in his writings.<sup>54</sup>

As Leon Edel has stated, Henry James takes Isabel, the protagonist of *POL*, from New York to London. All her old physical environmental elements give place to completely new ones. With physical environment, Isabel's major change is observed by the reader.

While the term "New World" refers to America, the "Old World" refers to Europe. Henry James introduces Isabel, "as an independent and self-reliant character typical of the American culture".<sup>55</sup> As stated, this is not only for Isabel; all Americans are fond of their liberty like her. In the book, the news about Isabel's being an independent woman comes to Gardencourt before her arrival. In Mrs. Touchett's telegram she writes: "Changed hotel, very bad, impudent clerk, address here. Taken sister's girl, died last year, go to Europe, two sisters, quite independent" (42). For Mrs. Touchett, the most striking feature of her niece is her being independent.

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<sup>54</sup> Leon Edel, *Henry James*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1963, p.12.

<sup>55</sup> Inmaculada Saiz Mcelvaney, "Overlooking the International Cultural Values in *the Portrait of a Lady*", California State University Dominguez Hills, Master Thesis, Fall 2008, p.1.

Isabel's American culture "over-insistence in establishing the self-sufficiency principle in Europe brings about an inability to perceive clearly other people's intentions and thus a critical erroneous character judgment."<sup>56</sup> Though her cousin Ralph and aunt try to warn Isabel, she could not perceive Mme Merle and G. Osmond's actual intentions. Only when she gains experience, does she perceive actual events. Mary Schriber says in her article: The irony and the pathos of Isabel's story are that for all her individuality and intelligence, for all that separates her from the conventional woman as she would have it, Isabel is the daughter of Victorian America and literature.<sup>57</sup>

In a way, Mary Schriber's Isabel "the daughter of Victorian America" is right. Being a woman of the nineteenth century, she does nothing for her education but she only reads novels for fun. "Marriage, for the Victorian woman, is the most tangible chance to achieve some sort of social status."<sup>58</sup> Although Caspar Goodwood is an American, he thinks a woman can gain her freedom only by marrying.

'Who would wish less to curtail your liberty than I? What can give me greater pleasure than to see you perfectly independent - doing whatever you like? It's to make you independent that I want to marry you.

'That's a beautiful sophism, ' said the girl with a smile more beautiful still.

'An unmarried woman "- a girl of your age - isn't independent. There are all sorts of things she can't do. She's hampered at every step. '

'That's as she looks at the question,' Isabel answered with much spirit. 'I'm not in my first youth - I can do what I choose - I belong quite to the independent class. (231)

This dialogue between Isabel and Goodwood shows that they are children of a typical Victorian America. Possibly, Caspar Goodwood says these sentences to persuade Isabel to marry him, but at the same time, he must be right for his time.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Mary S. Schriber, *Isabel Archer and Victorian Manners*, <http://sdu.summon.serialssolutions.com/tu-TU/search?s.q=Isabel+Archer+and+Victorian+Manners>, p.443-44.

<sup>58</sup> Inmaculada Saiz Mcelvaney, "Overlooking the International Cultural Values in *the Portrait of a Lady*", California State University Dominguez Hills, Master Thesis, Fall 2008, p.3.

In *POL*, Mr. and Mrs. Touchett, Ralph, Osmond and Mme Merle are expatriate characters. All these characters except for Mr. Touchett lose their national identities far from their country America.

The old gentleman at the tea-table, who had come from America thirty years before, had brought with him, at the top of his baggage, his American physiognomy; and he had not only brought it with him, but he had kept it in the best order, so that, if necessary, he might have taken it back to his own country with perfect confidence. (33-34)

Besides, Henrietta and Caspar Goodwood protect their identities since they continue living in their countries. It is seen that the psychologies, the ways of thinking and the manners of the characters change substantially with the physical environment.

In the novel, many places have influence on many of the characters. The characters that come from the New World to the Old World experience this impact.

### 3.1.2.2. Italy

In H. James' private life, Italy always had special place in his life. L. Edel in *Henry James*, emphasizes the importance of Italian cities in H. James' life:

[...] he traveled neither to Spain nor to the Isles of Greece; he only briefly visited the Low Countries, and on two trips cast a hurried glance at Munich. The capitals in Jamesian geography, extending from the New World to the Old, were Boston and New York, London, Paris, and Rome. Florence and Venice were way stations. And occasionally James explored the rural scenery of these countries.<sup>59</sup>

James travelled through Italy from late 1886 until the spring of 1887 and he also resided in Venice and Florence. European experience of H. James is felt by the reader in many of his works but "the Italian portion of that experience played a definite role in James's writing."<sup>60</sup>

As H. James wrote in the preface for the 2004 Collector's Library Edition of *The Portrait of a Lady*, he began writing the novel while staying in Italy. "The Portrait of a

<sup>59</sup> Leon Edel, *Henry James*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1963, p.13.

<sup>60</sup> Umberto Mariani, "The Italian Experience of Henry James", *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, University of California Press, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Dec., 1964), p.237.

Lady was, like Roderick Hudson, begun in Florence, during three months spent there in the spring of 1879”(9). The environment in Florence affects him so deeply that his own words point out his excitement:

I recall vividly enough that the response most elicited, in general, to these restless appeals was the rather grim admonition that romantic and historic sites, such as the land of Italy abounds in, offer the artist a questionable aid to concentration when they themselves are not to be the subject of it. They are too rich in their own life and too charged with their own meanings merely to help him out with a lame phrase; they draw him away from his small question to their own greater ones; so that, after a little, he feels, while thus yearning toward them in his difficulty, as if he were asking an army of glorious veterans to help him to arrest a pedlar who has given him the wrong change. (10)

If H. James is influenced by the environment so much, it is impossible for his characters not to be affected by it either. In *POL*, it is seen that Italian cities like Rome and Florence move to the foreground. However, Umberto Mariani asserts that “In *The Portrait of a Lady* the role of the Italian landscape is of much less importance than in *Roderick Hudson*. Once more, setting and atmosphere do not reach the depth and resonance of a real set of symbols...”<sup>61</sup>

Umberto Mariani cannot deny the roles of Florence and Rome again. “The imagery still tends towards the obvious and the evocations toward the rhetorical (e.g., life on the hilltop in Florence and in the Palazzo Roccanera in Rome, the pseudo-facade of the villa, etc.)”<sup>62</sup>

In Chapter 19, when Mme Merle speaks about Osmond for the first time, we learn that he lived in Italy. According to Mme Merle, giving that information about Osmond would be enough to know him:

He's Gilbert Osmond - he lives in Italy; that's all one can say about him or make of him. He's exceedingly clever, a man made to be distinguished; but, as I tell you, you exhaust the description when you say he's Mr Osmond who lives *tout bêtement* in Italy. No career, no name, no position, no fortune, no past, no future, no anything. Oh yes, he paints, if you please - paints in watercolours; like me, only better

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p.249.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.



than I. His painting's pretty bad; on the whole I'm rather glad of that. Fortunately he's very indolent, so indolent that it amounts to a sort of position. He can say, "Oh, I do nothing; I'm too deadly lazy. You can do nothing today unless you get up at five o'clock in the morning." In that way he becomes a sort of exception; you feel he might do something if he'd only rise early. (278)

Mme Merle associates Osmond's laziness with the place in which he lives. Osmond's life is quite simple and he has no distinctive property. In the novel, Italy, specifically Florence becomes "the nest of bachelor Gilbert Osmond and his daughter, Pansy,"<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, Florence acts as an escape place for Mrs Touchett. She lives apart from Mr Touchett, they maintain their marriage in different residences. While Mrs. Touchett lives in Florence, her husband lives in England.

However, according to Agostino Lombardo, "Italy is solitude and renunciation; Italy is a stage where men and objects wear masks, creating a show in the presence of which the American 'dreamers' find themselves . . . face to face with history"<sup>64</sup> Eric Harolson and Kendal Johnson's thoughts are also parallel with the view of A. Lombardo:

James's great novel uses Florence as the site of the narcissistic aunt Lydia Touchett's continental villa as well as the residence of Gilbert Osmond and his sister, Countess Gemini, née Susan Osmond (with "Gemini" suggesting false doubleness or duplicity), and the perch of Madame Serena Merle.[...]<sup>65</sup>

In fact, H. James puts all these characters into Florence deliberately. Interestingly, "Florence's history and architecture establish a suffocating and ominous atmosphere and the taint of sexual intrigue tied to Madame Merle and Osmond's sister, the Countess Gemini [...]"<sup>66</sup> Like, Mrs. Touchett, Osmond sees Florence as a place to get away from trouble. Florence gives these characters pleasure, boon, and release.

In an effort to leave Mme Merle, he has gone to Florence to start a "better" (if not less selfish) life, and Florence is just the place where Isabel, at the end of her restless wandering through the Old World, will

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<sup>63</sup> E. Harolson and K. Johnson, *Critical Companion to Henry James: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*, Facts on File, the United States of America, 2009, p. 391.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p.358, qtd in Lombardo, Agostino. "Italy and the Artist in Henry James." In Tuttleton and Lombardo, p.236.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p.392.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

conceive that sense of duty and generosity which inspires her to help Osmond. It will be Rome, instead, that will witness the wretched future of her illusion.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, Isabel decides to endure her psychological suffering in Rome. “Recognizing the ruins of Rome as a place of human suffering, Isabel comes to an understanding of her own share in that suffering.”<sup>68</sup>

Isabel experiences comebacks twice and each return terminates at “Rome as a particularly appropriate ‘historic’ setting for the type of metaphorical ‘fall’ described by Hawthorne and James.”<sup>69</sup> Just as Henry James’ Rome in *POL*, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Rome in *The Marble Faun* is also full of sorrow, pain, and fall.

In *POL*, Rome turns to a torture place for Isabel and her stepdaughter Pansy. “Osmond sends Pansy back to the more literal convent in Rome whenever his control over her existence weakens.”<sup>70</sup> Osmond is like a prison officer, Pansy is like a prisoner. Whenever he wants to punish her, he locks up her in the convent in Rome.

Italy is one of the major places of H. James’s novels. In *POL*, there is an irrefutable connection between characters and Italy, especially Rome and Florence. Isabel, Mme Merle, Pansy, the Countess Gemini, Ralph, Lord Warburton, Edward Rosier and even Gilbert Osmond suffer in Italy.

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<sup>67</sup> Umberto Mariani, “The Italian Experience of Henry James”, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, University of California Press, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Dec., 1964), p.249.

<sup>68</sup> Sigi Jöttkandt, Ed. Henry Sussman, *Acting Beautifully*, State University of New York Press, United States of America, p.4.

<sup>69</sup> Katherine L. Morrison, “Hawthorne’s *The Marble Faun* as a Modular Influence on James’s Development of the International Novel culminating in *The Portrait of a Lady*”, Unpublished Master Thesis, Sir George Williams University, Montreal, Canada, September 1971, p.89-90.

<sup>70</sup> Gregory N. Munce, “Roman Catholicism and Form in Three Novels of Henry James”, McMaster University, September 1969, p.48.

### 3.1.3. The Architecture that H. James Created

#### 3.1.3.1. Gardencourt

H. James opens and closes his masterpiece, *POL*, at Gardencourt. It is mansion set in a large estate and it belongs to the Touchetts. Gardencourt is initially full of peace and light for Isabel Archer and the reader. The most striking feature of Gardencourt is absolutely its architectural style. As Henry James states Gardencourt has the biggest place in the picture that he draws: “The house that rose beyond the lawn was a structure to repay such consideration and was the most characteristic object in the peculiarly English picture I have attempted to sketch” (32).

From the very beginning to the very end of the novel, Gardencourt continues to be a significant place for Isabel. When she arrives in England, she finds herself at Gardencourt. H. James prepares a pleasant, nice and an interesting location for his protagonist.

The front of the house overlooking that portion of the lawn with which we are concerned was not the entrance-front; this was in quite another quarter. Privacy here reigned supreme, and the wide carpet of turf that covered the level hilltop seemed but the extension of a luxurious interior. The great still oaks and beeches flung down a shade as dense as that of velvet curtains; and the place was furnished, like a room, with cushioned seats, with rich-coloured rugs, with the books and papers that lay upon the grass. The river was at some distance; where the ground began to slope the lawn, properly speaking, ceased. But it was none the less a charming walk down to the water. (33)

Alongside with being beautiful, this historical and magnificent building in the exposition of the novel stands for the symbol of Mr. Touchett’s success. The old man comes from America and he achieves to protect his American physiognomy in the best order. His physiognomy even tells his successes:

At present, obviously, nevertheless, he was not likely to displace himself; his journeys were over and he was taking the rest that precedes the great rest. He had a narrow, clean-shaven face, with features evenly distributed and an expression of placid acuteness. It was evidently a face in which the range of representation was not large, so that the air of contented shrewdness was all the more of a merit. It seemed to tell that he had been successful in life, yet it seemed to tell also that his success had not been exclusive and invidious, but had had much of the inoffensiveness of failure. (34)

Like this old gentleman, his estate also witnessed many events. As these experiences could be understood from Mr. Touchett's face, the weary bricks of Gardencourt seem to stand for his life. This old house has a long history and a glorious name. Its history goes back to Edward VI and it hosts some important people and this makes the house precious. However, because of some difficult periods, it is damaged. Mr Touchett who knows Gardencourt's the aesthetic value buys it and gives the value that it deserves.

The house had a name and a history; the old gentleman taking his tea would have been delighted to tell you these things: how it had been built under Edward VI, had offered a night's hospitality to the great Elizabeth (whose august person had extended itself upon a huge, magnificent and terribly angular bed which still formed the principal honour of the sleeping apartments), had been a good deal bruised and defaced in Cromwell's wars, and then, under the Restoration, repaired and much enlarged; and how, finally, after having been remodelled and disfigured in the eighteenth century, it had passed into the careful keeping of a shrewd American banker, who had bought it originally because (owing to circumstances too complicated to set forth) it was offered at a great bargain: bought it with much grumbling at its ugliness, its antiquity, its incommodity, and who now, at the end of twenty years, had become conscious of a real aesthetic passion for it, so that he knew all its points and would tell you just where to stand to see them in combination and just the hour when the shadows of its various protuberances - which fell so softly upon the warm, weary brickwork - were of the right measure. (32-33)

Gardencourt and its owner stand up to all difficulties, so they extend their lifespan. Mr. Touchett "serves as proof of the curative power of architecture."<sup>71</sup> As well as this historical English estate is strengthened by an American banker, this building also presents all its beauty for him.

"The setting conveys the idea of a positive exchange between American and European culture."<sup>72</sup> In this way, H. James signals the reader to the future relationship between America and Europe. He also shows us the significance of a building. The houses of H. James embrace hidden meanings.

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<sup>71</sup> Sarah Luria, "The Architecture of Manners: Henry James, Edith Wharton, and the Mount", *American Quarterly*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Vol. 49, No. 2 (Jun., 1997), p.322.

<sup>72</sup> Juliane Blank, "The Architectural Principle in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*", Seminar Paper, Institut für Anglistik/ Amerikanistik, FSU Jena, 16 March 2006, p.5.

Both Mr. Touchett and his estate carry weight with Isabel, because both of them take her under their wings. Furthermore they bring new big opportunities for her. Olga Zhdanova argues how Isabel missed all these opportunities:

The new dwelling – Gardencourt – offers the entirely new opportunities and stands as a house that transforms the fate of a romantic young heroine. The pastoral pleasures of the setting of Gardencourt provide a lot of prospects of unknown horizons, release, and freedom, with amplitude of space for aspirations to soar. Isabel will never be freer than when she first comes to Gardencourt; however she is far from appreciating it. She sees it only as romantic and picturesque when pursues her childish idea to see a ghost in this old house. A safe haven where things are what they seem to be – Gardencourt – soon is rejected by Isabel Archer because she cannot judge houses correctly as well as people.<sup>73</sup>

Unfortunately, Isabel lacks realistic perception, and for this reason she cannot appreciate Gardencourt sufficiently. According to Edwin T. Bowden, Isabel’s unlucky end is because of “a flaw in her esthetic attitudes (her interest in human ‘specimens,’ ‘romantic effects,’ ‘picturesque’ revolutions); it is her own tendency to view life in terms of art that renders her blind to”<sup>74</sup> all things around her.

Ralph Touchett realizes her romantic viewpoint and warns Isabel to change her romantic ideas about the house. She insists on her own point of view:

'Please tell me - isn't there a ghost?' she went on.

'A ghost?'

'A castle-spectre, a thing that appears. We call them ghosts in America.'

'So we do here, when we see them.'

'You do see them then? You ought to, in this romantic old house.'

'It's not a romantic old house,' said Ralph. 'You'll be disappointed if you count on that.'

'It's a dimly prosaic one; there's no romance here but what you may have brought with you.'

'I've brought a great deal; but it seems to me I've brought it to the right place.' (85)

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<sup>73</sup> Olga Zhdanova, *Life-Journeys: a Feminist Reading of Henry James's The Portrait of a Lady and Olha Kobylianska's The Princess*, Yeditepe University, Unpublished Master Thesis, Istanbul 2010, p.33.

<sup>74</sup> Elaine Coulter, "The Themes of Henry James by Edwin T. Bowden; Henry James" *The New England Quarterly*, The New England Quarterly, Inc Vol. 30, No. 3 (Sep., 1957), p.415.

Isabel looks at her surrounding as if she were still reading a novel. So, she looks at Gardencourt and only she hopes to see a ghost. As Elizabeth B. Machlan states, Isabel “knows nothing about architecture, immediately places Gardencourt in a literary, as opposed to a historical, context.”<sup>75</sup>

It is no wonder that Gardencourt is worth much more than that. This architecture was built by the author for some purpose. At first, Isabel finds Gardencourt so much beautiful that she thinks herself in a novel. In fact, this nuance shows that Isabel will catch some opportunities. Firstly, she gets a proposal from Lord Warburton and this proposal is not a casual one. As Isabel stated he is “a lord; it's just like a novel!”(46).

The second opportunity that she gets is the unexpected inheritance, seventy thousand pounds. Mr. Touchett leaves it to Isabel thanks to Ralph. Isabel could not even imagine such a good fortune. When she hears the news, she suddenly bursts into tears (294). Her new mansion, Gardencourt opens its doors to Isabel completely.

Gardencourt is the starting point of every action in Isabel’s life. She does not have a stable house. Whenever she feels her independence is in danger, she set out in search of a new place.

In *Portrait*, houses do not only set the scene; they suggest a course of action. How much power Isabel has at any point in the novel directly correlates with how free she is to leave-or stay-wherever she currently resides. While there are in fact "plenty of houses," lack of her own dwelling becomes Isabel's biggest liability, and her resistance to established forms creates a kind of prison. Still, she is never freer than when she first comes to Gardencourt. As if vicariously enjoying his heroine's newfound independence, James temporarily derails the marriage plot in favor of a more complex narrative, [...].<sup>76</sup>

Gardencourt is like a “court” for Isabel rather than “a garden”. She slowly becomes aware of that condition which is very strange to her, here, there are some rules, conventions and she is expected to obey them:

'You can't stay alone with the gentlemen. You're not— you're not at your blest Albany, my dear.'

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<sup>75</sup> Elizabeth Boyle Machlan, “ ‘There are Plenty of Houses’: Architecture and Genre in *The Portrait of a Lady*”, *Studies in the Novel*, Volume 37, number 4 (Winter 2005), the University of North Texas, 2005, p. 396.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

Isabel rose, blushing. 'I wish I were,' she said.  
'Oh, I say, mother!' Ralph broke out.  
'My dear Mrs Touchett!' Lord Warburton murmured.  
'I didn't make your country, my lord,' Mrs Touchett said majestically. 'I must take it as I find it.'  
'Can't I stay with my own cousin?' Isabel enquired.  
'I'm not aware that Lord Warburton is your cousin.' (111)

When Mrs. Touchett says “you're not at your blest Albany”, she answers: “I wish I were,” because she feels very uneasy about the rules imposed on her. We see in *POL* many times, when the marriage proposals increase, leaving her present dwelling is the only way for Isabel. Just before she leaves her grandmother’s house in Albany, Gardencourt and her aunt’s house in Florence, she comes across a marriage proposal.

Whatever happens, it is the reality that in our characters’ lives Gardencourt is one of touchstones. While we think we will not see Gardencourt again in *POL*, H. James brings the protagonist Isabel there. H. James wants us to realize the difference between the former Isabel and the later Isabel. The author prefers expressing this reality implicitly rather than explicitly.

### **3.1.3.2. Isabel Archer’s Grandmother’s House**

We first meet Isabel Archer at Albany; New York in an old house which belongs to her grandmother. We see that this architecture is very significant for us to be able to understand Isabel as a whole. For this reason, in chapter 3, the author takes the reader away Albany before it is too late.

Monica O. V. claims that the contrast of American and European cultures is to be seen in the first two houses; Isabel’s grandmother’s house in Albany and Gardencourt:

The house and most importantly the room in which aunt Lydia found Isabel reading, fondly called ‘*the office*’, represents America with her ‘officiousness’ and ‘business or materialistic’ consciousness; her bureaucratic and democratic nature. To America belong lecture halls and podiums and in her lacks the great palaces, cottages and country houses, cathedrals and ancestral houses. And the environment in which

the only remarkable figure is 'the Dutch House ...with it's rickety wooden paling ...occupying school children', cannot produce a challenge to Isabel's pursuit of the high ideals of culture that pleases James's imagination.<sup>77</sup>

This building also tells us about Isabel's past and future. We learn the shaping of Isabel's American character which will be so active in the novel, her economic condition, her childhood and reminiscences of the house. It will be held later how her future is also foretold by the house. The condition of house is given in detailed by the author:

It was in an old house at Albany, a large, square, double house, with a notice of sale in the windows of one of the lower apartments. There were two entrances, one of which had long been out of use but had never been removed. They were exactly alike - large white doors, with an arched frame and wide sidelights, perched upon little 'stoops' of red stone, which descended sidewise to the brick pavement of the street. The two houses together formed a single dwelling, the party wall having been removed and the rooms placed in communication. These rooms, above-stairs, were extremely numerous, and were painted all over exactly alike, in a yellowish white which had grown sallow with time. On the third floor there was a sort of arched passage, connecting the two sides of the house, which Isabel and her sisters used in their childhood to call the tunnel, and which, though it was short and well lighted, always seemed to the girl to be strange and lonely, especially on winter afternoons. (54)

There was a notice of sale in the windows because Isabel's father wasted a great fortune by gambling and feasting. Thus, the financial situation of Isabel Archer could be estimated by the reader. At this old house, Mrs. Touchett finds her niece while she is reading a book alone. Mrs. Touchett tells Ralph about her first meeting day with Isabel:

I found her in an old house in Albany, 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. (79-80)

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<sup>77</sup> Monica O. V. Ike, *The Clash of Cultures in Henry James: The Portrait of a Lady, The Wings of The Dove and Daisy Miller*, Master's Project, University of Constance, April 1998, p.24.



The room in which Isabel sits is described by her aunt as a “dreary room”. This room pictures the inner world of Isabel. Mrs. Touchett, like a prince, wants to rescue her from this dungeon and she manages it. But, Isabel is so accustomed to being bored that she is unaware of her present mood. She chooses a book from the library and closes herself in the office. H. James describes the place where it is impossible not to get bored:

The place owed much of its mysterious melancholy to the fact that it was properly entered from the second door of the house, the door that had been condemned, and that it was secured by bolts which a particularly slender little girl found it impossible to slide. (57)

Like Isabel, in our lives, we choose isolated places if we get bored and gradually we make friends with loneliness. But, Isabel is “assiduously feeding her mind with books whose frontispieces especially attracted her.”<sup>78</sup> Choosing the sources unknowingly is going to cause her to make a bad marriage. From the architectural style of this house, the reader also could understand her independent characteristic better.

The manner of life was different from that of her own home - larger, more plentiful, practically more festal; the discipline of the nursery was delightfully vague and the opportunity of listening to the conversation of one's elders (which with Isabel was a highly-valued pleasure) almost unbounded. (55)

She was freer at the old house of her grandmother than anywhere else in her childhood. For this reason, she likes this house even though her father died there. Peter K. Garrett states that Isabel's home and her office “create an image of imaginative self-enclosure”. Isabel goes from Albany to Gardencourt which is vaster, so the author creates a contrast between two settings. This big difference between them foretells the reader about the change which Isabel will experience in Europe.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> What Then Remains? How Henry James Architects Character in *The Portrait of a Lady*  
[http://www.google.com.tr/#hl=tr&site=&source=hp&q=What+Then+Remains%3F+How+Henry+James+A+rchitects+Character+in+The+Portrait+of+a+Lady&btnK=Google%27da+Ara&oq=&aq=&aqi=&aql=&gs\\_l=&bav=on.2,or.r\\_gc.r\\_pw.,cf.osb&fp=7ea3b83cba613f8f&biw=1280&bih=615](http://www.google.com.tr/#hl=tr&site=&source=hp&q=What+Then+Remains%3F+How+Henry+James+A+rchitects+Character+in+The+Portrait+of+a+Lady&btnK=Google%27da+Ara&oq=&aq=&aqi=&aql=&gs_l=&bav=on.2,or.r_gc.r_pw.,cf.osb&fp=7ea3b83cba613f8f&biw=1280&bih=615), p.3.

<sup>79</sup> Peter K. Garrett, “Scene and Symbol: Changing Mode in the English Novel from George Eliot to Joyce”, Yale University, 1967, Ph. D. Language and Literature, modern, University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan, p.114.

Isabel was fond of her childhood dreams, she knew the reality but she did not want to prove to herself that her own theory was wrong.

She knew that this silent, motionless portal opened into the street; if the sidelights had not been filled with green paper she might have looked out upon the little brown stoop and the well-worn brick pavement. But she had no wish to look out, for this would have interfered with her theory that there was a strange, unseen place on the other side - a place which became to the child's imagination, according to its different moods, a region of delight or of terror. (57)

She prefers covering the reality with her unlimited power of imagination. The effects of her childhood are beheld later when she gets acquainted with Osmond. As before, she again covers the reality and creates a completely different man. Then she opens her eyes and realizes that her perceptions were false. "She saw the full moon now - she saw the whole man. She had kept still, as it were, so that he should have a free field, and yet in spite of this she had mistaken a part for the whole"(574).

The change of place that she experienced from Albany to Europe supplied her to distinguish Osmond's real character. Although "we are constantly reminded of the fact that Isabel is an American, and Henrietta Stackpole and Caspar Goodwood both bring an aura of American-ness with them wherever they go"<sup>80</sup>, it is indisputable for Isabel to undergo a great change in her character. Her former ideas follow her to Europe like her American cotton merchant suitor Caspar Goodwood.

Nevertheless, from the moment she leaves her grandmother, her life is not going to be as before. When Isabel arrives at Gardencourt, both Isabel and the reader realize that "European culture is rich in aesthetic imaginations, while that of America lacks it or is very poor in it."<sup>81</sup> To put it in a different way, Isabel's power of imagination goes into shock. All of a sudden, her little world finds itself in a world of overwhelming imagination and endless experience. She escapes her grandmother's house which is

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<sup>80</sup> "The Portrait of a Lady Setting",  
<<http://www.shmoop.com/portrait-of-a-lady/setting.html>>, (17.03.2012).

<sup>81</sup> Monica O. V. Ike, *The Clash of Cultures in Henry James: The Portrait of a Lady, The Wings of The Dove and Daisy Miller*, Master's Project, University of Constance, April 1998, p.25.

[...] the only house in the novel without a name or a well-defined, envisionable architectural genre (i.e., hall, villa, palace), and, while within its walls, Isabel seems to be more of a concatenation of traits and tropes than the "freestanding" figure Chandler describes.<sup>82</sup>

Mrs. Touchett takes Isabel to show that she has not known the world yet. This is how explains it to Ralph: It occurred to me that it would be a kindness to take her about and introduce her to the world. She thinks she knows a great deal of it - like most American girls; but like most American girls she's ridiculously mistaken. (80)

The wish of Isabel's aunt comes true and as Ralph Touchett says Isabel throws herself into the world (218). Her journey starts from Albany, New York to Gardencourt, England; Florence and Rome, Italy; various other European locations. To the end of *POL*, Isabel returns to Gardencourt, but she is not the former independent Isabel. As H. James specifies in the title, "Isabel ends the novel as a 'lady', not a woman."<sup>83</sup> The reason of taking the reader back to Gardencourt is to show the difference between the former Isabel who just has come from Albany and the later Isabel who has "drained the cup of experience." (217)

### 3.1.3.3. Osmond's Villas

Isabel Archer's life journey which started in her grandmother's house at Albany goes on with Osmond's house in Italy. A full description of Osmond's house in Florence is given by the author:

The villa was a long, rather blank-looking structure, with the far-projecting roof which Tuscany loves and which, on the hills that encircle Florence, when considered from a distance, makes so harmonious a rectangle with the straight, dark, definite cypresses that usually rise in groups of three or four beside it. The house had a front upon a little grassy, empty, rural piazza which occupied a part of the hilltop; and this front, pierced with a few windows in irregular relations and furnished with a stone bench lengthily adjusted to the base of the structure and useful as a lounging [...]. (316)

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<sup>82</sup> Elizabeth Boyle Machlan, " 'There are Plenty of Houses': Architecture and Genre in *The Portrait of a Lady*", *Studies in the Novel*, Volume 37, number 4 (Winter 2005), the University of North Texas, 2005, p.400.

<sup>83</sup> Solomon Wakeling, "The portrait of a lady: A feminist pamphlet?", <http://webdiary.com.au/cms/?q=node/1457>, (26.11.2010).

H. James explains that this nice description of the front is only a mask. Peter K. Garrett claims that this front conceals his holder's duplicity but it appears later in his actions.<sup>84</sup> H. James exactly puts this concealment into lines:

[...] - this antique, solid, weather-worn, yet imposing front had a somewhat incommunicative character . It was the mask, not the face of the house. It had heavy lids, but no eyes; the house in reality looked another way - looked off behind, into splendid openness and the range of the afternoon light. (316)

Gilbert Osmond has a special power to hide the real ugly face of his house. He furnishes his houses with his precious beautiful pictures, medallions, tapestries, bibelots and other works of art. Maurizio Ascari claims:

Osmond is a gravitational centre, a sort of black hole, the master of enclosed spaces. His talent for furnishing enables him to create a perfect setting for exclusive social rituals, aimed at magnifying his taste and status, thus satisfying his will to power. It is his ability and desire to dominate the domestic space that connects the refined Osmond with Gothic villains, turning him into a jailer whose coercive means are not violence and locks, but a respect for conventions and appearances which is as inflexible as it is cruel.<sup>85</sup>

Isabel pays attention to Osmond's manners and realizes that "he seemed to hint that nothing but the right 'values' was of any consequence." (353) His weapons are conventions and he harms people around him by using them. One day, while he talking to Isabel, he confesses that he is not conventional he is convention itself. (426)

Isabel's first perceptions about Osmond's house are very important for the reader to get this image completely. When she sees Gilbert Osmond's house at first time, she likes it. She is impressed by his house because Isabel likes dark, isolated, gothic and locked places. In fact, in her grandmother's house, she "had the whole house to choose from, and the room she had selected was the most depressed of its scenes." (57) At Gardencourt, the first thing she hoped to see was a ghost.

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<sup>84</sup> Peter K. Garrett, "Scene and Symbol: Changing Mode in the English Novel from George Eliot to Joyce", Yale University, 1967, Ph. D. Language and Literature, modern, University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan, p.104.

<sup>85</sup> Maurizio Ascari, "Three Aesthetes in Profile: Gilbert Osmond, Mark Ambient, and Gabriel Nash", RSA Journal 7, p.46-47, <http://www.aisna.net/rsa/rsa7/7ascari.pdf>, (29.03.2012).

Osmond's villa in Florence is on a hilltop which is "the best place for a person who wants to put the claims of the base world behind and live a life of ideal appreciation and detached observation, and Isabel is attracted to this degree of rarefied removal."<sup>86</sup>

Osmond sees nobody as a rival in the world except for three people; the Emperor of Russia, the Sultan of Turkey and The Pope of Rome.

'I don't see why you should have renounced,' she said in a moment.

'Because I could do nothing. I had no prospects, I was poor, and I was not a man of genius. I had no talents even; I took my measure early in life. I was simply the most fastidious young gentleman living. There were two or three people in the world I envied the Emperor of Russia, for instance, and the Sultan of Turkey! There were even moments when I envied the Pope of Rome - for the consideration he enjoys. I should have been delighted to be considered to that extent; but since that couldn't be I didn't care for anything less, and I made up my mind not to go in for honours. (366)

The door of Osmond's house opens into "a vaulted antechamber, as high as a chapel and paved with red tiles" (324). This antechamber could be the reason of his jealousy of the Pope of Rome. Osmond's villa looks like a witch's château. This architecture signals us that Isabel will be captured by the householder. We could feel this from Isabel's perceptions: There was something grave and strong in the place; it looked somehow as if, once you were in, you would need an act of energy to get out. For Isabel, however, there was of course as yet no thought of getting out, but only of advancing. (24)

While reading this part, even the reader is pulled into a horrible atmosphere. Furthermore, Maurizio Ascari compares Osmond and Medusa "because he reduces people and feelings to their "shell", depriving them of their vital core."<sup>87</sup> In Isabel's mind, it is clear that Osmond resembles with Medusa\*.

[...] her short interview with Osmond half an hour ago was a striking example of his faculty for making everything wither that he touched,

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<sup>86</sup> Olga Zhdanova, "Life-Journeys: a Feminist Reading of Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* and Olha Kobylianska's *The Princess*", Master Thesis, Yeditepe University, Istanbul 2010, p.34.

<sup>87</sup> Maurizio Ascari, "Three Aesthetes in Profile: Gilbert Osmond, Mark Ambient, and Gabriel Nash", *RSA Journal* 7, p.47, <http://www.aisna.net/rsa/ras7/7ascari.pdf>, (29.03.2012).

\* In Greek mythology, Medusa is a creature. People who gaze upon her directly would turn stone.

spoiling everything for her that he looked at. It was very well to undertake to give him a proof of loyalty; the real fact was that the knowledge of his expecting a thing raised a presumption against it. It was as if he had had the evil eye; as if his presence were a blight and his favour a misfortune. (571)

Even, in Osmond's villa, Osmond's sister The Countess Gemini warns Isabel implicitly about being careful. She says: "[...] don't sit there; that chair's not what it looks. There are some very good seats here, but there are also some horrors" (352). She means that nothing and nobody in this house are not what they look. However; she lacks the real perception at that time, for this reason she answers: 'I don't see any horrors anywhere [...] everything seems to me beautiful and precious' (352)

Once Isabel and Osmond marry, they move to the Palazzo Roccanera in Rome. They "dwelt in a high house in the very heart of Rome; a dark and massive structure overlooking a sunny *piazzetta* in the neighbourhood of the Farnese Palace" (494). We again see the adjectives "dark", "massive" for the Palazzo Roccanera. It is absolutely to Isabel's taste.

Isabel thinks that Osmond's mind and ability will enlighten things but she understands that she has been mistaken. "Isabel at last finds herself not moving in realms of space and light, but trapped in the darkly named Palazzo Roccanero."<sup>88</sup>

In Chapter 42, at midnight Isabel thinks on her marriage and realizes Osmond's duplicity. H. James with this paragraph gives us the message that in *POL*, houses foretells his protagonist Isabel's future fate.

She could live it over again, the incredulous terror with which she had taken the measure of her dwelling. Between those four walls she had lived ever since; they were to surround her for the rest of her life. It was the house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation. Osmond's beautiful mind gave it neither light nor air; Osmond's beautiful mind indeed seemed to peep down from a small high window and mock at her. (578)

James uses the Palazzo Reconera as a figure for Osmond's entrapment of his wife. It represents a prison for Osmond's wife and daughter, and Rosier also thinks it as

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<sup>88</sup> Peter K. Garrett, "Scene and Symbol: Changing Mode in the English Novel from George Eliot to Joyce", Yale University, 1967, Ph. D. Language and Literature, modern, University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan, p.106.

“a palace by Roman measure, but a dungeon to poor Rosier’s apprehensive mind”. (491) Rosier cannot hinder himself from thinking it in a bad way: [...] Rosier was haunted by the conviction that at picturesque periods young girls had been shut up there to keep them from their true loves, and then, under the threat of being thrown into convents, had been forced into unholy marriages. (495)

All Osmond’s villas are identified with him. Like him, his villas do not bring happiness to the dwellers in them. Both Isabel and Pansy are suffering psychologically in them. The décor of architectures mirrors Osmond and also they foretell what Isabel’s future is going to be like. Isabel goes on searching for a permanent dwelling but at the last destination the Palazzo Reconera in Rome becomes a place where she suffers a lot and she cannot escape from there easily. H. James uses the villa of Osmond in Florence as a trap and the Palazzo Reconera as a prison.

### 3.1.3.4. The Seasons and the Weather Conditions in the *POL*

Numerous scientific researches show that there is a link between weather and human emotions. Weather is particularly one of large indicators how one's mood is going to turn out for the day.

In most novels, poems and other literature works, the weather plays a huge factor. Weather supports the effects of events on the reader and it also makes more possible for the reader to share the characters' feelings. Furthermore, most writers give weather conditions in advance. Thus, the reader could predict how the event will develop.

There's no better element to create a romantic, nice, pleasant setting than sunny, hot weather because the atmosphere in the book which surround the characters transfers to us completely. Aris Whittier states her views on the effect of weather condition:

Since I'm a romantic suspense writer, stormy conditions also serve as a metaphorical function in my writing when it comes to sexuality. Sexuality becomes heightened in a stormy atmosphere because it mimics the passion and energy between the characters. A secluded cabin in stormy weather, crackling fire, naked bodies, rain pelting against the window, moans mixed with whipping wind ...you see what I'm getting at. The severe weather makes the scene all the more intense. The reader anticipates that the lovemaking is going to be as strong at the conditions looming outside. You can see how the two are intimately connected.<sup>89</sup>

Bernard Richards, in his article "Henry James's Fawns" points out his being skilled in creating weather. "James was as capable of inventing weather as any novelist, but it may be that in this particular case his mind was going back to a scenic memory that was important to him, and that he wanted to enshrine-if only for his own satisfaction."<sup>90</sup>

In *POL*, H. James also strengthens the effects of his words with the weather conditions. We see that the characters like us are also affected by the seasons and the weather conditions in the novel.

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<sup>89</sup> Aris Whittier, "Weather Plays an Important Role in Your Novel", <http://ezinearticles.com/?Weather-Plays-an-Important-Role-in-Your-Novel&id=1608616>>, (06.05.2012).

<sup>90</sup> Bernard Richards, "Henry James's Fawns", *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 4, Henry James Issue (Autumn, 1983), *Modern Language Studies*, p.167.



H. James uses weather to create a pleasant summer afternoon as early as in the first chapter:

The implements of the little feast had been disposed upon the lawn of an old English country-house, in what I should call the perfect middle of a splendid summer afternoon. Part of the afternoon had waned, but much of it was left, and what was left was of the finest and rarest quality. Real dusk would not arrive for many hours; but the flood of summer light had begun to ebb, the air had grown mellow, the shadows were long upon the smooth, dense turf. They lengthened slowly, however, and the scene expressed that sense of leisure still to come which is perhaps the chief source of one's enjoyment of such a scene at such an hour. (31)

This summer afternoon creates a delightful, charming, lovely and pleasant ambiance for the people in the tea ceremony. The purpose of H. James is also to prepare the environment or the setting for the arrival of the protagonist, Isabel. This short outside activity shows that good days are coming for her soon; a devoted and unexpected cousin, a great fortune and a life experience which she desired much.

The bad weather conditions precede the first meeting between Isabel and Mme Merle. Thus, the weather signals that Mme Merle is a villain character and she will harm her one day.

Isabel went to her own room, noting throughout the house that perceptible hush which precedes a crisis. At the end of an hour, however, she came downstairs in search of her aunt, whom she wished to ask about Mr Touchett. She went into the library, but Mrs Touchett was not there, and as the weather, which had been damp and chill, was now altogether spoiled, [...]. (244)

In addition, H. James gives some other details to invent a sinister atmosphere; “the piano was placed at the end of it furthest removed from the door at which she entered” (244), Mme Merle’s “back was presented to the door” (244). Isabel requests Mme Merle to play something more.

“Madame Merle continues to play while Isabel sits and listens, meanwhile James increases the ominous atmosphere”<sup>91</sup> with the help of natural events:

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<sup>91</sup> Ben H Wright, “The Portrait of a Lady - An Analysis of Identity in the Henry James Novel”, <http://ezinearticles.com/?The-Portrait-of-a-Lady---An-Analysis-of-Identity-in-the-Henry-James-Novel&id=5132126>, (09.05.2012).

The lady played in the same manner as before, softly and solemnly, and while she played the shadows deepened in the room. The autumn twilight gathered in, and from her place Isabel could see the rain which had now begun in earnest, washing the cold-looking lawn and the wind shaking the great trees. (246)

As the topic of this thesis points out, there is an interrelation between the environment and characters. The emotions and feelings of our characters also affect the environment. Before Ralph's death, on the way to Gardencourt, Isabel cannot feel the pleasant environment:

She performed this journey with sightless eyes and took little pleasure in the countries she traversed, decked out though they were in the richest freshness of spring. Her thoughts followed their course through other countries - strange-looking, dimly-lighted, pathless lands, in which there was no change of seasons, but only, as it seemed, a perpetual dreariness of winter. She had plenty to think about; but it was neither reflection nor conscious purpose that filled her mind. (748)

Even on the day of Ralph's death, the weather is so bad that it makes the reader feel cold face of death. "The day was dark and cold; the dusk was thick in the corners of the wide brown rooms" (759). Days before Ralph's death resemble days before his father Mr. Touchett death. The house was also "perfectly still - with a stillness" and this stillness reminds Isabel "days before the death of her uncle" (759).

Isabel waits for Ralph's death in her bed and his death comes on that night. It is clearly seen that just like night covers day, death covers life. H. James also directs his character Isabel with respect to the environment:

She quitted the place and in her certainty passed through dark corridors and down a flight of oaken steps that shone in the vague light of a hall-window. Outside Ralph's door she stopped a moment, listening, but she seemed to hear only the hush that filled it. (772)

Generally, people fall in love when spring comes. When the weather warms up, love is in the air. Sanden Totten makes a nice comparison between lovers and drug addicts:

Every April your brain unwittingly becomes a dopamine factory, turning you into a love junkie. In fact, brain scans of people flooded with the stuff look a lot like brain scans of drug addicts. Which makes sense, since being high on dopamine feels, as many lovers would put it, euphoric.<sup>92</sup>

Spring is the season for love. Many scientists draw our attention to a hormone named melatonin. This hormone is:

[...] produced in the brain by the pineal gland. Increased levels of melatonin are accompanied by tiredness and sluggishness. As the days grow longer in spring, the pineal gland produces less melatonin, and energy levels consequently increase. While this energy boost can be applied to any number of activities, looking for love likely ranks high on the to-do lists of those unattached.<sup>93</sup>

In *POL*, it is seen that the love of Isabel and Osmond flames up in the spring. Moreover, Osmond becomes a poet and writes a poem for Isabel with the power of love.

[...] during these closing days of the Roman May he knew a complacency that matched with slow irregular walks under the pines of the Villa Borghese, among the small sweet meadow-flowers and the mossy marbles. He was pleased with everything; he had never before been pleased with so many things at once. Old impressions, old enjoyments, renewed themselves; one evening, going home to his room at the inn, he wrote down a little sonnet to which he prefixed the title of 'Rome Revisited'. A day or two later he showed this piece of correct and ingenious verse to Isabel, explaining to her that it was an Italian fashion to commemorate the occasions of life by a tribute to the muse. (417)

The winter is the season in which our innocent, submissive Pansy is captured in the convent. We understand this from Osmond's own words:

'Bring her with you then,' said Isabel promptly.

Mr Osmond looked grave. 'She has been in Rome all winter, at her convent; and she's too young to make journeys of pleasure.'

'You don't like bringing her forward?' Isabel enquired.

'No, I think young girls should be kept out of the world.' (391)

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<sup>92</sup> Sanden Totten, "Spring is the season for love, scientifically speaking", <http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2010/04/09/love-in-spring/>, (06.05.2012).

<sup>93</sup> Carrie St. Michel, "Spring Forward and Fall in Love", <http://healthnow.usc.edu/2008/03/spring-forward-and-fall-in-love.html>, (07.05.2012).

Ironically, unlike Pansy, Ralph Touchett is so free that he has to leave his home because of his illness. “He wintered abroad, as the phrase is; basked in the sun, stopped at home when the wind blew, went to bed when it rained, and once or twice, when it had snowed overnight, almost never got up again” (76). The winter brings him illness, unhappiness and solitude. When he stays at England, he becomes a prisoner like Pansy.

Poor Ralph Touchett, as soon as the autumn had begun to define itself, became almost a prisoner; in bad weather he was unable to step out of the house, and he used sometimes to stand at one of the windows with his hands in his pockets and, from a countenance half-rueful, half-critical, watch Isabel and Madame Merle as they walked down the avenue under a pair of umbrellas. (267)

In his preface to 2004 edition, H. James states that he also begins writing *POL* after he spent three months in Florence in the spring of 1879 (9). Moreover, he benefits from the environmental events to define his use of stream of consciousness:

I find, I must again repeat, this projection of memory upon the whole matter of the growth, in one's imagination, of some such apology for a motive. These are the fascinations of the fabulist's art, these lurking forces of expansion, these necessities of upspringing in the seed, these beautiful determinations, on the part of the idea entertained, to grow as tall as possible, to push into the light and the air and thickly flower there; and, quite as much, these fine possibilities of recovering, from some good standpoint on the ground gained, the intimate history of the business - of retracing and reconstructing its steps and stages. (11-12)

Every season, the weather condition and other environmental events become a tool in H. James's hands. All these things help the author to create an environment to his purpose. Without a scenic background, characters will be bare and meaningless.

## CONCLUSION

Few writers have had H. James' unique skill to create an intricate web of interaction between the characters and the environment. When we look at *POL*, we find this reciprocal action. The term "environment" encapsulates both the physical and the social environment in the study.

As the author expresses it in his preface, he superadds all the usual elements of a 'subject' to his characters especially to the protagonist of the novel. The usual elements are topographic environmental elements. In the novel, H. James wishes to show the impact of social and physical environment on the characters. Also, he implies that our personality is shaped not only by our past, education, family, relatives, or our possessions. There are so many other things affecting our personality we are not aware of.

The author wishes to draw the reader's attention to the difficulty of being an expatriate. Almost all expatriate characters of *POL* are unhappy being far from their country America. Being an expatriate may be a joyful experience for some people while it is a burden for others. H. James' characters in the novel seem bereft of a permanent home since they are squeezed between the New World and the Old World.

In the novel, the character's actions, lives, minds, emotions, and experiences teach us a lot. We have realized that we always make wishes, target something in life like Isabel, but most of our life circumstances are beyond our control. They prevent us realizing our intentions.

Isabel's unappealing life experience warns us to be cautious of the people's masks. However, they drop them one day. On that day, seeing the reality will not give us pleasure but pain. We will also be lost in wonder at "the eternal mystery of things" to quote Ralph Touchett.

Bad things that we experience are not the end of life. We see that Isabel mature by suffering, so bad experiences will enable us to grow and mature. Isabel accepts her faults and turns back to her husband since she gains the experience through her life journey. Most of people do not accept their faults unlike Isabel and blame them on other people or circumstances.

H. James mostly does not make any comment on the actions of his characters or judge them and he leaves all comments and judges to his readers. In this novel, Henry James has opened many windows for us to observe his characters from different angles. We also hope that the present thesis will help the students studying Literature to view the novel from different angles and get a deeper insight into the matter.

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