

American Values as Reflected in The Portrait of A Lady by Henry James

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Abstract. This research aimed to discover the elements of American values characters in The Portrait of A Lady novel by Henry James based theory of (L. Robert Kohls, 1984). The method of this research was descriptive qualitative. The main source of the data of this research was the novel The Portrait of A Lady, which published on 2001, consists of 55 chapters, and 687 pages. Meanwhile, the instrument of this research was note taking. The technique of data analysis of this research was linked to the story, concept, and method. Based this research, researcher found some parts of values in the novel based on Kohls's theory. The results found, there are four American values characters in the novel, namely personal control over the environment, change, independence, future orientation and optimism. It was concluded that some of the previous American values are depicted in the novel The Portrait of A Lady.

Keywords: *American Values, Structuralism, The Portrait of A Ldy, Isabel Archer, Character*

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INTRODUCTION

Literature is a written text that is made with language in the form of a variety of works, fiction, and drama. Text in the form of language is accepted in culture, so the concept of language from literary works broadly reflects the wider culture. Meanwhile culture is a broader concept than literature, it has similarities between literature. Literature serves as a form of explanation or starting point for knowing a culture.

Literary works were born not in a cultural vacuum but appeared in a society that already has traditions, customs, beliefs, outlook on life, ways of life, ways of thinking (Arizah, 2004). All of which can be categorized as cultural manifestations. Literature can be seen as part of the socio-cultural life of the people who gave birth to it, so that literature arises because people want their social and cultural life (Rabiah, 2012).

Culture is a social act and norms that are obtained in people's lives, as well as in the form of knowledge or ideas that exist in the mind of a human being, beliefs, literature and art, law, customs, in the habits of a group (Lebron, 2013). Hawkins (2012), said that culture is a complex that includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, customs and other abilities and habits possessed by humans as part of society (Hawkins, 2012).

The meaning of American culture is derived from a permitted and established society that allows everyone to express their own identity. America is known for its cultural diversity, and for that matter has its own personal culture, often described as a consumer culture as a result of economic growth after 1945 (Daniel, 2013).

Americans always present themselves as idealistic people. They set high limits for their own sake and believe in what is right at will. Even though Americans always rely on themselves in doing something, they are still fully proud of what has become the basis of culture and values that have been established in American government since long ago until now (Greenberg et al., 2009).

Culture in people's lives has an important part and is related to the values therein. Value is a standard measure or principle that is carried out by a society or individual itself, all of which are interrelated and grow together. Values are usually taught and practiced in every culture, from childhood to adulthood, assisted by parents about what is good. Some of America's values are also highlighted in the culture and customs of society that are highly valued today.

Americans demonstrate the cultural influence of producing novels, which form part of the American literary tradition. Henry James is present in the novels to explain American culture and taking American culture higher than European culture. He shows that what has become American culture is a freedom, naturalness, innocence, and purity. Henry James shows the figure of Isabel in the novel with the characteristics of an American woman (Moghadam and Wan Yahya, 2014).

Henry James is one of the famous authors in England, who gave birth to several works. James is one of the originators of the understanding of Realism in the fiction of his works, and he also contributed greatly in literary criticism. He asserted that the authors should be given freedom in voicing their opinions about

the world. The combination of American and European figures is a prominent theme in most of his works. Where he lived and studied all his life as an American who spent all the time in Europe. For James, Americans people are more likely to have naive, uplifting, easier, sincere, quick, and spontaneous traits, and they are more self-respecting than the rest of society. In contrast, Europe is sophisticated, listless, formal, senseless, blunt, and cunning, and they value society more than individuals (James, 2006).

Henry James in the work of his books, taking the path that fiction works should reproduce reality. He described reality as two understandings, first through the author's particular experience of him, and second through his unique description of it. From most of his works, conflict arises from the relationship between Americans and Europeans, each group with their own characteristics and morals.

According to James, 'culture' is something of close value and something that can cause problems, as explained about ancient myths at that time, where culture is an experience, experience is a knowledge, and knowledge can lose its innocence (Marchi, 2007). Americans demonstrate cultural influence in producing a novel, which is part of American literary customs. Henry James appears in the novel to describe American culture, and chooses American culture over European culture, and he says that the nature of American culture is freedom, real, innocence, and pure. Henry James takes Isabel in the novel as the role of an American woman (Moghadam and Wan Yahya, 2014).

The Portrait of a Lady by Henry James is a 19th Century European-American novel by the author as the main ingredient in the work of the thesis, because the story in the novel has some values and culture related to people's lives in general. The novel tells the story of a woman of strong character, who in her life wants to have freedom of choice. She particularly brought along her American values and culture into the British society. Her strong point in maintain her American culture and values at that time making it interesting to analyze.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this research is descriptive analysis method. Descriptive analysis method is one of the methods or methods used in collecting data in literary research. The descriptive method of analysis is done by describing the facts which are then followed by analysis. The fact referred to here is the story of Isabel in the novel who wants freedom in her life but there are consequences that are born in every freedom of her decision, which is inseparable from the reality of society in general. Then analyzed using the theoretical basis used is about American Values in *The Portrait of A Lady* novel.

Data source is itself, *The Portrait of a Lady* by Henry James novel. The researcher uses the book pulished by words worth Editions in 2001, consisting of 687 pages, and have 45 chapters in the novel. The qualitative data analyzed descriptively to work through the case. To analyze the data, the researcher applied the instrument which called note taking. Note taking was the technique used to collect the data contain in a literary work, and then researcher in the forms of notes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Literary work in the form of a novel is inseparable from people's life in general. Values and culture are often linked in structural life, so that they are of good value in the structural itself. Several values are also explained by Kohls about the values that exist in America. Therefore, it is associated with what values are contained in the novel *The Portrait of A Lady* by Henry James.

Tabel 1. American Values by Characters

Characters	American Values	Page Number(s)
Isabel	Personal control over the environment	C.12/P.127
Isabel	Change	C.19/P.216 C.19/P.221
Isabel	Independence	C.16/P.173 C.16/P.184 C.6/P.62
Isabel	Future Orientation and Optimism	C.4/P.42 C.12/P.119 C.19/P.213

The first American values are personal control over environment. Isabel was described as a real American woman. She has a good temper and ability to control herself based on the condition and situation. Also, by rejecting the proposal of nobleman because of her belief shown that she has control of her future and her environment.

“She could not marry Lord Warburton; the idea failed to correspond to any vision of happiness that she had hitherto entertained, or was now capable of entertaining.”

Excerpt 1, p. 127

The excerpt describes the belief of Isabel as a woman. She bravely rejected the marriage proposal because she did not feel anything for the man. She belief that a feeling of mutual affection is needed in marriage. She has wealth, that is way she was not interested in titled.

The next American values is change. It refers to be in a better condition. It is also related to development, improvement, progress and growth. As the main character of the novel, Isabel Archer's attitude indeed portrayed this value as follows:

“I should like to be like that!” Isabel secretly exclaimed, more than once, as one of her friend’s numerous facets suddenly caught the light, and before long she knew that she had learned a lesson from this exemplary woman. It took no very long time, indeed, for Isabel to feel that she was, as the phrase is, under an influence. “What is the harm”, she asked herself, “so long as it is a good one? The more one is under a good influence a better. The only thing is to see our steps as we take them, to understand them as we go. That i think i shall always do”

Excerpt 2, p. 216

Isabel convinced herself that Madam Merle is a good example of woman. She is an intelligence person. She also has many talents and expertise about life. By using Madam Merle as her role model, Isabel belief that she is also changing as a better person.

“Isabel thought the better of herself for enjoying the favour of a person who had so large a field of comparison; an it was perhaps partly to gartify this sense of profiting by comparison that she often begged her friend to tell her about the people she knew”

Excerpt 3, p. 221

Because of her interaction with Madam Merle, Isabel felt herself experiencing a good change. She felt liked by the people around her and a wider part of the scope when living her life in England. Madam Merle is one of those people who changed Isabel. She thought that Madam Merle had already traveled a lot in Europe and had more knowledge experience. The stories of Madam Merle journey to Europe become a dominant factor that change Isabel.

The changing in Isabel is also agreeable according to her aunt, Ms. Touchet. She belief that Isabel has become one of the images of most American girls. She has a good ability to be introduced to the wide world. Her knowledge is not only from the books, but also coming from the outside world.

Independence is one of the things that Isabel brought from her native America. This one value is the one that she has no thought to give up soon. Independence is also the most notable values of American heritage. Her family, The Touchetts aware of the young lady temper, in this case the mentioned young lady is very independence. Isabel also have informed Ralph, her cousin, that ‘she loves her liberty’.

“Isabel had no hidden motive in wishing her cousin not to take her home; it simply seemed to her that for some days past she had consumed an inordinate quantity of his time, and the independent spirit of American girl who ends by regarding perpetual assistance as a sort of derogation to her sanity, had made her decide that for these few hours she must suffice to herself”

Excerpt 4, p 173

Isabel believes that she would become a bother for the other people if she asked them to do something that she could do. Therefore, she prefers to everything herself, her independence attitude and in the excerpt showed the she could find her own way home.

Her independence also become one of the reasons about marriage. Isabel tries not to expect a man in her life and get married, she wants to always live in her independence. She believes that having a partner who is less intelligent can keep a woman happy and does not have to have a partner in life.

“From lapsing into a stage of eagerness on this point she earnestly prayed that she might be delivered; she held that a woman ought to be able to make up her life in singleness, and that it was perfectly possible to be happy without the society of a more or less coarse-minded person of another sex”

Excerpt 5, 62

Isabel makes her view of marriage in regard to her liberty and freedom clearly than before. She said:

“If you were in the same place as I, I should feel as if you were watching me, and I don’t like that. I like my liberty too much. If there is a thing in the world that I am fond of, Isabel went on, with a slight recurrence of the grandeur that had shown itself a moment before, “it is my personal independence”

Excerpt 6, 184

She wanted people to be away from her, she would like to be able to do what she wanted. She loves her freedom, if there is something she likes, then it is one of the freedoms her lives.

As an American lady, Isabel indeed value her liberty above all. It was a common trait that American ladies are known to be more independent and liberal than the English ladies (Ike, 1998). In one of the scenes that happened in Gardencourt was the night that Lord Warburton come. Her aunt, Mrs. Touchett told Isabel that she was not at her best blest in Albany. Isabel wanted to stay longer with the men to chat. But her aunt, Lidya told her that in the decent family home, young lady should not be leave alone with the gentlemen, at any even or time. At the very least there should be chaperone among them. However, Isabel did not care about the remark. This incident after all become the starting point of her shown her independence and liberty to her family.

At the time when the novel was written, it was the time when American stormed Europe (Ike, 1998). For American such as Isabel, the one who had a purpose, to find the high civilizations or writers and inventor, trying to make a name in Europe. In doing so, they would be acknowledged in their home country. It is believing that coming to Europe actually is not a bad move, as long as people have a clear vision for their achievement.

The next values are future orientation and optimism. The Americans have a great sense to value the future. They are so positive and traditional American's belief that the future will bring them better life and happiness. They use most all of their energy to realize that dream.

In the novel, it shows that Isabel has a good record of knowledge to prepare for her future. She like to find more information anywhere. She prepared well for her arrival in England.

“She had a great desire for knowledge, but she really preferred almost any source of information to the printed page; she had an immense curiosity about life, and was constantly staring and wondering. She carried within herself a great fund of life, and her deepest enjoyment was to feel the continuity between the movements of her own heart and the agitations of the world. For this reason she was fond of seeing great crowds and large stretches of country, of reading about revolutions and wars, of looking at historical pictures, a class of efforts to which she had often gone so far as to forgive much bad painting for the sake of the subject”

Excerpt 7, p 42

Her desire for knowledge makes her develop a good personality. She has what it called expansive personality. Many people attracted to her because she has a great capacity for growth. This personality gives her an aptitude to react spontaneously to get new experience.

“I venture to repeat, at this simple young lady from Albany, who debated whether she should accept an English peer before he had offered himself, and who was disposed to believe that on the whole she could do better. She was a person of great good faith, and if there was a great deal of folly in her wisdom, those who judge her severely may have the satisfaction of finding that, later, she became consistently wise only at the cost of an amount of folly which will constitute almost a direct appeal to charity”

Excerpt 8, p 119

Isabel convinced herself that refusing Lord Worburton would find her a better partner. Isabel has faith even though in the end she will get something that is not according to the expectations of her wisdom. The decision she made was so strong as to show others who belittled her that she made decisions according to the wisdom of her heart.

Isabel has what it called a depth perception that no other people have. Because of this, her qualities in her personality attracted many people to her. People who know her, such as Madame Marle and Henrietta Stackpole, grow to

admire her. Also, for men such as Gilbert Osmond and Ralph Touchett. Moreover, man who has divergent characters and personalities, as Caspar Goodwood and Lord Warburton fall in love with her. Thus, it could be saying that part of Isabel greatness is the charm she possessed to attract many people with different characters.

“But she often reminded herself that there was essential reason why one’s ideal could not become concrete. It was a thing to believe in, not to see, a matter of faith, not experience. Experience, however might supply us with very creditable imitations of it, and the part of wisdom was to make the best of these”

Excerpt 9, p 213

Isabel believes that the realization of hope is something she believes, not from an experience, but from the believe in her heart. Experience can provide a believable example of that hope, and use that example as a good part of wisdom.

Isabel, portrayed the most ideal of American lady who also possessed American values. She has what it took to change from a “Miss” to a “Lady”. Therefore, despite some flaws she possessed, she is the ideal representation of American Lady.

CONCLUSION

American values are shown mostly by Isabel Archer. There are four of them; they are personal control over the environment, change, independence, future orientation and optimism. Isabel’s is clearly still attached to her American values rather than her European values. As for the author, his portrayal of characters from *The Portrait of a Lady* gave the readers of his view of European. As Europe is the highest culture, however it does not follow anyone who to it. Only for the one who sincerely looking for it.

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