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Psychological Realism in Jane Campion's The Portrait of a Lady (1996)

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Abstract

This article studies Jane Campion's The Portrait of a Lady (1996) from the perspective of psychological realism and analyzes this cinematic adaptation of The Portrait of a Lady via semiotics, images and symbols deployed in the light of psychological realism. Henry James's novel The Portrait of a Lady has variously been adapted into several films. However, Campion's film seeks to question rather than reproduce the stereotypes. This is achieved by shifting attention away from the narrative and focusing instead on the characters, chiefly the focal character, and their reactions.

Keywords: *Psychological Realism; The Portrait of a Lady (1996); Adaptation; The Portrait of a Lady, Henry James*

1. Introduction

Due to advancements in technologies, filmmakers move closer towards realistic representations with their work including camera mobility and volume, sound and microphone technology, set design, etc. These techniques are directly responsible for a different kind of realism in the cinematic experience: a more developed understanding of psychological realism. A successful presentation of psychological realism of a novel into a visual form of a film is possible as far as an adaptation, through its fresh imaginative approach to the text, is capable of providing a critical gloss on the source novel in order to enrich the viewers' perception of it. Since success in any adaptation is dependent upon the successful conversion of the subject, story, and plot of a novel which is to be transferred into an appropriate cinematic form, a study of film adaptations diving deep into the fundamental elements of both forms, i.e., novel and Film can contribute indispensably. This paper is concerned with the study of psychological realism in Jane Campion's cinematic adaptation of Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* and that how through deployment of close ups and long shots, together with other contributing techniques and means this process of modification from source text to film has been carried out. The semiotic record of the presented shapes and images in this study would also aid in revealing the latent meaning behind the cinematically articulated appearance.

2. Objective and Scope of the Study

Since literature and cinema belong to two different forms of art, this comparative study is interdisciplinary. It is through interdisciplinary studies that the information and theories of various

branches of art and science are interweaved. This essay has two objectives. First, it endeavors through interdisciplinary approach to study this cinematic adaptation in the light of psychological realism and goes through the devices comprising it. Second, since demonstrating the focal character's psyche is of prime significance for acquiring insight into the psychological process she goes through, the audio-visual art deployed presenting gestures, facial expressions and a symbolically suggestive mise-en-sce-ne are analyzed in order to provide clues of her psychic unfolding revealed.

3. Significance of the Study

Even though the psychological realism appears to be almost always the dominant aspect in every work written by Henry James and thus has been deployed and depicted in the adapted visual works in different eras and different contexts, there are still works in which this perception bespeaks of its existence to the mind of the audience more promptly. The selected cinematic adaptation has been chosen accordingly; It discusses how Jane Campion in this cinematic adaptation of *The Portrait of a Lady* contextualizes and appropriates her portrayal of a dependent inactive character's attaining her independence and securing her achieved position.

4. Literature Review

Since its release in 1996, Jane Campion's adaptation of *The Portrait of a Lady* has attracted a varied range of critical responses. Ellen Cheshire in her book on Campion, describes this adaptation as "[t]horoughly depressing... the extreme close-ups of beautiful people, in elegant drawing rooms, is akin to watching the paint dry on a series of portraits" (qtd. in Raw 2006, p.157), and Karen Mitchel Chandler thought that it was "merely...a flawed dramatization of James's novel" (157). She, however, thought otherwise on her revisiting this adaptation and came to the conclusion that the director has in a way unnecessarily simplified many of the characters and their own conflicts in order to "evaluate the social constraints on nineteenth -century womanhood"" (157). Feminist critics, on the other hand, have taken a specific interest in this adaptation; Warton observes that Isabel (Nicole Kidman) remains "an object of [male] scrutiny," whose efforts to control and develop her subjectivity are "subverted and her sexuality constrained by the time in which she lives" (157).

Nancy Bentley, on the other hand, holds the idea that Campion attempts to create a portrait of a woman that as she states in "Conscious Observation: Jane Campion's *The Portrait of a Lady*", is capable of manipulating her own "medium to try and sustain conflicting possibilities about the imagination, desires and 'fate' of a woman who is an object of 'conscious observation' " (Bentley 1997, p.128). The variety of critical responses demonstrates how this version of *The Portrait of a Lady* focuses on a series of discourses-social, political and cinematic- and their methods of ordering experience in order to "expose the gaps (the repressions) and the contradictions within them" (157).Taking this variety of attitudes into consideration, it can hardly be disregarded that the discussed approaches can get along well with psychological realism, for the latter, due to its comprehensive nature, can by itself encompass them all without even contradicting or superseding them. The poetics of cinema is reflected in the actual play of images of any film, for fundamentally film is nothing else but a group of structured images leading towards the desired meaningful product. Even the meaningfulness and interpretation as well as analysis in this realm is dependent upon the images deployed. Images and image making, in the final run, remain to be an activity which brings in the total 'poetics of cinema'... Symbolic meaning itself forms a system in film and centers around an image of man or of reality," (Valicha 1988, p.25)

5. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This study is based on two theoretical bases: Remak's theory about interdisciplinary studies and Hutcheon's theory of adaptation. According to Remak's "Comparative Literature: Its Definition and Function", comparative literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and

belief, such as the arts [in this case a cinematic adaptation], on the other (Remak 1961, p.1-57). As Linda Hutcheon argues in *A Theory of Adaptation*, "Neither the product nor the process of adaptation exists in a vacuum: they all have a context—a time and a place, a society and a culture" (Hutcheon 2006, p. xvi). Since adaptations occur in different places with their own customs and cultures, the adapted and the original works may vary significantly. Holland's film adaptation of Henry James's *Washington Square* goes through the process of "Repossessing and... creation to the adaptation's context of reception" (xvi). This is why Campion's cinematic adaptation of *The Portrait of a Lady* is different from James's text, for the adapted work in its being contextualized, has been "reinterpreted" and then "recreated" (8) in order to delineate her own conception of the focal character's psychological process of self-development.

6. Discussion

6.1. Cinematic Presentation of the Portrait of a Lady (1996)

This opening sequence of the movie is significant in that the women models in this segment stare directly into the camera which is by itself rare in narrative cinema. Campion might have had it in mind to shift the audience's attention from James's novel to her own style from the very beginning. As the movie begins Isabel Archer (Nicole Kidman) is portrayed as a woman with a conscious desire to determine her own fate, and simultaneously as an object of conscious observation on which everyone in their own turn seeks to impose his or her will, either through settling a fortune on her or via encouraging her to get married. Even though her wavering eyes, depicted through close ups of her eyes in the first shot, do appear to be alert or at least seeking to find answers, her lack of experience is simultaneously displayed on her still innocent looking fresh visage that bespeaks of her want of experience as if being a new-born being introduced to a new unknown world. In adapting James' novel to the screen, Jane Campion's endeavor appears to be concerned chiefly with how to make "the meaning of 'entertainment' intersect with the history of mass entertainment, a history in which the 'conscious observation of a lovely woman' carries a set of materially realized meanings […]" (Bentley 1997, p.174). Consequently, as Bentley observes, a film version of James' novel, "has to be written in flesh, conveyed in the visual images of actor's bodies rather than the hieroglyphics of print" (Bentley 1997, p.175). By presenting the title shot of her film as a handwritten inscription on a woman's finger, Campion in a way establishes her method and style, i.e. her deploying female body for demonstrating words as opposed to James' text as a body of work. "A 'portrait' in film, Campion seems to insist, is not a novel. Even a famous nineteenth-century text by a famously language-obsessed novelist will be fashioned out of elemental acts of looking at the faces and bodies of women once it is recreated on screen" (Bentley 1997, p.175). The moment Isabel (Nicole Kidman) accepts Osmond's proposal in a way places herself under someone else's control and that is why Ralph Touchett (Martin Donovan) accuses Isabel of having sacrificed herself for someone as narrow and selfish-as a dilettante. What is revealed through Ralph's not recognizing the contradictions within Isabel's existence is the extent to which the social and political discourses of *The Portrait of a Lady* depend on language and the (patriarchal) ideology on which they are based.

Isabel, however, through discovering a mode of expression that cannot be reduced to a language based on power, authority, and rational explanation, manages to transcend the roles already imposed on her. She, sets her mind on remaining within the restricted zone of her marriage even though she simultaneously loathes Osmond and appears to derive some form of masochistic pleasure from his treatment of her. She does believe that she is the one who should face and accept the consequences of her actions. At the end of Campion's adaptation of *The Portrait of a Lady*, one cannot be certain whether Isabel will return to her previous life in Rome or stay in England and launch a new life as a single woman. But what appears to be particularly significant is that the notion of female "freedom" according to Raw's argument in *Adapting Henry James to Screen*: *Gender*, *Fiction*, *and Film* (2006), Cellan Jones's adaptations of *The Portrait of a Lady* and *Golden Bowl*, as Campion suggests are not identified with direct action but expressed through statements" -either verbal or non-verbal-that repudiate rational (i.e. masculine) values" (Raw 2006, p.158) and thus providing multiple perspectives.

6.2. Deviations from Novelistic Presentation

Campion in her adaptation, however, as Raw states, deliberately endeavors to challenge the conventions of the period adaptation, for its objective is "reinforced in terms of form as well as content" (158). The deliberately deployed anachronistic elements-in the opening scene of Campion's adaptation, for instance, brings about some sort of juxtaposition where several young Australian women from mid - 1990s talk about their experience of love or in a sequence comprising images in a variety of cinematic styles ranging from the look of a Valentino silent epic to the bizarre effects of a surrealist film. Such moments invite the viewer "to construct and contradict simultaneously, to make connections and suggest distinctions. Startle the viewer with the juxtaposition of seeming opposites" (158).

When Isabel makes her first appearance, difficulties arise at the beginning of both the novel and the film; an image of as an eligible marriage prospect at Gardencourt framed by the ample doorway leading to the garden is to foreshadow her future imprisonment in the discourses belonging to the late Victorian bourgeois society. Later when Ned Rosier (Christian Bale) sees her "framed in the gilded doorway" (James 1881, p.105) of Osmond's house, the image recurs; it is where "she struck our young man as the picture of a gracious lady" (105) which in the movie itself has been depicted as young men's heads and eyes turning to Isabel as walks in her initial scene. her being situated there as the object of men's gaze is reminiscent of Michel Foucault's statement concerning gaze that "the gaze is connected to power and surveillance: the person who gazes is empowered over the person who is the object of the gaze" (Johnson 1997, p.39). Warburton (Richard E. Grant) offers her marriage proposal with the splendid security of money and influence in return; for Isabel, however, this opportunity so offered her was not the greatest she could conceive, for the same strategy is tried by Goodwood (Viggo Mortensen). He tells her that "You don't know where to turn "after Ralph's death; turn straight to me. I want to persuade you to trust me" (*The Portrait of a Lady* 2:12:13-13:13). Ralph's concern for Isabel is a function of his desire to control her future as a gracious lady. Even though he has no distinct interest in marrying her. He regards it as it has exactly been described by the novelist himself in the source text as "an entertainment of a high order" to discover "what she was going to do with herself". Thus she is even fetishized by him in an aside: "A character like that... a real little passionate force to see at play is the finest thing in nature. it's finer than the finest work of art-than a Greek bas-relief, than a great Titan, than a Gothic cathedral" (James 1881, p.63)

Ralph believes that he can transform her into an independent woman who will realize his "charming vision of her future through settling an inheritance on her" (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1:01 50-52). I had amused myself with planning out a high destiny for you " (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1:01 55-58). Ralph's somewhat contradictory desires (i.e., giving Isabel financial freedom yet simultaneously trying to organize her life) appears to differ from those proposed by Warburton and Goodwood; for Ralph, Isabel stands for a commodity whose love and respect for him depends on her possessing a large fortune and the security that goes with it. Simultaneously, as Patricia E. Johnson observes in "The Gendered Politics of the Gaze: Henry James and George Eliot", "implicit in the structures of much Western art and many classic Hollywood films is the idea of the male gazer and the female object" (Johnson 1997, p.39). Linda Nochlin has also asserted within the same context, that "the male artist's right to represent women is interconnected with the assumption of general male power over and control of women in society" (39). This idea is reinforced in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1996) by Ralph Touchett's first response to his cousin Isabel. Laura Jones's screenplay for this scene includes Isabel's pain and bewilderment as she figures out Ralph's true intentions. The final scene has her standing in front of one of the pens in the Plazzo's Crescentini's stables which is suggestive of her semi-imprisonment within the prison house of male controlling desire (*The Portrait of a Lady* 2:13:54-59).

6.3. The Image of Self-imprisonment VS. an Independent Woman

Throughout the film, the image of Isabel's self-imprisonment recurs in various forms; Isabel is at one point, shown walking Osmond in the garden of his house with the iron railings obviously visible in the foreground. she is discovered standing by the window at Gardencourt on another occasion, she cannot

walk unaccompanied in the garden despite her wealth. Campion in a ball scene later on suggests that most women within Isabel's social position share the same fate. Campion uses a series of close-ups to emphasize the preparations for the ball- a tracking shot of the servants putting top hats on a table, a close-up of the ladies offering their dancing cards, and the gentlemen filling in their names. This is followed by the shot of couples dancing in circular formation. What Campion does in fact differs from Ivory's Europeans where the ball sequence comprises a series of long shots focusing on the historically accurate sets and costumes. When Campion cuts to a medium shot of Osmond twirling Isabel's parasol prior to seducing her, they seem like automata as they make circular patterns reminding us of the sequence earlier on in the film. The whole ritual of finding a suitable marriage partner obviously resembles a business devoid of any human feelings. Through showing some ladies being carried out of the room on the servants' shoulders, while others, too exhausted to continue, are given smelling salts to revive them, Campion puts emphasis on the callousness of the ball by itself. According to the capitalist logic of the occasion, they are inferior goods- unlike Pansy, who (as Warburton observes) has several young men who are more than willing to dance with her.

Campion's adaptation of *The Portrait of a Lady* is suggestive of this fact that any woman's attempts to pick up her own destiny through flouting the system would undoubtedly be doomed to failure. It is demonstrated in a short sequence that expands on the scene in James's novel where Mrs. Touchett accuses Isabel of being "too fond of her own ways" (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 7:53-54) and Isabel replies that she wants to "know the things one shouldn't do...so as to choose" (*The Portrait of a Lady* 7:56-57). What is suggested by Campion in the film also includes some extra dialogue as Mrs. Touchett (Shelley Winters) criticizes Isabel for not heeding her advice. Through a close-up of Isabel's hand pulling some scraps of papers on which a series of words have been written (including terms such as honesty, probity, and nihilism) off her wardrobe door, Campion intends to summarize the contradictory experiences of an independent woman residing within a bourgeois patriarchal society. Even though her nihilism and her honesty might be admired, she may still be admonished for neglecting her appointed roles as wife, mother, and marriage partner. Thus her established choice might also be regarded as a sign of deviation ultimately. In the production notes to *The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, as Raw observes, Campion herself asserts that scenes like this have been included in order to "emphasize the contemporary aspects of the story to give women the chance to identify themselves with the heroine (Raw 2006, p.161).

6.4. The Process of Gradual Discovery

The repeated close-ups of her looking at herself in a mirror is by itself indicative of a process of gradual discovery on her part that her acquired independence is not totally pertinent to her resisting patriarchal power, for the modern era has had its own impact. as well. On finding a form of expression that leads to her confounding masculine logic and thus renders this Portrait even more bold. This type of shot, from one point of view, may as Raw asserts, emphasize "control from the periphery of the image. The object of the shot is not what she, as the protagonist, is looking at, not even her look for it is instead 'looking at her looking' " (161). Looking at herself would merely place here in the position of the object appearing pleasant to the masculine look bringing pleasure once more, but looking at her image would simultaneously place her in a powerful position capable of controlling instead of being controlled, for up to this point, most specifically at the beginning, i.e. in the afore-mentioned initial scenes she has been treated mostly as the object of men's gaze. This totalizing force and organization of vision works to efface, or at the very least contain, the female look." It can be argued from another point of view as Campion suggests that this denotes female" potentiality as Isabel comes to understand something about herself and her future. It is at moments like these, according to production notes that Isabel "awakens to a curious freedom" (161).

The stated "freedom" according to masculine standards is curious for sure. "Close personal distance" is according to Edward Hall, the distance at which "one can hold or grasp the other person' and therefore also the distance between people who have an intimate relation with each other. Non-intimates cannot come this close and, if they do so, it will be experienced as an act of aggression (qtd. in Kress &

Leeuwen 2006, p.123). There is one specific point at which Isabel's close personal distance has been violated; it occurs when Osmond hurts her not just through psychological violence but with physical indignities as well; he picks her up, sits her down on a heap of cushions, and subsequently standing on her dress and consequently falls to the floor, but all the while keeps claiming that she has played "a very deep game" in preventing Pansy's marriage to Warburton. Despite her suffering, Isabel reacts by moving toward him as if expecting a kiss. She is obviously still sexually drawn to him (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 1:37:57-59).

Such strain of masochism runs throughout Campion's adaptation of *The Portrait of a Lady*; it can well be noticed in Isabel imagining the possibility of being promiscuous for instance in the dream sequence where she is fondled by all her suitors at a time while she consciously acknowledges the restrictions that marriage has imposed on her. Scenes like this in this adaptation does provoke voyeuristic pleasure taking in the audience at the expense of female suffering. Jane Campion, on the other hand, suggests that the experience of masochism is capable of giving Isabel the chance to experience some sort of power or even pleasure within the given patriarchal constraints limits imposed on her. Isabel undeniably is punished and that is for sure, but still, she receives pleasure in return; her experiences; moreover, leads the audience towards empathizing with her suffering. In the final shot of the scene, Isabel's sense of power is implied; her right profile is fully visible in medium close-up, while Osmond can only be seen in reverse. This placement of Isabel as Laurence Raw observes, the already "battered wife", as an acquired-power woman may "unbalance...the drama" (Raw 2006, 161). For critics such as "Philip Horne", it just unbalances the masculine status in the cultural law and transfigures the already-stablished position of the dominator and the dominated. only appears unbalanced in terms of the (masculine) cultural law that separates the dominant from the dominated (162). Campion, however, does not confine Isabel to one of these; she is instead demonstrated at a negotiating position between these two a contradictory poles. She is active despite her being passive; Even though she experiences being humiliated she is eventually fulfilled.

Isabel is shown running back to Gardencourt in the film's final sequence; her progress is jerky, heightened by the deliberate use of step-printing as her dark skirts is watched flashing over the snow, we can see through the windows of the house a room lit attractively by candlelight. The scenes depicting Isabel's hand turning on are all the ones that do contribute to Campion's portrayal of "the portrait of a lady" looking slightly to the viewer's right. If earlier in 1968,in as Raw states, "Cellan Jones's adaptation of the novel for TV" (162), Isabel treats any attempt as a masculine strategy to impose order and unity on a personality to capture her in portrait "(whether literal or figurative) that seeks to remain perfectly free" (162), Campion's adaptation, not much unlike, treats Isabel as rejecting order and unity in a way as to leave the audience uncertain and unable to decide whether she will open the door and return to her past life or that her choice would be to stay outside and fend for herself there. Such circumstance might not signify that much, for as a woman, she has acquired more, that is a means of expression for herself that goes beyond rejecting one life choice for another, likewise Campion's version. But perhaps this does not really matter for a woman who has discovered a means of expression for herself. Far from this acquisition, she strives to construct a comprehensive perspective that encompasses both and provides her a voice of her own.

Campion's intention to repudiate the conventions ruling classical narrative film appears to be made chiefly in order to make the audience find connection with the ambiguous ending of her adaptation of the novel. This attitude is evidently introduced at the beginning where a blank screen is demonstrated accompanied with the sound of women talking about their ways of taking pleasure by/with themselves. Through these apparently disparate scenes Campion cuts to a sequence-photographed in black-and-white, a series of shots comprised of color of modern young women who are either moving slowly or standing still."[This] deliberate separation of women's voices from their filmic bodies suggests that Campion recognizes a break or disjunction in film that tends to detach female subjectivity and female desire from the visual surface of a woman's cinematic 'portrait'" (Bentley 1997, p.175). Campion in an interview coinciding with the film's American release pointed out that this scenes and shots were designed

specifically to show "what the romantic hopes of young girls could be...[It] serves as a link to our era...a poem before the journey of a young woman" (162). They look for a mirror-in other words, they, by staring directly into the camera lens, look for someone who might respond in kind to the young women's feelings and emotions-, as if expecting the audience to let that role be fulfilled. Also, through this sequence, Campion updates the late nineteenth century Jamesian literary objectification of women to a late twentieth-century context the continued objectification of women in film in a post-modern style that could not be found in the modern era.

The women in the referred sequence are, on the other hand, active agents who manage to "approach the viewer on equal terms and expect the same in return" (163). However, as Boyum asserts there is no possible way" that every member of an adaptation's viewing audience will ‘see’ the same movie (Boyum 1985, pps. 44-5). Campion shows Isabel in medium close-up, a skillful transition between present and past, at a time when she has spurned Warburton's proposal of marriage. Isabel's tear-filled look turns from right to left and then stares directly at the viewer as the camera zooms in towards her, as if searching, like the young women for someone who does not expect her to get married and therefore might at the moment provide the clearer mirror of her feelings. Later on in the film, as Isabel talks to Ralph, after having rejected Goodwood's proposal, the same shot recurs. Ralph's gaze emphasizes his desire to control her, but Isabel, as if searching for someone less threatening, turns away from him and looks straight into the camera. It is only when she looks at herself in a mirror, as it does appear, that she understands the significance of self-reliance. According to John Berger:

> Publicity is about social relations, not objects. Its promise is not of pleasure, but of happiness: happiness as judged from the outside by others. The happiness of being envied is glamor. The spectator-buyer is meant to envy herself [sic] as she will become if she buys the product. She is meant to imagine herself transformed by the product into an object of envy for others, an envy which will then justify her loving herself. (Goldman 113)

Campion herself in an interview has suggested that Isabel possessed "very strong sexual aspirations, who wants to be loved" (*Interviews* 180). The images in the film-and the swelling musical score accompanying it-correspond closely to the erotic implications of James's prose: Another sequence occurs just after Goodwood exits (having promised to leave Isabel alone for two years) and thus Isabel experiences a fantasy of making love to Goodwood, Warburton, and Ralph simultaneously (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 17:51-18:25); Isabel seeks to resist patriarchal authority by acknowledging her powerful sexual desires:

> [S]he was trembling-trembling all over. Vibration was easy to her, was in fact too constant with her, and she found herself now humming like a smitten harp.... [T]he sense was there, throbbing in her heart, it was part of her emotion, but it was a thing to be ashamed of-it was profane and out of place. It was not for some ten minutes that she rose from her knees, and even when she came back to the sitting room her tremor had not quite subsided. It had, verily, two causes: Mr. Goodwood, but it might be feared that the rest was simply the enjoyment she found in the exercise of her power (James 1881, p.232).

The third black-and- white fantasy sequence included in the film is suggestive of Isabel's relinquishing that power she has once acquired though its being apparently intended to be a record of her ravels on honeymoon (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 56:14-57:54). Also while the circular motion of parasol-with Osmond's face emerges at the rear of the shot-becomes a vortex into which Isabel’s nude body plunges,a large pair of lips repeat Osmond's declaration ("I'm absolutely in love with you") (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 57:24-57:52); a plate of transmogrified beans repeat the words once more. As Michael Anesko complainingly states, the sequence "deliberately forecloses Isabel's imagined freedom; something he perceives as characteristic of a film that yields to the simplifications of an overriding agenda" (Anesko 2000, p.164). What appears to be significant is how Isabel's acquired freedom is defined, for even when she is experiencing her husband's physical abuse, she simultaneously is experiencing pleasure in it together with the audience's sympathy gained. This sequence, as Laurence

Raw argues, has a positive rather than a negative connotation, for it is in fact capable of encouraging multiple and/or contradictory perspectives. Campion's statement is by itself indicative enough of how Isabel is "fascinated by images of domination and suppression," even while she finds them repugnant: "She believes that she's looking for light, when she's attracted by shadow, by a somber adventure that's going to swallow her up. When Osmond makes his declaration of love, it's in a place plunged in darkness, with beams of light." (qtd. in Raw 164). The truth of this observation depends very much on what is meant by Isabel's imagined freedom; even while suffering physical abuse from her husband, she enjoys the freedom to experience pleasure, as well as solicit the viewer's sympathies.

Critics such as John Carlos Rowe have complained of how willfully such sequences tend to distort James's text. In her endeavor to provide an option for Isabel as Rowe observes, Campion has oversimplified Ralph's role by transforming him into a "late nineteenth century decadent or aesthete, bringing to mind such figures of the aesthetic and avant-garde as Lyton Strachey, Oscar Wilde and John Aldington Symonds" (164). Isabel's alternative to dominate "heterosexual normativity" (164) has been expressed in the black-and-white honeymoon sequence. Row's complaint proceeds with the scene concerning Isabel's making passionate love without intercourse in her climbing into bed with Ralph; he as Rowe elucidates has been forced to "perform the symbolic work of cultural sacrifice for the sake of feminine catharsis" (164). It can thus be argued as he states whether Ralph endures a "cultural sacrifice" (164) at all, either in the novel or the film. Ralph on his deathbed endeavors to control Isabel by maintaining his idealized vision of her: This idealized version of his appears to be the reason why he does not want her to return to Rome and makes this request to her: "You must stay here" (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 2:06: 47-49).In fact, he assures her that no matter what might happen, "for me you'll always be here" (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 2:06:44-47)..He dies, in the end still refusing to believe she will not return to how he once conceived her to be. He instead keeps insisting that she will "grow young again": her "generous mistake" cannot hurt her "for more than a little" (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 2:07:21-43).

That in the film Isabel is responding passionately to Ralph can be regarded as being suggestive of this fact that she has willingly sacrificed herself and her acquired freedom to him. This by itself does not seems to contradict Campion's interpretation, for beside its being coherent in terms of her objectives, Isabel does not seek to renounce patriarchal authority but rather to find out ways of experiencing pleasure within it, and through doing this, she feels much closer to Ralph than she has ever felt before.

Despite its not receiving mass appeal, it can still be argued that Campion's adaptation can be regarded as representative of a bold endeavor to portray the content of the novel in another form not presented before. The director here in this adaptation, in fact, provides a cinematic narrative that makes the audience ponder over new introduced attitudes that have been inserted primarily in order to present contradictory multiple perspectives. She also dares to combine fantasy with psychological realism through utterly disparate elements in order to focus once more on female masochistic pleasures which can by itself be reminiscent of Goldman's statement regarding women's having "sublated the judging power of the male gaze into a self-policing narcissistic gaze" (Goldman 2005, p.108).

Jane Campion apparently has dared to step into an issue about which Mary Gentile, in 1985 has warned feminist filmmakers. According to Mary Gentile, "feminist filmmakers ought to avoid a cinematic language that seeks to create meaning by "focusing, scheduling, narrowing down a proposed concept", for they should rather develop a form that "attempts to open out into various directions, to suggest new correlations and interrelations." (qtd. in Raw 2006, p. 165). Strangely enough, *The Portrait of a Lady* (1996) is perhaps the first James Adaptation to attempt to open out into various directions, suggesting new correlations and interrelations. In both literary and cinematic terms, Campion's *The Portrait of a Lady* turns that representational schema on its head as far as the direct question of portraiture is concerned. For using a sophisticated camera style that is more mobile, searching, and ever-changing than Scorsese's, as Nicholas S. Witschi observes in "Realism and the Cinematic Gaze," is what makes Campion's adaptation of the tale of Isabel Archer "less an assertion of cinema's ability to render

perspective and more a critical interrogation of the formal qualities of cinema" (Witschi 2019, p.829). The use of silent-film-style travelogue images together with the inclusion of a fantasy sequence of the playing of voices of contemporary women reflecting that apparently has no basis in James's original text can by itself according to Nancy Bentley be regarded as representative of Campion's "self-consciously cinematic manipulations" (qtd. in Witschi 2019, p.829). The discussed manipulations according to Bentley also help draw attention to the ways in which cinematic portraiture has a long and fraught history of depicting women particularly as objects of vision (134).

In refusing to overlook the source text, Campion prefers to style John Malkovich, with a tightly groomed beard and a balding head in the role of Gilbert Osmond. As numerous commentators have pointed out, Malkovich's Osmond is, a much more physically cruel tormentor than he is in James's novel; yet the explicit resemblance of Malkovich to James in this film as Witschi asserts should remind viewers of "earlier modes of beholding a potentially limiting and debilitating portrait of a woman" (831). As far as providing both material and an exemplar of an artistic sensibility is concerned, it is literary realism as he observes that matters more to cinema than cinema matters to literary realism. What Campion's version of James's story portraying a young woman of ambition contributes in comparison with what occurred in depicting women on screen in the preceding decades is that it does portray what has not been so daringly depicted even during those periods of the latter decades of nineteenth century that included distinctive force of their own. Whereas directors such as Bogdanovich take up realist material in order to devise the case for the cinematic narrative to tell a story, Campion, in fact. far from it, introduces and inserts a sensitivity to the form that is the basic part of the narrative of that gazing look. Literary realism has in its own way refined such methods of narration that are capable of defining as well as revealing the truth claims of representation. Cinema in fact takes up the selected narrative forms and through its preeminent technology, turns them into what is there for looking and being looked at. In this respect, the author of that zoom-in moment in "Crapy Cornelia" as Witschi observes may well "have understood better than his peers that perception would define "the real," much more so that the other way around" (Witschi 2019, p.832) and that is what Campion has endeavored to accomplish in her adaptation.

Even though Campion has had James's plot on mind, some deviations can well be noticed in this adaptation: the voices and images of modern Australian girls in the prologue, talking about love and kissing, or the sexual fantasy with which the heroine's mind is obsessed, and the end of which her suitors as Bradley observes "dematerialize a la 'Star Trek'" (Bradley 2000, p.41).Laura Jones's script nevertheless stays mostly close to James's dialogue, and also to his later more elaborate revised edition.

Perversely, after all the care and imagination that Campion has poured into sets, locations, costumes and manners, the effort of exactly recreating a physical, historical world, which has perversely given the actors as John Bradley states in *Henry James on Stage and Screen*, "their head in gestural improvisation - with awkward results" (41). Beside this piece of anachronism noticed in this adaptation, there is also the issue of "social solecism" (41) discussed by some critics such as Bradley who asks this question Portrait of a Lady? He asks it when observing Nicole Kidman, whom he describes as "a finely serious though not radiant Isabel" (42), after a day out in London chatting to her cousin Ralph Touchett that is acted by Martin Donovan whom he agreeably calls "wonderful" (42). But when it comes to the process of taking off her boot, sticking her nose in it and sniffing, he discusses the serious problem that is the physical abuse Isabel suffers late in the film, that is neither mentioned in the novel nor in the shooting script, at the hands of her elegant yet cruel husband Gilbert Osmond (John Malkovich), and it is the moment she opposes him. As he argues Campion goes too far in allowing Osmond to go beyond the "maliciously calculated mind-games at which he is expert"(42). He does it to rap her knuckles, trip her on a marble floor and - strangely enough - grinding his head into her temples. There are the scenes that according to his argument Campion has added "to play up the scene at the cost of the story" (42). Isabel (who weeps in nearly every scene) is instantly justified in rebelling as a physically abused and hurt wife. This insertion of the scene on the part of the director has in its turn destroyed the force of the later scene, that has been taken from the novel itself. It is the scene where Osmond insidiously appeals to Isabel's

sense of responsibility and faith: “I think we should accept the consequences of our actions, and what I value most in life is the honor of a thing” (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1:52:45).

6.5. Complex Psychological Compulsions

Isabel faces an ethical dilemma alongside her complex psychological compulsions in James’s novel, whereas in the film, Campion's somewhat masochistic reading of Isabel's choice of Osmond unbalances the drama and cuts out the debate. “(she seems to have been influenced by Alfred Habegger's strong reading in Henry fames and the 'Woman Business' [1989])" (Bradley 2000, p.42). Just like what occurs in the novel, the dying Ralph here hardly could tell Isabel about Osmond’ s feelings and that he “was greatly in love with you”. It would have made a difference in this adaptation, had the director decided that he could have told Isabel. The outcome of the decided upon choice is that instead as John Bradley pus it "Malkovich gives us one of his insolent villains, and it is a shame that William Hurt, who can convincingly do likeability as well as cold selfishness, did not, as originally intended, play the part" (42).

As Cynthia Ozick has commented in her article "What Only Words, Not a Film, Can Portray" published in *The New York Times* in 1997, that any film adaptation of a 'complex and nuanced work of fiction' faces obstacles, one of which is the necessity of cutting much of the language itself: “a film based on a novel is, perforce, essentially an excerpt”. What gets lost in Campion's adaptation of *The Portrait of a Lady* is, as Ozick observes, "exactly what films have no use for: acute, minute examination of motives; the most gossamer vibrations of the inner life', and above all 'something atmospheric … that something akin to what we might call a philosophy of the soul'(qtd. in Bradley 2000, p.162). As Janet Maslin also in *The New York Times*, has asserted similarly, “[s]o much social observation and psychological texture has been stripped from this story that the characters lose their rough edges” (162).

What Campion has daringly done to James’s novel in her adaptation is not all that much unlike making the book her own through her means of appropriating it; this very thing is not confined to this adaptation of hers, for in plumbing James's *The Portrait of a Lady* Campion has echoed those themes in her earlier films. Since this adaptation takes James's novel as a pretext for intervention, rather than a text to be translated directly to the screen, it has been regarded as an “appropriation” or even a “postmodern appropriation, a pastiche of adaptation and invention" (162). What is significant about Campion's title sequence of this adaption is that from the very onset, the audience notice that what they are watching is not going to be necessarily a straightforward literary adaption of a work written by the author of the elite, for apparently it refuses to let the audience indulge in nostalgic scenes, country estates or Italian villas. An adaptation as Bluestone asserts is a "filmed novel" (Bluestone 1957, p.VIII), a novel "brought to life"; regardless of how an adaptation departs from the source text, an adaptation "stands in indissoluble relation" to its source (Boyum 1985, p. 64).

Campion, preferably, intends the viewers to ponder over the differences between James's era and ours simultaneously. The director, in her own way tries to move beyond a straightforward adaptation towards what one might call an upper-middlebrow film bearing its own stamp of difference and variety. On the other hand, through doing this, she has undergone the riskful circumstance of losing the middle-brow viewers well-accustomed to faithful adaptations to literary classics. Also, as its outcome, *The Portrait of a Lady* (1996) has not turned out to be as successful as its star Nicole Kidman had hoped it would. Whereas Most literary adaptations up to Campion's time would conform to rules of making classic nineteenth-century novels accessible to twentieth-century audiences, Campion’s, however, rather than for instance deploying the more typical warm sepia-toned lighting of most period films, insistently renovates the lavish sets and sum. Her own comment well reinforces this attitude that she has intended to turn the audiences' expectations upside down: "When you choose a novel like *The Portrait of a Lady* you aren't trying to win a popularity prize. It's not middle of the road cinema. You know you're out there anyway, so you might as well do what you want to do. There's a lot of film out there for a more medium ground audience" (qtd. in Eaton 2000, p.162).

7. The Inclusion of Montage Sequence Mixing Various Cinematic Styles

Isabel Archer's travels to Egypt in the novel has in Campion's adaptation been portrayed as a bizarre montage sequence mixing early twentieth-century cinematic styles and travelogues together with the director's bold black-and-white sequence in the middle of the film. Also, the silent-era Orientalist films starring Rudolph Valentino, the surrealist films of Luis Bunuel, and the psycho-sexual suspense films of Hitchcock as if providing the audience with an unnecessary lecture on the history of early cinema has just left this feedback in the majority of the audience that Nancy Bentley suggests, in a reading of this sequence, that Campion “has made a film that doesn't try to translate a novel to the screen but attempts something closer to the reverse: a backward displacing of the history and material conditions of film onto a narrative of nineteenth-century womanhood” (163). Campion's boldest innovation in the sequence in nearly the midway point of the film, has apparently served as a lecture on the history of film up to modern time regardless of the viewers' general attitude on receiving such a lecture in the middle of a film. The sequence certainly is deliberately anachronistic, for James's novel, published in 1881, preceded the invention of cinema by some 20 years. In portraying Isabel's world journey, Campion also misses an important aspect, for the issue of cultural refinement depicted through Isabel's travels has somewhat been "burlesqued" through Campion's portraying it “playfully and reductively in silent-film style”, in order to turn her travels “into something more banal and more portentous” (163). The images on screen consolidate the idea that Isabel has repressed her sexual desires, for she can't get Gilbert Osmond out of her mind and so hurries back to get married with him. The real point of Isabel's travels, in this sense, namely to exercise her new-found financial independence and freedom of mobility has been occluded within Campion's interpretation. At this point, these statements from the source text,“The world lay before her,” and “she could do whatever she chose” (James 1881, p.307) do resonate.

7.1. **The Inclusion of a Postmodern Interlude**

Campion reveals Isabel's rash and confused decision to marry Gilbert Osmond through this postmodern interlude; Isabel's meeting with her American suitor Caspar Goodwood in which the heroine is already married comes as the following scene. Campion focuses on the disastrous outcome of the marriage through both omitting the wedding itself and including the black-and-white interlude that is there to serve as a turning point. A shift in the tone of the film is noticed from the implied promise of a young unmarried woman feeling free to do whatever she wants to do with her life to the somber disillusionment of a woman finding herself being married to the wrong man. This is Isabel's sudden decision to get married that leads to Ralph's expressing his disappointment and surprise that she had “come down so easily” (*The Portrait* of *a Lady* 1:02:04). He characterizes her husband as almost too refined for his own good. Even though Osmond is depicted as a dilettante by James, he is portrayed as a snob in the film. Ralph tells Isabel “"I can't get over the sense that Osmond is somehow, well, small”,“I think he's narrow, selfish. He takes himself so seriously" (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 1:02:48-54).

Despite this fact that Ralph regards Osmond “the incarnation of taste”(1:02:53), in his statement that “He's the incarnation of taste”, he implies that thus his taste is somewhat superficial, and might even be illegitimate as well. Isabel, on the other hand, predictably defends her husband: “His taste is exquisite” (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 1:02:54). This exchange of attitudes is peculiarly significant. In a film that is dependent upon viewer interest in high culture, and consequently trades on the viewer's own 'taste' in nineteenth-century novels. Campion's interpretation of Osmond's “exquisite taste” as Eaton states in “ 'Exquisite Taste': the Recent Henry James Films as Middle- brow Culture” is "indicative of the ways in which cultural capital has been denaturalized" (Eaton 2000, p.164). In Campion's view, "exquisite taste" appears to be somewhat suspect, and it is as though "she has taken to heart Bourdieu's lesson in Distinction (1988) that taste is bound up with class privilege and no longer simply a matter of natural sensibilities, as was once assumed" (164). From Isabel's point of view, taste is the problem, and accordingly not Osmond's most attractive feature. In this scene, Campion's critique of Osmond is ultimately conventional, but there is also an irony in Campion's critique; as long as social critique of the

judgment of taste is concerned, her film could only have acquired success by educating filmgoers in what it is generally known as cinematic taste.

Since general viewers are encouraged to encounter and witness wealthy characters and grandiose mansions reminiscent of Hollywood's long-standing avoidance of presentative of the class status and appealing to the taste of the characters, the women there accordingly wear beautiful gowns all of fine fabrics and also detailed embroidery. The homes there are also furnished with 'high-bourgeois drawing room decor': mirrors and oil paintings on the walls, stuffed pillows in dark, rich colors on leather armchairs. With Gilbert Osmond, John Malkovich luxuriating in the rich decor, wearing satin robes around the house, Campion can hardly be accused of adding too much unnecessary luxurious items to the décor. The care with which she contextualizes the elaborate decor in order to make it an integral part of the story, is in fact in line with her following James's lead, for his novel as her source text is also full of precious objects that play significant part in revealing aspects of the characters and at times even advancing the plot. There is a scene that speaks out all of this so well and that is the moment when Osmond admires a piece of fine china: “Please be careful with that precious object” (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 1:47:07), Osmond replies: “[I]t already has a small crack in it, anyway” (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 1:47:09); this very comment is manifested in his rough treatment with Isabel, the most precious being, or more appropriately, the most supposedly precious “object” in his collection. She too gradually experiences bearing cracks as a consequence of being married to this man.

As Anthony Lane observes in *The New Yorker*, Campion’s decision to bring out the mostly buried 'prospect of erotic adventure' in *The Portrait of a Lady*, “feels like an error, if not of taste at least of perspective” (qtd. in Eaton 2000, p.165). Even though he does not state it directly, Lane somewhat draws near ascribing bad taste to Campion, for he does accuse her of poor judgement. Given that the film everywhere invokes the notion of taste as a defining characteristic, the mere suggestion of bad taste can nevertheless be by itself ironic. Moreover, as he proceeds the film has tried to "galvanize a middle-brow audience by appealing to their taste for a deliberately non-commercial product" (165). Whereas the Italian sets and the costume design and the other decorated stuff all do conform to period-piece style, the film attempts experimental stylistic features: for instance, the deployment of several visual motifs and the frame of the beginning. It is a matter of dispute whether in this respect Campion's adaptation contains a conflict of interest. The cast of noteworthy actors alone was expected to guarantee acquisition on of both critical acclaim and a wider audience for this adaptation, whereas the film's heavy direction departing from convention has pushed it far from the expectations.

7.2. The Display of Acclaimed Actors and Innovative Techniques

The combination of acclaimed actors and innovative technique were in fact fundamental factors in bringing success for Campion's previous film, i.e. *The Piano*, that did receive several Academy Award nominations. *Holly Hunter* also won the Oscar for Best Actress. In the case of *The Portrait of a Lady* (1996), on the other hand, total accomplishment was to receive merely one nomination (Barbara Hershey for Best Supporting Actress). Despite the deployment of likewise factors and elements, the ultimate result of popular success was not similarly met. This might not all be Campion's fault totally, for as Michael Anesko observes in "The Consciousness on the Cutting Room Floor. Jane Campion's *The Portrait of a Lady*", part of the reason, may be that James's novels seem irrelevant to too many viewers. Henry James could seldom keep a secret about his early masterpiece, *The Portrait of a Lady*, he revealed several in the Preface composed for the New York Edition of that novel: “its date (1879) and whereabouts (Florence) of inception; its deliberate displacement of incident by character as the intended vehicle of plot; its grand architectural principle of design" (Anesko 2000, p. 177). That might resound the very theme tempting enough for a feminist director; what more could she ask for with the fundamental element sill present there for a cinematic adaptation? Nevertheless, the best thing' about James's *The Portrait of the Lady* does not appear in Jane Campion's adaptation of the novel, and this is an omission, as Anesko observes, "surely worthy of interrogation. Admittedly, the challenge would be intimidating: how might a long, silent psychological tableau be conveyed through a necessarily abbreviated sequence of visual images

(enhanced by a soundtrack)?" (177). Even if Campion's avoidance of this particular moment in her adaptation be regarded as an indirect Campion's *The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, is the thing that altogether "subverts the convenience of this logic" (178), because in other instances the director does use the camera to reveal the inner life of Isabel Archer or at least her erotic fantasies. The issue at hand at this point is apparently "editorial and not tactical, for how -and why - did 'the best thing' about the novel end up on the cutting room floor?" (178) as Michael Anesko asserts. Laura Jones comments on her intimate collaboration with Campion over "what kind of film it could be" in a preface to her screenplay of *The Portrait of a Lady*.

7.3. Feminine Subjectivity

The director and the script writer decided that their script should affirm the universal implications of what it is like to be a girl like Isabel, in any time as they searched out the novel's feminist implications over a series of meetings. To accomplish this end, Jones asserts that they had to do what James had done, to understand Isabel (echoing a crucial phrase from the novelist's own Preface) as theirs "of consciousness" (178). Campion's failure in translating that motive to the screen, however, has been observed everywhere. According to Cynthia Ozick, Isabel (played by Nicole Kidman) is "far more Ms. Campion's creation than James's', a crudely reductive parody of the novel's complex original" (178). As Janet Maslin quipped in *The New York Times*, Instead of faithfully reiterating James's novel, Ms. Campion chooses to "reimagine it as a Freudian fever dream. In place of James's nineteenth-century romantic idealist, Campion's Isabel is a thoroughly postmodern female masochist" (178).

As Campion once remarked "When you choose a novel like *The Portrait of a Lady*, you aren't trying to win a popularity prize", (178)"; in fact she apparently hasn't been nominated for one according to the film's reviews, and disappointing box-office returns, but the case wasn't all that different with James who as a novelist has had several occasions during which he would experience chronic unsailability. Though the movie's occasionally bizarre deflections from James's text has been lamented by several critics, there were simultaneously others who did admire Campion's bold freedom in recasting James's novel. Since Campion's adaptation does not pursue fidelity to the novel and its historical era, as Robert Sklar observes, her adaptation "presents a new way of thinking about movie adaptations of literature" (qtd. in Anesko 2000, p. 179). Even though neither screenplay nor film follows James's novel closely,and it is something that no one would expect, in many respects this adaptation adheres to its source text. All the elements, from the green English scenery to the magnificent costumes, grandiose aristocratic setting, and the golden Italian sunshine have been chosen as closely as possible to the original descriptions given by James in the novel. English turf was never greener, all the splendid dialogues deployed in the movie have also been driven from the New York Edition text. Considering the amount of fidelity to James's novel, the screenplay has indeed undergone some sort of inevitable compression. As for deviations from James's novel, even though they are not innumerable, they have somewhat conspicuously been included. What makes them so conspicuous, is according to Anesko, "exactly the film's inertial historicity and commitment to lush visual realism. The episodes to which almost all viewers have had conflicting responses are really just three in number" (179). As for one instance of this adaptation's deviation from James's novel, the anachronistical sequence (*The Portrait of a Lady*, 2:40) is displaying casually dressed young women staring directly out from the screen or intentionally posing for the camera that is observing them in restrained black-and-white. There is also the soundtrack there before these images on the screen that is played together with the women's soliloquizing over some erotic issue in their Australian accent.

Campion's preface to her adaptation is of a paradoxical type and lets the film begin in medias res with Isabel Archer receiving Lord Warburton's offer of marriage in an agitated state. The female bodies and feminine faces there demonstrate some sort of emphasis upon feminine subjectivity there which is not to be traced in James's novel itself. In juxtaposing faceless, disembodied feminine subjectivity with a focused insistence on the female body, as subject, this unexpected visual rupture, which is as Anesko states, "doubly violent to anyone anticipating a more leisurely foregrounding of the subject (such as we so

memorably recall from James's novel), almost forces the viewer to gasp for air" (179). The sudden appearance of Nicole Kidman's anxious face is juxtaposed with the relaxed musical score to which some of Campion's models innocently dance with their indifferent freedom. In the recesses of Gardencourt, Kidman then, tense and conflicted, a prisoner of her wasp-waisted dress, makes a kind of tortured retreat across the lawn to find sanctuary from her suitor. The image of "hampered flight" (180) is the image through which Campion tropes Isabel's psychological unrest from the very beginning.

7.4. The Significance of Motion

Unlike that significant scene in James's novel, depicting Isabel as motionless, Campion's Isabel never finds herself motionlessly seeing something, or at least partially, for Campion's heroine is virtually in motion. Even when she is not, it does not draw near James's text, it is just for the sake of another instance of Campion's reformulation of the source novel. As a director, Campion's greater degree of authorial endorsement can well be noticed in her giving visual reality to Isabel's imagination of being loved (or more clearly sexually aroused).

In the course of the reformulation occurred in this adaptation, it is not just one, but two suitors who are sent packing by Isabel. Caspar Goodwood, the American, who occurs to be the second suitor, has followed her from the States and has also intercepted his intended at her London hotel. Isabel, however, Instead of refusing him on the spot, asks Goodwood for time in order to see the world, enjoy her freedom and resolve her conflicted feelings. (One should not forget that she has previously given him hope and reason enough to be hopefully encouraged). Isabel offers him her hand in farewell, after receiving his unwillingly given consent to let her be alone. The amplification of the musical score takes control of the mood of the scene. Having Caressed her cheek in quick repetition of Goodwood's touch, Isabel then glides down the length of the bed, lets her fingers brush her eyes and forehead. Goodwood at this time, tenderly lifts Isabel's chin with his hand, in order to once more look Isabel in her eyes. Before faring her well, his forefinger glances her cheek and then he departs. The moment he is beyond her scene, Isabel kicks the room's door shut behind him. In reverie, after a while of close company with both Goodwood and Warburton, Isabel turns her head to one side, then eventually opens her eyes to find Ralph, her cousin, beside her. What startles her at this moment is the sense of being observed. Consequently, Isabel flees from her fantasy, and the three men (Ralph independently, Warburton and Goodwood locked in violent confrontation) dissolve from the screen (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 17:51-18:25).

7.5. Depiction of Erotic Innuendo via Images and Musical Score

These images, accentuated by the musical score accompanying them, correspond closely to as Anesko states the "erotic innuendo" (Anesko 2000, p.180) embedded in James's text. Isabel after getting rid of Goodwood, ("by an irresistible impulse) drops on her knees before the 'looming... four-posted bed' and buries her face in her arms. 'She was not praying,' James writes, she was trembling - trembling all over.

> Vibration was easy to her, was in fact too constant with her, and she found herself now humming like a smitten harp. She only asked, however, to put on the cover, to case herself again in brown holland, but she wished to resist her excitement, and the attitude of devotion, which she kept for some time, seemed to help her to be still. She intensely rejoiced that Caspar Goodwood was gone; there was something relieving in having thus got rid of him that was like the payment, for a stamped receipt, of some debt too long on her mind. As she felt the glad relief she bowed her head a little lower; the sense was there, throbbing in her heart; it was part of her emotion, but it was thing to be ashamed of - it was profane and out of place. It was not for some ten minutes that she rose from her knees, and even when she came back to the sitting-room her tremor had not quite subsided. It had had, verily, two causes: part of it was to be accounted for by her long discussion with Mr. Goodwood, but it might be feared that the rest was simply the enjoyment she found in the exercise of her power (James 1882, pps.144-5).

Isabel's vibration doesn't last for 10 minutes (rather 2:14) on screen, but there is more to what we watch there, for that compression there is compensated. What James suggests there reticently and somewhat implicitly has been depicted visually explicit, for Campion's treatment of this scene is deeply nuanced, psychologically, especially through the inclusion of Ralph, whose presence as spectator marks his ambiguous role in the structure of Isabel's sexual desire. Isabel simultaneously becomes aware of the extent to which she has as Anesko observes, "objectified" (Anesko 2000, p.181) herself for her lovers; in becoming aware of Ralph's yearning gaze, that occurs to be "less voyeuristic than sympathetically vicarious, she goes through an epiphany that both feeds and disrupts her fantasy of arousal" (181). Isabel's capacity for defending herself has been confirmed through this expressive scene together with her vulnerability simultaneously. Campion's film unfortunately enough, doesn't appear to be maintaining this level of thematic ambiguity and as Anesko observes "ultimately yields to the simplifications of an overriding agenda" (181). A restless accession of vulgarity disfigures even the most polished scenes that follow the instant Gilbert Osmond (John Malkovich) enters the scene.

When Madame Merle first speaks to him of Isabel, the grotesque chortle that bursts from his lips not only dishonors the subject of their talk, it also in no time makes the hypocrisy of Osmond's “gilded seclusion from a world so tiresomely beneath him obvious" (182). James' mysterious allure that has so meticulously been built up in long stretches of indirect narration here collapses into a figure of what Anesko describes as "crude malevolence, a spider-like Svengali" (182). Ironically, this compressed transformation has been made more conspicuous through the careful economy of Jones's screenplay, that has skillfully plumped together sections of running dialogue from James's text. The significant point in her screenplay is not the language but the delivery of for instance "Osmond's gestures, articulation and poses (elements controlled by the director) - effects this radical change" (182).

7.6. The Implication of Impulsive Will and Agitated Moral Consciousness via Visual Shorthand

The novel's careful elaboration of the social context of Isabel's new-born subjectivity, her impulsive will and agitated moral consciousness with which James has created her, all this can only be traced in Campion's adaptation through her sort of visual shorthand. The novel's expressive prelude to Isabel's arrival in England has not been left secure, Warburton's proposal of marriage, the whole American foreground of Isabel's career have also been incredibly shortened. One of the most conspicuous consequences of this shortening is that Isabel's decision to marry Osmond rather inexplicably and right after her impulsive decisions and actions is to follow: confirming her impulse to run from things that agitate her, she decides to go to London to meet her American friend, the journalist Henrietta Stackpole, and also tour the capital. In order to sustain European standards of decorum, after refusing Warburton, Mrs. Touchett insists that her cousin accompany her: “With Ralph you may go anywhere,” (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 07:49) she states and her statement is confronted with Isabel's angry response: “Isn't anything proper here?” (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 07:52). Her aunt's response to her statement instantly shifts perspective to accentuate the impression of her impulsive rashness. But when she turns to answer Mrs. Touchett's “Mme. Merle: There's something I should like you to do in Florence. There's a friend of mine 1 want you to know. Osmond: What good will that do me? Mme. Merle: It will amuse you. [Osmond almost chokes on a plosive laugh.] If only I could induce you to make an effort” (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 36:42-37:07). Significantly, in James's text - just at the point that Osmond interrupts Madame Merle- the narrative voice explains that there “was nothing crude in this rejoinder; it had been thoroughly well considered” (James 1881, p.206). Campion reverses the intention of this authorial cue.

We can observe more closely an intimate detail of Isabel's personal surroundings, the moment the focus is briefly shifted, for an instant, to the dressing screen behind her. Quite aware of the symbolic power things can have, Campion as Madame Merle does, has a great respect for things photographs of beaux and admirers, a dancing card scribbled with names, the wilted remnant of a wrist corsage instead of a nineteenth-century woman's ordinary boudoir ornaments. Campion has made Isabel methodically insert slips of paper into one frame of the screen with what appears to be vocabulary words written on them. We

see the words inscribed when her hand reaches up to retrieve these flashcards: Nihilism, nihilistic, Probity, honesty, integrity, Admonish, Admonition, Admonitory, Abnegate, Aberration and Aberrant.

In fact, only the first two of these mentioned words are readily recognizable to the viewer, for the fifth slip at the top of the series remains totally obscure that might even be regarded as a blank one. The camera pauses for merely a fraction of a second in its upward sweeping which is by itself suggestive of this point that even though Isabel correctly has provided a definition for probity correctly, she is still uncertain about the meaning of nihilism. Sadly enough, her being married to Osmond does not mean anything far different. There is some admonition concerning Isabel's fate and future that is in a way that can best be described through terms ‘curiosity’ and ‘naiveté’ (Anesko 184). The apparently blank scrap at the top of the column might even conflate the heroine's character with that of Pansy, Osmond's not all that fortunate daughter who according to James's description in the novel occurs to be "really a blank page, a pure white surface, successfully kept so; she had neither art, nor guile, nor temper, nor talent - only two or three small exquisite instincts...Yet to be so tender was to be touching withal, and she could be felt as an easy

Victim of fate' " (James 1881, p.268). The fate Campion has cast for Isabel Archer, appears to be victimization, for the simplification cast on her is also the director's choice that eventually presents her simply enough indeed as a victim for Osmond's predatory attitudes. The camera again works to restrict both her vision and will when in his museum-like Florentine villa, Isabel eventually meets her fate. In the novel, on the other hand, she feels very much like she has found herself in the presence of a prominently privileged man. “His pictures, his medallions and tapestries were interesting”, as James states, “but after a while Isabel felt the owner much more so, and independently of them, thickly as they seemed to overhang him. He resembled no one she had ever seen... Her mind contained no class offering a natural place to Mr. Osmond - he was a specimen apart” (James 1881, p. 224). Isabel's comprehension of the whole setting in Campion's adaptation seems much less significant than Osmond's treatment with his daughter through taking Pansy between his knees, stroking her bare forearms with his hands and also circling her waist with his arms. Apparently there is, as Anesko observes, something beyond Osmond's fatherly fondling that is capable of sensualizing Isabel's apprehension "at the expense of equally significant social or aesthetic impressions to which she might otherwise be susceptible" (Anesko 2000, p. 184). Even though James's Isabel goes through her first meeting with Osmond impressed with his noticeable success in sustaining his worldly independence, Campion, on the other hand, shifts the focus to her heroin's latent sexual curiosity. The film’s intentional revealing Isabel's imagined freedom and her inclining towards a sort of “visual prurience” (184) is launched from this point onwards. In order to “physicalize what James only implied” (184), Campion has bestowed an irresistible tactile magnetism on Osmond. Then comes the series of his touches that are the elements that do not belong to fantasy, first touch of a man's lips - outside the realm of fantasy - snares are the very things that are powerful enough to snare Isabel completely. When Osmond declares his love to Isabel, his words -and lips are the elements that are to haunt the haunted young Isabel as she goes on her journeys to far away territories.an interlude (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 1:45) The quick sequence of clips is there to act as a vehicle to disclose Isabel's psychological state of mind for the viewers in a surrealist mood through the visual anachronism of the black-and-white home movie that has intentionally been portrayed amateurish. The moment has come when Isabel's instinct to flee what agitatingly perplexes her no longer resolves her plight. The scene of “tossing of the ship, the back and-forth shifting of furniture and cargo, when seen from above, are reflective of a disturbing new inner fluctuation and the lateral roll of the steamer is suggestive of stasis rather than forward motion" (185). The exaggerated speed of some of the footage: Isabel, clad in desert clothing, on an Egyptian camel in a similar mode done rapidly, makes a contrast with the camera's lingering, focus on the mysterious dislocated images. The images are comprised of the echoes Osmond's declaration with a plate of transmogrified beans that are there to keep repeating his words; the parasol's swirling pattern is another image that becomes a vortex into which Isabel's nude body plunges. Through the deployment of this compressed montage of cinematic styles, Campion is certainly commenting on her own medium rather than on James, for the film to become more self-conscious than its heroine as Anesko observes may seem an "odd reversal; but the filming of a lady now takes precedence to the portrait of one, but the logic of the

act seems inexorably pornographic" (185). That same logic has apparently been applied to the film's explicit violence; when Isabel and Osmond immediately become engaged at a time when pulled back to Florence, Isabel is the one who must find an answer for the skepticism of others. Campion departs from the screenplay's modest stage direction by having Isabel strike him across the face when Ralph confronts his beloved cousin with obvious disappointment: “You were meant for something better than to keep guard over the sensibilities of a sterile dilettante”. (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 1:02:48-54). Osmond's treatment of his wife, on the other hand, is noticeably more sadistic after three years of their marriage. The prominent instance is when Osmond becomes convinced that Isabel has interfered with his plans to marry his daughter to Lord Warburton who occurs to be more in love with Isabel than her step-daughter (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 1:35:43-36:20). Osmond accentuates his accusations through slapping Isabel three times. When to escape his questions (if not his abuse), Isabel forces her way across the marble, she once more finds her dress resisting her. Even when Osmond's overmastering foot sends her sprawling to the floor, she is still on her feet, and not yet thoroughly humiliated. While Osmond aggressively nuzzles his whiskers into her neck and face, she must now reply to his insistent queries (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 1:36:21-1:37:21). Isabel is not the only one who stands all such brutal gestures: “Isabel stands quickly, and so does Ralph” (James 1881, p.64) Osmond's conduct during this episode is complemented by the silence of the screenplay. It is in their final scene together, later, that Isabel receives Osmond's hypocritical injunction when he repudiates her wish to return to England by striking her forehead against the mantel of his chill studio fireplace: “You are nearer to me than any human creature, and I'm nearer to you” (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 1:52:26). As the novel itself informs us it was 'Ten minutes before,' that “she had felt all the joy of unreflective action - a joy to which she had so long been a stranger; but action had been suddenly changed to slow renunciation, transformed by the blight of Osmond's touch' (James 1881, p. 446) At last, Ralph is dying and Campion translates James's complicated part of the plot in terms of a glittering self-mutilation with his particular consistency.

7.7. Impulsive Reaction VS. Physical Withdrawal

For the director, the most challenging part to both place and understand is perhaps related to Isabel's inner reactions to the circumstance in which she has been situated. Campion rearranges the scenes through which Jones's screenplay has attempted faithfully to record Isabel's situation in a sort of editing process from her perspective. When during moments of self-discovery in accordance with the novel's structure, Isabel eventually realizes that Madame Merle holds the same view as Osmond regarding capturing Warburton. When she states “let us have him”, she has actually made an inadvertent declaration. Isabel also through asking the question “ Who are you…What have you to do with me?” expresses her surprise. When she receives Madame Merle response “Everything” (*The Portrait of a Lady* 1996, 1:44:17-29), her impulsive reaction to this unexpected incident is once more through resorting or in fact escaping to physical withdrawal. In Jones's screenplay, this is portrayed through showing Isabel walking by herself in a twilit grove of cypress trees “'contemplating the ruins of her happiness” (qtd. in Anesko 2000, p.185). Campion, on the other hand, transposes this scene in order to make it act as a means through which Isabel's physical victimization by Osmond is depicted. Even though the mood can be regarded as comparable, the same is not true about the lighting, for Osmond does not physically abuses his wife at a time when “her silhouette” as Anesko observes " would hardly be visible after sundown" (Anesko 185).

What Jones has put in her scripts can be conceived of as a terse equivalent to the novel's Chapter 42 and has appeared as such on the screen. Osmond then instantly orders Isabel to spare Warburton's apparently endless corridor that was lit by candles on wall brackets.at intervals The candles’ light would cast two lines of glowing reflections on the sides of the corridor's floor with Isabel walking down the corridor, moving toward the darkness at the far end carrying her candle. Between the two lines of glowing reflections in the center path, "It was the house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation"’ (James 1881, pps.81-2). Campion, on the other hand, in order to make this scene follow Osmond's last cold rejection of his wife's request to attend her dying cousin Ralph, dislocates this scene. Despite the deployment of dim lightning for the set, this fact can by no means be concealed that Isabel's

dress and jewelry are completely different from what she was wearing just a moment before, although there is no sense of a visibly cued flashback. Beside these dislocated entities' being crude symbolic instances of visual discontinuity, Isabel's consciousness also betrays a "fundamental misprision of the film's central subject" (Anesko 2000, p.187). Henry James's being exquisite about the issue of timing does pinpoint this adaptation's negligence of such an issue. This by itself is somewhat reminiscent of what Henry James has stated: “the public that subscribes, borrows, lends, that picks up in one way and another, sometimes even by purchase - grows and grows each year, and nothing is thus more apparent than that of all the recruits it brings to the book the most numerous by far are those that it brings to the ‘story’ ” (qtd. in Anesko 2000, p. 187). The novelist has apparently predicted such occurrences before hand in his day, for he was in fact the one who decided to “address The Future of the Novel at the beginning of the century” (187) that was to witness the advent of technology and the upcoming sunset of the novel at the dawn of cinema and movie. What he most astutely discerned was how closely the future of the novel was related to the nature of the society receiving and consuming it. What James understood most keenly was that the future of the novel was inextricably bound up with the nature of the society that consumed it, an audience that in his day was expanding.

Nevertheless, James's recent rediscovery by Hollywood underscores the fundamental truth of his century-old insight. “In a society with a great and diffused literary sense”, as Henry James observes in *The Art of Criticism*, “ the talent at play can only be a less negligible thing than in a society with a literary sense barely discernible. A community addicted to reflection and fond of ideas will try experiments with the 'story' that will be left untried in a community mainly devoted to traveling and shooting, to pushing trade and playing football (James 1986, p. 247). With this in mind, that would be no wonder to find Campion’s adaptation of Henry James’s modern *The Portrait of a Lady* assuming even a post-modern facet in some respects.

7.8. Depiction of Cultural Confrontation

Campion in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1996), deliberately deploys anachronisms, one of which is the prologue of women's voices describing their ideas about love and desire that is followed by the portraits of women watch[ing] themselves being looked at, in order to as Carlos Rowe asserts in "For Mature Audiences: Sex, Gender and Recent Film Adaptations of Henry James's Fiction “push the late nineteenth and late twentieth centuries into uneasy contact” (Rowe 2000, p.193). In order to alienate viewers from nostalgic identification with characters, locales and the historical period, Campion's meta-cinematic devices and moments are regular in an adequate way, consequently our attention is focused on what stays from the past in our present circumstances. The representation of feminine identity and their respective ideals of a proper woman at the end of the twentieth century govern how bodies and sexualities has not been merely deployed in this adaptation, for it has also been employed in two other adaptations based upon James's novels as well, i.e. *Washington Square* and *Wings of a Dove*. All the aforementioned adaptations work out their diverse conflicts chiefly through social and economic circumstances of the late twentieth century. With the overt “theatricalisation of sexuality and the substitution of the sensuous body for Jamesian psychological interiority” (196) in these films, as Carlos Row observes, that feminine identity is the ideological issue that is required to be clarified. All three films move towards moral conclusions about how women ought to act and thus appear socially, now that it is “commonly agreed (or so the different films argue) that older definitions of feminine identity primarily in terms of sexual reproduction are either politically unacceptable or unworkable in the different social and economic circumstances of the late twentieth century” (196). All these films, On the surface, develop James's heroines into film protagonists who, even as such nineteenth-century attitudes of feminine identity are thematised, consciously reject marriage and motherhood, often by way of strategic nostalgia and then in each film are decisively rejected.

Despite Campion's argument differing prominently from the simple progressive politics of Holland's film, her heroine (Nicole Kidman) has also instances of failed marriage and the associated troubles of their offsprings around her, ranging from the orphaned Isabel to the separated Touchetts (John

Gielgud and Shelley Winters) and their dying son, Ralph (Martin Donovan), to Osmond (John Malkovich), Merle (Barbara Hershey) and Pansy (Valentina Cervi). Campion's Isabel, in the final scene, even as she flees Goodwood's possessive sexuality, is left in a suspended position, and the film's reaction to Victorian conventions of femininity regarding marriage and the family shows no sign of ambiguity.

Despite Henry James's being the novelist of "broken families and homes, at his time divorce could not be thought of as the normative consequence of marriage" (196). In the films based on his novels, these unhappy families do not appear to be depending on the conflict or confusion of two fins-de-siècles; instead, they take on more contemporary meanings unlike the ones pertinent to James's own time. At the turn of the nineteenth century, James could still,as Carlos Rowe asserts, imagine that the family might be fixed and that "the growing rates of divorce in England and America might be reversed, rather than divorce become the normative result of marriage" (196). Sadoff's statements concerning the failure of marriage and the family about Campion's *The Portrait of a Lady* (1996), can also be applicable to Holland's and Softley's films: The social anxiety about the failure of marriage and the family "as institutions that is generated by the statistics of divorce mobilizes the transportability of the nineteenth-century novel into film.'(qtd. in Rowe 198).

What the empowered anxiety together with the uncontrolled and unsublimated sexuality portrayed in Campion's adaptation appear to address, does go beyond James's text and even intentions. Focusing on the sado-masochism that results from the profoundly repressive practices of the bourgeois family, Campion's *The Portrait of a Lady* (1996) addresses this contemporary problem in liberal progressive terms. The cultural anxiety represented in these films exceeds considerably just worry about divorce rates and related social problems. If the postmodern family is irretrievably broken, how do we as Row asserts "regulate and direct sexual desire?" (198). For all the flagrant sexual display in these films, especially Campion's and Softley's, the viewer gets the sense of an overpowering anxiety about uncontrolled, unsublimated sexuality. These films as Carlos Row observes seem to ask, often against their directors' intentions, "What is sex for in an age of overpopulation and global want, AIDS and a host of other sexually transmitted diseases and under the shadow of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis?" (Rowe 2000, p.198). Once uncoupled from the family, procreation, mothering and nurture, sexual desire as he proceeds, becomes a dangerous sublime that threatens social coherence and reason itself. Campion's *The Portrait of a Lady* addresses this contemporary problem in liberal progressive terms, focusing on the "sado-masochism that results from the profoundly repressive practices of the bourgeois family" (198). Gender hierarchies within such families instruct children at home in the ways of the wider capitalist world, preparing them for the class inequities from which they will benefit or suffer. Karen Chandler points out that "the strong man in chains entertaining the crowd outside Pratt's Hotel appears just before' Isabel's meeting with Caspar Goodwood inside the hotel, when he pens her in and touches her face without her permission" (198). ln the constraint and repression women experience everyday within the family and often teach their children, as he proceeds they also structure social and economic relations outside the family.

8. Conclusion

This interdisciplinary study has endeavored to delve into the focal character of this cinematic adaptation through the lens of psychological realism. In order to acquire insight into the psychological process she goes through, the audio-visual art deployed presenting gestures, facial expressions and a symbolically suggestive mise-en-sce-ne are analyzed. This paper is concerned with the study of psychological realism in Jane Campion's cinematic adaptation of Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* and that how through deployment of close ups and long shots, together with other contributing techniques and means this process of modification from source text to film has been carried out. The semiotic record of the presented shapes and images in this study have also contributed in revealing the latent meaning behind the cinematically articulated appearance. This paper has discussed how Jane Campion in this cinematic adaptation of *The Portrait of a Lady* contextualizes and appropriates her portrayal of a dependent inactive character's attaining her independence and securing her achieved position.

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