

The age of innocence



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Narrative A telling of an event or sequence of events; a story involving characters and what they say and do
 Narrator the person who tells a narrative; the imagined voice telling a story (as distinguished from the author)
 First Person use of " I"; perspective of a single character who is part of the story
 Third Person Omniscient narrator who is outside the story but has access to the thoughts of all characters
 Third Person Limited narrator who is outside the story and describes the thoughts of only one character
 Focalization The perspective from which the events of a narrative are seen; point of view
 A third-person omniscient narration is what type of focalization unfocalized, since it incorporates all perspectives
 A first-person or third-person limited narration is what type of focalization A first-person or third-person limited narration is focalized through a particular character, limited to that character's point of view
 "[T]he world of fashion was still content to reassemble every winter in the shabby red and gold boxes of the sociable old Academy. Conservatives cherished it for being small and inconvenient... and the sentimental clung to it for its historic associations, and the musical for its excellent acoustics..." (3)

- No individuals here
- Wide angle view whole of society

The Age of Innocence Edith Wharton Point of View of The Age of Innocence. Third Person Limited

Focalization is on Newland Archers POV" When Newland Archer opened the door at the back of the club box the curtain had just gone up on the garden scene" (4)

" Newland Archer, leaning against the wall at the back of the club box, turned his eyes from the stage and scanned the opposite side of the house"

(5) [May]

" Newland Archer, following Lefferts's glance, saw with surprise that his

exclamation had been occasioned by the entry of a new figure into old Mrs. Mingott's box" (8) [Ellen]• Slowly shifts our view point to Archer

- Primary actor is SOCIETY AS A WHOLE
- New York society comes to the Opera to look at each other not at the Opera" New York was a metropolis, and perfectly aware that in metropolises it was 'not the thing' to arrive early at the opera; and what was not 'the thing' played a part as important in Newland Archer's New York as the inscrutable totem terrors that had ruled the destinies of his forefathers thousands of years ago" (4)Anthropological metaphor

New York was a metropolis..... thousands of years ago.

Comparison to ancient primitive society

Look at the customs of New York, they are primitive

Wharton is saying coming fashionably late is violating a taboo is you do not, punishable by death

Turning anthropological idea on own society

" that ritual of ignoring the 'unpleasant'" (22)

" The New York ritual was precise and inflexible" (22)

" the Mingotts and the Mansons and all their clan... and the Archer-Newland-van-der-Luyden tribe" (28)

" it was against all the rules of the code that mother and son should ever allude to what was uppermost in their thoughts" (32)

" his duty as a future member of the Mingott clan" (32)

" according to immemorial custom... While this rite was in progress..." (35)•

Ritual clan tribe distances us from the seemingly ordinary events going on in this world." In reality they all lived in a kind of hieroglyphic world, where the

real thing was never said or done or even thought, but only represented by a set of arbitrary signs, as when Mrs. Welland, who knew exactly why Archer had pressed her to announce her daughter's engagement... yet had felt obliged to simulate reluctance... quite as, in the books on primitive man that people of advanced culture were beginning to read, the savage bride is dragged with shrieks from her parents' tent" (38)

[Saussure on arbitrariness of language] Shows the anthropological fascination of the time and distances us from the seemingly ordinary events going on in this world

- Our arbitrary behaviors are just as savage and nonsensical. Highly VIOLENT text
- Collapsing primitive and contemporary society, showing the savage
- " Heiroglyphic world" (Image) being educated in the code world where everyone behaves in symbolic value
- Arbitrary signs. DOing away with natural way of acting
- Arbitrarily decided nor reason or sense just what society does, just as strange as any other society

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Ferdinand DeSaussure Swiss Linguist
A sign is made up of a signifier (the word or symbol itself) and a signified (the concept it stands for)

Link between signifier/ signified is not natural, but arbitrary, based only on convention

o Wharton endorses idea social behavior is arbitrary

o Based entirely on convention

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Archer on Women • " abysmal purity" (6)

- " the terrifying product of the social system he belonged to and believed in" (36)
- " all this frankness and innocence were an artificial product... factitious purity, so cunningly manufactured by a conspiracy of mothers and aunts and grandmothers and long-dead ancestresses" (38-9)
- " Women ought to be free--as free as we are" (35)• " abysmal purity" (6)
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- " Women ought to be free--as free as we are" (35)Archer's view on women

A TYPE not a person
Modern Society in the Age of Innocence. • Incredible strength of convention, but that they are arbitrary

- Just as primitive as practice of any other culture

- Begins to get a dual visionsign
Made up of a signified and a signifier
SignifierWord or symbolSignifiedconcept it stands for
"'Nice' women, however wronged, would never claim the kind of freedom he meant, and generous-minded men like himself were therefore... the more chivalrously ready to concede it to them" (36)

" There was no use in trying to emancipate a wife who had not the dimmest notion she was not free" (165)Gender system

- o Archer is realizing gap

- o femininity is a social product

- o Does not reject social system but still adheres and believes it

- o Turn towards the system that created all the characters

- o Rather than saying we should all be free individuals- individuals are a product of the arbitrary society

- Stereotype of femininity

- not a character at all

- Women ought to be free idea is an ironic idea,

- Man's role in femininity

- Create person in May
- simultaneous inside and outside Archer

Foreignness and femininity: " perverse and provocative" (89)

" the countess was apparently unaware of having broken any rule" (53)

" For the first time he perceived how elementary his own principles had always been" (81)

" But my freedom--is that nothing?" (94)

" Is there nowhere in an American house where one may be by one's self?" (112)• Disrupts thick social system

- Insider and outsider
- Provocative about her femininityNew York Society and Ellen Olenska•

Unaware of rules of New York Society

o Newcomer acting in a different thing from the norm

o Shows archer how elementary his own principals are

o reverses his values and social rules

o language of freedom

o Principal of individuality

o European model of freedom.

o Does not want to be different

o Perverse desire to conform to the rules

o Accepts the idea that society is rigid and will not change

o Acquiescing to social views

- " I cant love you unless I give you up" (145)

What is deserving of love in Archer, his obedience to social customs

Tries to defend Ellen, his integrity that is so important

The condition of their love is to have that distance

to violate rules would be to violate that which was lovable about them both

o A story of American Society in particular"... but one can't make over

society.' 'No,' she acquiesced" (94)

encounter at her house (137)

" it's too late to do anything but what we'd both decided on" (144)

" you had felt the world outside tugging at one with all its golden hands.. and

yet you hated the things it asked of one... That was what I'd never known

before--and it's better than anything I've known... I can't love you unless I

give you up" (145)Idea of Elen Olenska trying to conform to a society which

is rejecting her for her nonconforming to the society she was enteringWhy

doesn't Elen go back?(Re) Discovering America

- We ought to be different from Europeans

- Why doesn't she go back?

o Archer made her understand things about the nuances of American life

o self sacrifice for society

o Europe a place of self centeredness

o Equates with idea of Americans

o Giving oneself up for the customs of society, selfless

o believe in their rules, know they are arbitrary, most admirable about

Archer different from Europe ON THE AGE OF INNOCENCE SPECIFICALLY FOR

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