Name of Student

Name of Professor

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Day Month Year

Analytical Essay

***What is the role of culture in connecting or alienating characters from each other?***

***Introduction***

There are various female novelists in English literature but ver**y** few could be included in the list of who criticized the set patterns of society. The age of innocence is one of the best novels of the 19th century, which was set in the time of Wharton's childhood and was published in 1905. This novel refers towards the gilded age and it not only focuses on the love triangle but also, it emphasized on the idea of private vs. individual public self.

***Discussion***

After reading this novel, one of the most obvious things that could be highlighted is the culture difference and clashes between the two ideologies. The age of Innocence is the detailed portrayal of the social conventional culture of 19th-century high society. After critically analyzing this novel it could be said that this novel describes the culture of New York and its prevalent social class at a specific time in American history. According to a scholar, Louis Auchincloss claims that "this novel is written in the Proustian mood of remembering the things that invoke the airless atmosphere of an old and ordered small town of New York".

Various characters have been portrayed in this novel but Ellen Olenska is one of the main characters who grab the attention of the society because of her particular cultural fashion and social manner that clashes with the formal and unusual cultural views of the society. Ellen wanted to become a trend setter as she does not want to follow the conventional ways of living life. Researches show that in the 19th century, many European and young rural people came and settled in the industrial areas of America. Taking a look at the cultural practices of the New Yorkers, it could be said that they used to attend Opera, read books, used to go to theater, sports like archery and arranging parties and dinners which depict their culture of conspicuous consumption.

Taking into account, the research work of Joy. L. Davis who says that dinning ritual depicted in this novel are actual reveal the hospitality, hypocrisy, rivalries and consumer culture that is hidden beneath the social posture. This fact cannot be denied that the culture of the same society has been presented in this novel but there could be seen a clash in the ideology. Culture is the driving force that at some point became the cause of alienation and on the other hand, it also becomes the reason behind the bonding that some character exhibit (Singley,et,al,2017). A significant role has been presented by culture for separating and bounding characters of the novel. One of the most obvious examples that have been witnessed in this novel is of Ellen and Newland, who came close to each other because of the radical ideas and unique manners of Ellen. The culture perspective of Ellen was somewhat unusual and unique than the rest of the society. Pieces of evidence show that Ellen's behavior is deemed to unorthodox and she believed that she cannot fit into the old New York.

Ellen has been presented as a rebellion who walked against the way that has been paved by the society. Ellen is one of the main characters of this novel, who courageously challenged the cultural role and showed bravery to make her own rules and norms that would fit her ideology. On the other hand, Newland Archer could be taken as an example who does not directly negate the cultural values. He is the character who got influenced by radical ideas (Edith,et,al,2017). Newland got impressed by the rebellion nature of Ellen as he believed that at least she is the one who is free and truly alive. She is one who is fully enjoying her life without keeping into consideration the restrictions of society that bound us in the cultural cage. One of the major twists in the novel is that despite being engaged with May, Newland when meets Ellen Olenska, he got attracted towards her. Soon this attraction changes into love.

Clash in the way of perceiving culture becomes the reason of alienation of Newland and May as his fiancé behaves like an ordinary female who was just following the rules and the cultural restrictions being imposed on her. It could be analyzed that on one hand culture becomes the cause of the distance between Newland and his fiancé who is keeping herself in the cage of traditions. On the other hand, culture is the same thing that becomes the reason of closeness between Newland and Ellen, who represents to him the freedom and boldness against cultural norms and values that others were following blindly. Ellen was the only character of the novel who showed the freedom that was missing in the suffocating environment of the New York aristocracy.

It has been analyzed that personal freedom used to be sacrificed most of the time as social code enforces some rules that are considered to be good for society. Critical analysis of this novel shows that Newland was unable to follow his passion as despite loving Ellen because of her radical ideas about culture, he married May to fulfill his duty (Bendixen,et,al,2016). It won't be wrong to say that social code and cultural restrictions become the reason of the separation of Ellen and Newland as he was not bold enough to challenge the cultural norms and denied marrying his fiancé. Another factor that has been witnessed in this novel is that in Wharton's world, women are considered to be innocent. Having affair with other men other than the husband, cannot be expected as well accepted by the aristocratic New York society of that time. But Ellen was little different than the rest of the women who were following the set values of the society and the culture. From the in-depth analysis of this novel, it has been analyzed that the cultural role that was assigned to the women of that society was to spend life with one man, keep the home clean and provide continuity but Ellen from the perception of the society was refusing to fulfill this culturally selected role.

***Conclusion***

So, as a whole, after critically analyzing this novel "The Age of Innocence" it could be said that culture is the main reason which causes of the alienation of Newland as he first got attracted to Ellen because of her boldness to reject the cultural restrictions. On the other hand, culture also became the reason for the connection between May and Newland as he lacked the will and confidence to refuse the culturally decided role. In this novel, most of the characters are being portrayed as the blind followers of traditions and culture who sacrificed their happiness and freedom just for the sake of making the society happy by following the set patterns being decided by their culture. it won't be wrong to say that culture became the reason of alienation as well as connection in this novel.

Work Cited:

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Works Cited