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Daisy and Frederick: An Exploration of Innocence and its Consequences in Henry James'

Daisy Miller: A Study

by

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A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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Frederick and Daisy: An Exploration of Innocence and its Consequences in Henry James'

Daisy Miller: A Study

Innocence, Gender, and Nationality

Established Debates and New Questions

One of the primary debates surrounding Henry James' classic novella *Daisy Miller: A Study* focuses on the question of Daisy Miller's innocence. For example in her 1964 article "Daisy Miller: A study of Changing Intentions," Carol Ohnmann writes:

Henry James's most popular nouvelle seems to have owed its initial prominence as much to the controversy it provoked as to the artistry it displayed. The causes of argument, of course, were the character of James's heroine and the judgment her creator made of her. In late Victorian eyes, Daisy was likely to be either wholly innocent or guilty; James, either all for her or against her. (1)

To really understand this controversy, however, we must first decide what we mean by the word "innocent." The most popular reading of this word in relation to this novel, of course, is whether or not Daisy Miller is *sexually* innocent. Has she had sex with any of the men that she spends her time with while unchaperoned? While some would argue that this question is answered by Mr. Giovanelli's claim that she was "The most innocent!" upon Frederick Winterbourne's questioning after her death at the end of the novel, I would argue that this one unsubstantiated claim by just one of the men Daisy had been spending time with is not sufficient evidence to claim that she had never had any sort of sexual relations. Due to the ambivalent nature of the

novella's ending, the question of Daisy Miller's sexual innocence continues to remain open for debate and interpretation.

It is not solely Daisy's sexual innocence that is questioned however; the more popular debate surrounding Daisy Miller's innocence is whether or not she is actively and intentionally disobeying the rules of the upper-European society in which she travels. In this debate, her sexual innocence is not as much of a concern as is her cultural innocence. Some readers claim that Daisy's innocence remains intact here due to the fact that she is simply ignorant and unaware of the affects her actions will have on her and her reputation, essentially claiming her to be naively innocent. Even Henry James himself makes this claim when he writes to Eliza Lynn Linton, in 1880 according to an article written by David Hirsh:

Poor little Daisy Miller was, as I understand her, above all things *innocent*

The keynote of her *character* is her innocence—that of her *conduct* is, of course, that she has a little sentiment about Winterbourne, that she believes to be quite unreciprocated—conscious as she was only of his protesting attitude. (124)

Careful not to fall into the trap of authorial intent, it is, nonetheless, important to note that James did intend to tell a story about innocence, so much so that he entered into the debate himself with those who claimed her to not be innocent.

However, other critics claim that she knows exactly what she is doing and how her actions are viewed, yet she does not care about the consequences her attitude and actions may bring, making her more of a societal rebel than a naïvely innocent young woman. According to Carey Kirk in her 1980 article "Daisy Miller: The Reader's Choice," "The genteel American audience of James's day was outraged and insulted by Daisy's liberal behavior..." (275). If the American audience was so upset with Daisy's behavior it is clear that they did not think of her as

innocent, but as some sort of negative or corrupting force. Interestingly enough, Americans, who should have been more familiar with Daisy's American behavior, found her to be too liberal, even by American standards. In this case Daisy's liberalness stands opposed to her innocence.

Despite the ongoing debate both for and against Daisy's innocence, many scholars are still missing one of the key components when analyzing this issue. The question is not so much "Is Daisy innocent?" but "Who gets to decide what innocence really is?" and "Why are we questioning the innocence of this young girl in the first place?" Whether arguing about Daisy's sexual innocence or her innocence when it comes to society's rules, the real question is exactly what *are* these rules she is supposed to be following? Who made these rules and should they really be followed? Daisy, as well as Winterbourne, seems to be at odds with these rules at different points in the novella as those people of "society" work to stifle the gender, sexuality, and identity that both of these characters are trying to express. The rules society has set up for both Daisy and Winterbourne pose clear consequences to their lives, relationships, and in the end, Daisy's mortality. While Daisy Miller may seem to be more at odds with these rules than any other character in the novella, Frederick Winterbourne also has moments of doubt and unrest. While the rules for men and woman differed, both genders were equally expected to behave and act a certain way, even if those ways were different. Using some of the ideas laid out in Judith Butler's queer theory text *Gender Trouble* as a means to explore how these rules are constructed, I will show how exactly both Daisy Miller, as well as Frederick Winterbourne, are shaped and changed by their nineteenth-century-upper-class-European environment.

Gender Theory, Societal Rules, and Identity

While extremely important, Judith Butler's work in *Gender Trouble* can be complicated and complex. Although her text covers a wide variety of topics in great detail, for the purposes of this paper, it is her ideas on gender and identity that are most relevant. Butler argues that gender is a social construct:

When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and a *woman* and *feminine* male body as easily as a female one. (9)

The point Butler is making here is that our current society has a tendency to associate the idea of "feminine" and "woman" with female bodies and "masculine" and "man" with male bodies, however what society considers as feminine can be applied to male bodies and what society considers as masculine can be applied to female bodies, making the ideas behind the words "man" and "woman" simply constructs of what society deems as normal for the two genders.

Following this same line of thought Butler makes a similar argument about identity: "In such a case, not biology, but culture, becomes destiny" (11). According to Butler, one does not define oneself by their biological selves but by the way in which culture, or society, labels us. In other words, we are not born with an inherent sense of identity, there is no true self, but instead we adopt and adapt society's labels and categories onto ourselves as a way to define who we are and prescribe ourselves an identity. In this way society tells us who we are and who we should be just as much as, or possibly more than, we get to discover and apply our own self-identity.

Simply put, society is constantly working to tell us who we are, how we should behave, and what actions and identifications are forbidden to us.

So what does all of this have to do with Henry James' characters Daisy Miller and Frederick Winterbourne? Using the same line of thought that Judith Butler uses about the socially constructed nature of gender and identity in modern society, we can begin to see how thoughts about gender and identity were also socially constructed in the nineteenth-century-upper-class-European society that Daisy Miller and Frederick Winterbourne belonged (or at least were supposed to belong) to. In his article "Teaching Ethnicity, Gender, and 19th Century English Literature: The Inclusive 19th Century," Glen Bush points out, "Literary authors often combined their reflections of 19th century English popular culture with their domestic and foreign political concepts. Gender was one of the burning issues for both liberals and conservatives" (Bush 184). This, of course, shows that issues of gender were also prevalent in the nineteenth century and that James could very well have been writing about these issues in his novella. If gender and identity are indeed social constructs, then it stands to reason that the rules Daisy and Frederick are supposed to follow about gender and identity are social constructs as well.

Using the ideas of masculinity and femininity, Lynn Wardley makes a bold claim in her article "Reassembling Daisy Miller:"

Henry James's "Daisy Miller: A Study" (1878) figures forth in Daisy the androgynous body constructed in popular nineteenth-century accounts of adolescence. If, as Frederick Winterbourne sees it, Daisy Miller oscillates between masculine and feminine identification, she also oscillates between American and alien, savage and citizen, parvenu and natural aristocrat. (232)

Just as Butler talks about the idea of fluidity between gender roles, Wardley seems to take this idea one step further and applies it directly to Daisy. Throughout the novella it becomes clear that while Daisy is biologically female, she takes on the traits that were supposed to be associated only with men in this nineteenth-century-European society. This train of thought furthers the argument that the ideas about, and rules surrounding, gender are much more fluid than nineteenth-century-European society would like to believe or allow.

It is the impact that these socially constructed rules have on Daisy and Winterbourne that shape the events of the novella. Not only are they bound by the socially constructed rules of gender identity, but of class and nationality as well. If we look at innocence as a form of sexual virginity then we can see how the rules regarding sexual innocence change across the gender lines. While both Daisy and Winterbourne's sexual innocence are called into question at some point in the novella, only Daisy is required to worry about the social implications and the negative impact to her reputation that the questioning of her sexual innocence might have. On the other hand, Winterbourne as a man, does not have the same amount of scrutiny applied to his sexual life by any of the characters in the novella.

Looking at innocence in terms of ignorance, class and nationality play a more significant role. It is important to remember that both Daisy and Winterbourne are foreigners; both are Americans spending leisure time in Europe. The fact that both Winterbourne and Daisy are in Europe not on business, but to spend leisure time, speaks to their wealth and class status. While both Winterbourne and Daisy clearly have a substantial amount of wealth, making them part of the upper class, Daisy does not know the rules of how an upper-class girl is supposed to act in nineteenth-century-European society. So while being a part of this upper-class, she does not understand how society has constructed a different set of rules in European culture than in her

American culture. Winterbourne, on the other hand, has spent enough time in Europe to know that the rules for upper-class girls are different in Europe than they are in America, but still does not know the impact and consequences these rules have for a female. He is definitely more accustomed to European culture than Daisy is, but because he is a male, he does not comprehend the severity of the consequences Daisy will face when she breaks the very rules that she does not even know. In this way both Daisy Miller and Frederick Winterbourne are innocent, if we read innocence as naiveté or ignorance.

Money Rules

Daisy Miller as well as Frederick Winterbourne are both victims and products of the nineteenth-century -European upper class. The rules of this society have clearly worked to keep both Daisy and Winterbourne in line with the values that it asserts. While it is clear what characters uphold these rules, it is a little less clear as to the origins of these rules. While a long detailed history of Europe would no doubt shed significant light on the subject, there is still plenty to be found within the confines of the text itself.

In Laurie F. Leach's essay, "A nice Girl Ought to Know!": Henry James' Daisy Miller (1988)," Leach claims that:

In James' story gender issues are closely bound with those of class. The Millers represent the new wealth that accrued to Americans as a result of the Industrial Revolution; Winterbourne and his circle are people of leisure with inherited wealth. (86)

Looking at the evidence that the novella provides, it is easy to see that Leach's claim here seems to be a fairly accurate one. The idea that Daisy and her family come from new money is

apparent through with their lack of upper-class understanding in general. Because they have not spent time around old money, they do not fully understand the rules surrounding it. It is overwhelmingly clear from looking at Daisy's mother's actions that she is oblivious to not only the rules of old money, but also to the fact that she is not fitting in with it. This lack of understanding clearly passes down to both her daughter and her son, who do not know ,or perhaps in Daisy's case, do not care about those rules. While Frederick Winterbourne is an American, the fact that he comes from old money allows him to better integrate with the old money society in Europe.

Hotels and an Invasion of the American Girl

Henry James' novella opens by introducing the reader to the setting of Vevey, Switzerland seemingly simply in order to set the scene for the rest of the novel. However, among the description of beautiful lakes and luxurious hotels, James is also setting up one of the novella's most important dichotomies. It is here in Vevey that the reader is first introduced to the conflict between traditional European values and customs, and the newer, bolder habits and values of the American tourists. Because the majority of the novella tends to deal with the conflict that arises when European values are forced upon the American Daisy Miller, this opening scene shows almost the opposite, where American customs are shown invading a traditionally European space. James writes:

In this region, in the month of June, American travelers are extremely numerous; it may be said, indeed that Vevey assumes at this period some of the characteristics of an American watering place. There are sights and sounds which evoke a vision, an echo, of Newport and Saratoga. There is a flitting hither and

thither of “stylish” young girls, a rustling of muslin flounces, a rattle of dance-music in the morning hours, a sound of high pitched voices at all times. (James 3)

From this description of Vevey, we see that not only does this European town become host to a large population of American travelers, it actually becomes something akin to an American resort town. This speaks largely of the power an American presence can bring to Europe. The description specifically goes into detail about the American girls and how they act, look, and sound while visiting this European space. This passage provides foreshadowing for Daisy Miller’s struggle in two ways. First, by comparing the European Vevey to the American Newport and Saratoga, James illustrates how much influence Americans can actually have over in a European town. Despite Vevey’s deep European traditions and history, the simple presence of a large group of Americans has the power to change the very look and feel of the city. From this perspective, it is easy to see why many members of the nineteenth-century-European upper class view Daisy as a dangerous threat to their way of life later in the novella. The description the narrator gives about the Americans at Vevey gives precedent to the fear of American customs tainting traditional European values.

Second, this passage focuses on the power of American girls, also foreshadowing the problems that Daisy Miller is going to face later on in the novella. Not only does Daisy’s American background threaten many of the upper-class European characters in the novella, but her gender does as well. Despite Americans of both genders vacationing at Vevey, the aforementioned passage refers specifically to “young girls” while taking up the matter of this American invasion. As such, the power of change is given to those “young girls” who make themselves known by their sound. Indeed, this idea of the noisy young girl who is making sound when and where she should not be comes up numerous times later in the novel. This, of course,

plays into the gender stereotype of the free young girl (of American origin) who cannot control herself long enough to adhere to a more cultured and well-mannered European society. Of course, the concept of innocence again comes up here. While these American girls are simply enjoying themselves in an innocent (i.e., harmless) manner, this scene also shows their innocence (i.e., ignorance) of European culture and rules.

Understanding the atmosphere of Vevey as a whole during this tourist season allows the reader to then notice the significance of the more specific setting at which they first meet James's primary characters:

One of the hotels at Vevey, however, is famous, even classical, being distinguished from many of its upstart neighbors by an air of both luxury and maturity... But at the "Trois Couronnes," it must be added, there are other features that are much at variance with these [American hotels]: neat German waiters, who look like secretaries of legation; Russian princesses sitting in the garden; little Polish boys walking about, held by the hand, with their governors; a view of the snowy crest of the Dent du Midi and the picturesque towers of the Castle of Chillon. (James 3-4)

From this description of the "Trois Couronnes" it seems as if this hotel has managed to retain much of its European atmosphere and clientele despite the Americanization going on in the other hotels and public spaces in Vevey. The differences the narrator uses to describe this hotel in comparison to its Americanized neighbors are extremely telling. First, the words "luxury" and "maturity" are used to describe this hotel as something that the other hotels are not. Again, the narrator is solidifying the popular stereotypes of the time period of the immature and less refined

Americans. In reality all of these hotels at such an affluent resort area would most likely have an air of both luxury and maturity, however, because these other hotels are occupied by a visiting American population, they lose the right to these classifications in the eyes of the narrator and the European upper class that he represents here.

Another important detail to note here is the use of visual description of the Trois Couronnes, as opposed to the auditory description, James provides of the other Americanized hotels. First the reader is given a description of the types of people who are staying at the hotel, specifically Germans, Russians and Polish. No American persons are mentioned. Equally important is what these people are seen doing. They are sitting, walking, and waiting. All of these acts are generally noiseless and civil. There are no voices, music, or any other disturbances to the peace offered in this description. And when looking for a female presence the reader is offered a picture of a princess sitting quietly in a garden, not “flitting” and “rustling” about. Finally, the description of the Dent du Midi and the Castle of Chillon again offers the Trois Couronnes a sense of visual elegance and maturity. Both of these landmarks are situated deep within European history and antiquity, lending their view to the Trois Couronnes adding a sense of history and tradition to the hotel.

The Trois Couronnes, of course, is also unique because it is where Frederick Winterbourne and, his Aunt, Mrs. Costello are staying. Although they are both Americans, they have spent enough time among high society in Europe to take on the qualities of the European upper class and to fit in well with the Trois Couronnes European atmosphere. On the other hand Daisy Miller and her family are also staying at this hotel, despite their very American habits. This conflict between American and European values and customs sets the way for the rest of the novel and brings to focus the question of Daisy Miller’s innocence.

An Exploration of Daisy Miller

Daisy Miller and Frederick Winterbourne

Throughout James' novella, Daisy's actions and behaviors are considered un-ladylike and inappropriate for one of her age, gender, and relationship status. As a nineteenth-century-upper-class young unmarried woman traveling in European circles, Daisy was expected to behave in a certain way. Proper European society would have expected that all of her outings would have been chaperoned by her mother or another older woman of Society, especially any outings where men would have been present.¹ This important rule can be seen in the 1884 etiquette book *Manners and Social Usages* by Mrs. John Sherwood. The author states, "It is strange that the Americans, so prone to imitate British customs, have been slow to adopt that law of English society which pronounces a chaperon an indispensable adjunct of every unmarried young woman" (Sherwood 214) According to European customs, Daisy would have been expected to not stay out late at night and to behave politely and humbly at any parties that she would attend. Above all, perhaps, she was expected to listen to the older women of society when they gave her advice about her conduct. Daisy, however, does none of these things. She is strong-willed, independent, and a bit stubborn. While these characteristics would have been more acceptable for a man her age, as a woman these traits were not to be shown in public.

One of the first examples of society's construction of Daisy Miller comes early on in the novella just after Frederick Winterbourne encounters her for the first time. The narrator of the novella expresses Winterbourne's thoughts:

Poor Winterbourne was amused, perplexed, and decidedly charmed. He had never heard a young girl express herself in just this fashion; never, at least, save in cases

where to say such things seemed a kind of demonstrative evidence of a certain laxity of deportment. And yet was he to accuse Miss Daisy Miller of actual or potential *inconduite*, as they said in Geneva? (James 10)

This small look into Winterbourne's thought process is interesting because it offers the reader a biased view of how someone of the same nationality, but of a higher class of society, would view her during this time period. The fact that Winterbourne is "perplexed" by Daisy speaks volumes about his society. What about Daisy Miller is perplexing exactly? Within the first minutes of the introduction of Daisy she is already being judged by a man of Society. The fact that Daisy Miller speaks openly and freely would have been of no consequence in America, yet it causes Winterbourne great confusion. Because Daisy Miller is expected to be quieter, reserved, and refined, Winterbourne becomes unsure of what to make of her. He sees right away that Daisy is not adhering to the rules his society has established for young women, which makes Winterbourne wonder how to judge her. He relates her manners to "laxity of deportment," which he then claims to be an act of misconduct. Not only is Winterbourne questioning Daisy's character as a result of this brief interaction, but he is also accusing her of failing to adhere to social norms. He then quickly questions his own ideas about her, as accusing her of social misconduct would be too harsh and too cruel an act. Indeed, Winterbourne is so concerned with the rules of upper-class-European society that he cannot fathom that Daisy's rejection of social norms in this first meeting may actually be a good, or perhaps even conscientious, act.

So where does Winterbourne's reliance, adherence, and seeming veneration for these social norms come from? The narrator continues, "[Winterbourne] felt that he had lived at Geneva so long that he had lost a good deal; he had become dishabituated to the American tone" (James 10). Even as Winterbourne is judging Daisy by upper-class-European standards, he

becomes aware that he may have a bias when evaluating this woman. Winterbourne acknowledges that his evaluation and criticism comes from Geneva, a European city where European values come into play. At this point he is starting to become aware of Daisy's naiveté or innocence when it comes to the values and rules that he expects her to adhere to. It now begins to become clear to the reader that these constructed European values are already placing pressure on Daisy Miller's character.

Daisy Miller and Mrs. Costello

Another pivotal moment in the novella governing Daisy's character comes when Frederick Winterbourne visits his aunt, Mrs. Costello, in order to ask her to formally meet Daisy Miller, which Winterbourne had previously promised Daisy he would do for her. Although Daisy is actually missing from this scene altogether, the conversation between Mrs. Costello and Winterbourne sheds a lot of light on how society is judging and shaping Daisy's character. When Winterbourne inquires about whether Mrs. Costello has seen Daisy and her family, she replies "And a courier? Oh, yes. I have observed them. Seen them – heard them – and kept out of their way" (James 13). Mrs. Costello's disgust toward Daisy Miller and her family stems from a few preconceived expectations. First of all, her specific mention of the courier implies that she does not approve of their connection to him. Indeed, the courier would have been someone considered working class, a much lower class than Daisy Miller and her family should have been associating with. Returning again to Mrs. Sherwood's book of etiquette she states:

Familiarity with servants always arouses their contempt; a mistress can be kind without being familiar. She must remember that the servant looks up to her over the great gulf of a different condition of life and habit-over the great gulf of

ignorance, and that, in the order of nature, she should respect not only the person in authority, but the being, as superior to herself. (371)

European standards would have assumed that the courier should have been providing services for them and doing a job, not socializing with them and definitely not befriending them in anyway. By socializing with the courier, Daisy Miller and her family show that they do not have an understanding of, or perhaps simply disregard, proper European social convention. This disregard for proper upper-class convention also implies that Daisy Miller is from the class of new money. Because Daisy and her family seem to lack the knowledge of how the rich should behave with the working class, they clearly lack an understanding that those from old money would already have. The rules of Society are not yet engrained into their behaviors, thus solidifying their place in the slightly lower class of new money as opposed to the higher more traditional class of old money.

The second point of note in Mrs. Costello's initial response is that she "heard them," a point that is given emphasis in her reply. The fact that Daisy and her family have been heard implies that they are a generally noisy people. Again, this act of noisiness defies upper-class-European values. Those of the upper class were expected to be poised, proper, and reserved at all times and a departure from that conduct in public would have been considered improper and impolite to those around them. This value was a very European one and was quite the opposite of American ways as described in Sherwood's book: "Men and women educated in the creeds of the Old World, with the good blood of a long ancestry of quiet ladies and gentlemen, find modern American society, particularly in New York and at Newport, fast, furious, and vulgar" (Sherwood 5). The old adage of "seen but not heard" definitely applies here, particularly to those of the upper class, unless under the most specific of circumstances. Between their inappropriate

relationship with their courier and their tendency to be “heard” at unsanctioned times, Mrs. Costello not only chooses to avoid association with Daisy and her family, but outright dismisses them from her ideas of Society. Daisy and her family no longer matter as people to Mrs. Costello and become nothing more than a passing interruption to her rigid and structured lifestyle.

Mrs. Costello’s negative opinion of Daisy and her family becomes exacerbated as her conversation with Winterbourne continues. Indeed Mrs. Costello’s opinion of Daisy grows significantly worse when she finds out that Winterbourne has already met Daisy and has taken an interest in her:

I haven’t the least idea what such young ladies [as Daisy] expect a man to do. But I really think that you had better not meddle with little American girls that are uncultivated, as you call them. You have lived too long out of the country. You will be sure to make some great mistake. You are too innocent. (James 15)

The first language of note here is that Mrs. Costello considered Daisy Miller a “little American girl,” which stands out for two reasons. First, Mrs. Costello calls out Daisy as an American, almost as an insult. This is to suggest that being an American is somehow less than being a European. The irony here lies in the fact that Mrs. Costello and Frederick Winterbourne are also Americans. As Mădălina Stănescu says in her article “American innocence vs. European vice in Henry James’ Daisy Miller,” “The New World and the Old World appear as the spaces where the former’s lack of familiarity with another culture and other traditions comes against the latter’s sophistication and spirit of superiority” (Stănescu). Indeed, European “society” was often thought to be greater than American society in general. Their longer established traditions and stricter cultural rules led many people to believe that European society was more sophisticated and refined compared to the younger and less cultivated American cultural offspring.

Second, Mrs. Costello refers to Daisy as a “girl” instead of a woman. While this can simply be written off as an off-hand remark about her age, I would argue that there is some deeper meaning here. Not only is she called a girl instead of a woman, but she is also referred to as “little.” When one thinks of a little girl, one not only assumes innocence but also naiveté and a lack of maturity and social awareness. When Mrs. Costello refers to Daisy as a little girl, she is not only commenting on Daisy’s age but also belittling her as a woman and undermining her as a person of society. Unfortunately this idea carries over the critical sphere: “Her charm was flawed however, by a lack of mature and intelligent judgment – a flaw associated with childhood that relegated her to the perpetual position of “girl” (Merideth 191). While I agree with Merideth’s reading of why Mrs. Costello and others refer to Daisy as a “girl,” I do not agree with the sentiment that Daisy is actually immature and lacks intelligent judgment. While characters in the story definitely view her this way, careful readers should be able to discern a more complex and complete understanding of Daisy’s character and see beyond that biased reading of her character. In order to do so, we must only look at who in the novella characterizes Daisy Miller as immature. Only those who are largely steeped within the sexist and rigid nineteenth-century-upper-class-European values classify Daisy in this way, clearly showing that there is a bias here. From a modern reader’s perspective, Daisy should not be viewed as immature, but simply as non-conformist. Indeed, Daisy Miller is not an immature little girl, but rather an intelligent young woman who sees the rules society is trying to impose on her, but chooses to live and act as she always has, with the freedoms afforded to her in America.

This line of thought continues as Mrs. Costello informs Winterbourne that he has lived outside of America too long to realize what kind of girl Daisy Miller really is. Again, Mrs. Costello believes that because Winterbourne has lived in Europe for so long he cannot recognize

the consequences in associating with an “uncultured” American girl. By referring to Winterbourne as “innocent,” Mrs. Costello is suggesting that Daisy Miller’s forward and, seemingly, carefree attitude is somehow dangerous to him. Mrs. Costello’s interpretation of Daisy Miller implies sexual promiscuity, which she does not want corrupting Frederick Winterbourne and compromising his respected place in Society. Meanwhile this entire conversation has sexual undertones, as both Frederick Winterbourne and Mrs. Costello recognize that Winterbourne’s interest is indeed sexual in nature. The idea here then, is that Daisy Miller’s lack of cultural awareness and understanding will lead Winterbourne into the mistake of sleeping with her, thus corrupting him and compromising his standing in Society. This line of thought not only gives Winterbourne all of the power in his relationship (or lack thereof) with Daisy, but it also suggests that association with the wrong person can be disastrous.

Mrs. Costello’s evaluation of Daisy Miller before she actually ever meets her speaks greatly about how upper-class-European society will view and value her. Without ever saying a single word to her Mrs. Costello feels validated in her ability to judge Daisy’s worth as an individual. In this novella Mrs. Costello acts as European judgment personified and, as such, works to determine if Daisy Miller is indeed innocent or not. If Mrs. Costello’s reaction and thoughts are to be taken at face value, then it is clear that her innocence is, at the very least, under great scrutiny. While Mrs. Costello’s snubbing of Daisy and her family may be viewed as the ramblings of a woman who is both stuck in the past and too judgmental, the fact that her viewpoint aligns with other people of European society leads the reader to believe that she does indeed speak with some authority, even though as readers we are able to determine the validity of her power.

Daisy Miller and Mrs. Walker

In case Mrs. Costello's condemnation of Daisy Miller's actions was not enough to convince the reader of society's negative impact on Daisy, Mrs. Walker, another wealthy older woman of high European society, also strongly disapproves of Daisy's attitude and exploits. The key difference between Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker, however, is that while Mrs. Costello simply refuses to associate with Daisy whatsoever, Mrs. Walker makes it her mission to help and ultimately save Daisy from committing any more social sins. When Daisy takes off walking the streets of Rome with Frederick Winterbourne and Mr. Giovanelli, Mrs. Walker gets into her carriage and follows them in order to stop this act that offends her upper-class-European sensibilities. While Winterbourne is viewed as being in danger of corruption by Daisy's carefree ways, Mr. Giovanelli is already looked down upon by Mrs. Costello and the other members of high society, despite the fact he is European, due to his status as a working-class lawyer. Despite any monetary wealth he may have, Mr. Giovanelli is new money and this of a lower class. As such, Mrs. Costello first summons Frederick Winterbourne to the side of her carriage:

Mrs. Walker was flushed; she wore an excited air. "It is really too dreadful," she said. "That girl must not do this sort of thing. She must not walk here with you two men. Fifty people have noticed her." (James 33)

This passage is interesting because to a modern reader, Daisy's actions in this scene can be viewed as completely innocent, yet Mrs. Walker still seems to be causing a fuss over it. After all, although Daisy is with two young men, she is also surrounded by people on the crowded streets of Rome during broad daylight. However it is the very fact that she can be seen by all of those people that makes this conduct just as forbidden as if she were alone somewhere with these

young men. The key word in the aforementioned quote is “here.” Mrs. Walker does not claim that she should not be walking with these two men at all, but her grievance is that she is walking “here,” in the streets of Rome in broad daylight for the entire world to see and to judge. Mrs. Walker’s concern is not for Daisy’s safety, nor is her concern even for her actions; her real concern is for Daisy’s image. The fact that she is being “noticed” when it is not appropriate and during the unflattering conditions of being alone with two young men, again is breaking a major rule. Just as when Mrs. Costello heard Daisy and her family when she should not have been heard, Daisy is now being seen when she should not have been. The only sociably acceptable way Daisy could have gone out walking with these two men would have been with a chaperone. Sherwood says, “The duties of a chaperon are very hard and unremitting, and sometimes very disagreeable. She must accompany her young lady everywhere” (214). Sherwood acknowledges in her book of conduct that the act of chaperoning might be disagreeable to some members of the party, but nonetheless, a chaperone must be present any time a young unmarried lady goes out in public.

Again, this passage shows how these socially constructed rules are constantly working to police Daisy and her actions. She is supposed to constantly be aware of when it is permitted to be seen and when it is permitted to be heard, with whom, and for what purpose. These social conventions and other rigid rules are stifling Daisy’s freedom as a human being. In a conversation with Winterbourne Daisy even says while referring to the European women who condemn her, “The young ladies of this country have a dreadfully poky time of it, so far as I can learn; I don't see why I should change my habits for *them*” (James 39). This is a prime example of Daisy’s nativism coming through. As an American, the idea of needing a chaperone seems absurd to her and she does not see the reason why she needs to conform to European customs

when she is still an American, even if she is currently in Europe. Whether or not she is willfully disobeying these rules without regard for the social consequences or if she is simply unaware of the gravity of the sins she is committing by expressing her social autonomy is not important. It is the very fact that so many people, particularly women, of the European upper-class are so invested in Daisy's image that should be questioned and ultimately condemned.

Daisy's Death

So what then is the result of this conflict between Daisy Miller and the rules of upper-class-European Society? With Daisy Miller constantly under the scrutiny of those around her, her fate at the end of the novella does not seem all that surprising. On one level, the fact that she ends up dying from staying out too late, another act of rebellion against social norms seems to suggest that James has written this as a cautionary tale, providing an example of what happens when someone tries to go against social norms. As Eunice Merideth claims in her article "Gender Patterns in Henry James," "Daisy does not learn her lesson or accept the European social codes and forms, so Daisy does not survive" (191-192). In this reading, her lack of innocence suggests being of fatal consequence; her death becomes her own fault.

This reading of the story is, unfortunately, a very popular one. As matter of fact, in the first illustrated edition of *Daisy Miller: A Study*, the only time she is portrayed fully is when she is dead; clear pictures of her face when she is alive are curiously omitted (See fig. 1) (Sonstegard 73). By showing Daisy's face only in death, the illustrator puts all of the focus on the consequences of her actions, ignoring the freedom that she seemingly tried to pursue in life. By not showing Daisy's living face at any point, it is almost as if the artist is trying to censor her character. If the artist thought of Daisy as innocent, there would be no need to censor her,

whatsoever. So while James' story may not have been meant to be a cautionary tale, the illustrators seemed to try to make it one. Again, we see an outside force trying to make this novella about Daisy's innocence or lack thereof.



**Figure 1. A full picture of Daisy Miller with her face almost completely obscured
(Sonstegard 69)**

Perhaps even more scandalous than the character herself, the scene of Daisy and Mr. Giovanelli at the colosseum was portrayed as devoid of life altogether and accompanied by a grotesque symbol of death (See Fig. 2). The fact that what may be considered the most scandalous scene in the novella where Daisy is out alone at night in a secluded place with a gentleman she has been seeing, is portrayed only by the building in which the scene takes place accompanied by a creature which appears to embody death, again shows a form of censoring in

the novel. If the illustrator thought that Daisy was innocent there would be no need to censor this scene as she was doing nothing but talking to another person. Instead the artist chooses to downplay the facts that the book presents the reader, and instead chooses to focus on the negative outcome of the interaction. Daisy's innocence is nowhere to be found in this illustration.



Figure 2. The colosseum at which Daisy caught her death (Sonstegard 74)

However, Mr. Giovanelli's claim to Frederick Winterbourne at Daisy's funeral, that "she was the most innocent" outright contradicts the idea that she died because she wasn't innocent enough (James 50). So why did she die? Was she innocent in the end or was she not? The truth of the matter is it does not make a difference. This obsession that Winterbourne, as well as many other characters of Society in the novel, has with of Daisy's innocence proves to be inconsequential, and the fact that many scholars and critics still try to argue for or against her innocence means only that the bigger picture is not being taken into account. Indeed, what truly

ends up killing Daisy Miller at the end of the novella are the rules and standards society has tried to place on her throughout the story. The constant scrutiny and criticism she has faced has victimized Daisy to the point where she could no longer live freely. The fact that, although she was a woman, it appeared as if she wanted to live her life with a freedom reserved only for men, proved to be too much for the European Society, leading ultimately to Winterbourne's rejection along with the rejection of the world around her.

Daisy's Mother

No analysis of Daisy Miller could be complete without also taking a look at her mother, Mrs. Miller. Turning again to Mrs. Sherwood's book of etiquette for wealthy Americans in Europe, she specifically refers to Mrs. Miller as an antithesis of how one is supposed to act and behave:

We need not point to the wonderful Mrs. Miller — Daisy's mother — in Henry James, Jr.'s, photograph of a large class of American matrons — a woman who loved her daughter, knew how to take care of her when she was ill, but did not know in the least how to take care of her when she was well; who allowed her to go about with young men alone, to "get engaged," if so she pleased, and who, arriving at a party after her daughter had appeared, rather apologized for coming at all. All this is notoriously true, and comes of our crude civilization. (214)

It is clear that Mrs. Miller's character has to have been a strong enough example for what not to do to actually make her a negative example in a book of etiquette for the time period. Indeed, much of Daisy's own ignorance can be attributed to her mother's lack of cultural and societal understandings. Mrs. Miller is simply oblivious to the rules of the European upper class and

makes no attempt at learning them. She does not take her or her children's status or appearance seriously, leading Daisy to suffer the consequences.

An Exploration of Frederick Winterbourne

Frederick Winterbourne and Rudeness

While Daisy is, without question, the character on whom most scholars focus when discussing innocence in *Daisy Miller: A Study*, Frederick Winterbourne is also a victim of this ongoing debate. Ian Kennedy argues in his 1973 article "Frederick Winterbourne: The Good Bad Boy in Daisy Miller:"

...as soon as one recognizes that the only character in the story whom we see from the inside is Winterbourne, and that it is through him that we receive most of the evidence upon which any judgment of Daisy must be based, it becomes obvious that what one thinks of Daisy is to a large extent dependent on and in any case secondary to what one thinks of Winterbourne. (139)

While at certain points in the novella Winterbourne seems to be part of the oppressive nineteenth-century-upper-class-European society, there are also moments in the narrative when Winterbourne seems to be at odds with the very rules he upholds, disobeying, or at least questioning, the status quo. Winterbourne's fascination with Daisy Miller leads him to re-evaluate the rules of his society and, at times, outright disagree with the way in which these rules seem to be enforced. What really separates the way in which European society works on these two characters, however, is that while Daisy Miller is very much an American outsider from new money, Winterbourne has become almost completely Europeanized due to his place within the

European old money society. While technically an American, Winterbourne has spent so much time among the European upper class and has been away from America so long, he has internalized many of the rules and values of his adopted European society.

While Winterbourne struggles between upholding his European values and attempting to woo the admittedly “uncultivated” Daisy Miller, he is often faced with the dilemma of whose side he should take in certain situations. For example, while his aunt, Mrs. Costello, suggests that he should no longer attempt to have a relationship with Daisy, he decides to go against her wishes and continues to pursue his love interest. After Mrs. Costello informs him that she will not be formally introduced to Daisy or her family, Winterbourne has to find a way to inform Daisy of his aunt’s decision without insulting Daisy and still staying in her good graces. While his initial plan is to lie to Daisy and simply blame Mrs. Costello’s crippling headaches as the reason for denying his request, Daisy quickly sees through Winterbourne’s charade and states her understanding that she is simply not exclusive enough to have the pleasure of Mrs. Costello’s formal acquaintance. Still wanting to spare Daisy’s feelings and gain her gratitude and approval, “He felt then, for the instant, quite ready to sacrifice his aunt, conversationally; to admit that she was a proud, rude woman, and to declare that they needn’t mind her” (James 17). Despite Mrs. Costello’s warnings of the consequences that could befall Winterbourne for associating with Daisy, he seems to have this brief moment of rebelliousness where he is willing to condemn his aunt and her silly and stuffy rules for the sake of Daisy’s feelings. In this one brief moment, he is willing to give up his ties to society and pursue his own desires, regardless of any social repercussions doing so might cause. However, despite this fleeting desire he does not condemn his aunt because she is his primary source of income and helps him maintain his affluent, luxurious, and independent lifestyle.

As interesting as this act might be, the language used in this quote provides a small window into how Winterbourne might actually feel about his aunt and the society she belongs to and represents. By calling Mrs. Costello, “proud” and “rude,” Winterbourne admits that her rules and her society may indeed not be as great as she claims. If Mrs. Costello is being rude by refusing to associate with Daisy, then, by extension, the social rules and standards that compel her to refuse this request are also rude. For a culture that prides itself on its extreme politeness under any and every circumstance, Winterbourne is finally realizing that it may indeed be hypocritical in its selectivity and its exclusivity. After all, does Daisy Miller and those like her not deserve an extension of the politeness it offers to those people within its own ranks? This sentiment takes on even more meaning when compared with Mrs. Costello’s complaints about Daisy and her family’s noisiness. There she implies that it is the Millers who are being rude, when in reality Mrs. Costello is herself just as rude, if not more so, than they are.

Frederick Winterbourne and Innocence

It seems that every time Winterbourne begins to question the rules of his upper-class-European society, it is a direct result of talking with an older female member of the group. Returning to the scene in which Mrs. Walker chases down Daisy Miller, Frederick Winterbourne, and Mr. Giovanelli in her carriage, a critical point in Winterbourne’s evolution as a character can be found. As Mrs. Walker condemns Daisy’s actions and insists Winterbourne no longer associate with her, Winterbourne consistently defends Daisy throughout their conversation:

“I suspect she meant no harm,” ... “The poor girl’s only fault,” he presently added, “is that she is very uncultivated.”... “I suspect, Mrs. Walker, that you and I have lived too long in Geneva!” (James 36)

Here, again, the question of Daisy’s innocence takes center stage. While Mrs. Walker is insisting that Daisy Miller is purposefully ignoring the rules of society, Winterbourne still believes that she is innocent, albeit naïve, about the ways of the world. Although Winterbourne is still being a bit condescending about Daisy’s “uncultivated” manner, he is still defending her honor. He also returns to the idea that the only reason why he and Mrs. Walker have a tendency to question Daisy’s innocence and view her actions in a negative light is because they have been out of America for so long they no longer are familiar with the customs of their native country. While characters such as Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker seem to be unaware of their European bias, Winterbourne seems to be fully aware that his view of Daisy and her family is colored by his social environment.

Frederick Winterbourne and the Colosseum

Returning to the idea that Kennedy has laid out about this novella being just as much about Winterbourne, if not more so, than Daisy, the scene at the colosseum is no exception. James makes this abundantly clear when he writes about Winterbourne, “He stood there looking at her – looking at her companion, and not reflecting that he saw them vaguely, he himself must have been brightly more visible” (48). At first this seemingly mundane detail about the lighting in the scene at the colosseum may be overlooked if taken in its literal context. However, this line has a much more important second meaning. Not only is Winterbourne literally more visible in this scene, he is figuratively more visible as well. Throughout the novella Winterbourne has been

in a state of internal conflict, trying to decide how he should act and what he should do in relation to Daisy and his burgeoning feelings for her. In an ironic twist, it is at this point in the story that he believes that he can finally see who Daisy Miller really is. However, it is his newfound and steadfast belief in her corruption that actually shows who *he* is, what his values are, and ultimately where his allegiances lie. His view of Daisy is still vague, while the readers' view of Winterbourne becomes crystal clear.

To further emphasize this point one must only look at the very first line of dialogue in this scene in which Daisy compares Winterbourne to "one of the old lions or tigers" while simultaneously comparing herself and Mr. Giovanelli to "Christian Martyrs" (James 47). In this analogy Winterbourne has become an animal on the hunt, a literal remnant of Roman savagery. This remark can also be read as a connection to his roots in old money, gained in a civilization past. Equally as important is the analogy Daisy makes to herself and her companion as "Christian Martyrs." Her comparison is both a statement about their sexual innocence, as they are both unwed Christians, and about the sacrifice that must be made for upholding their beliefs in the face of adversity. They are being punished for a crime that they do not see as a crime whatsoever.

If it was Daisy Miller's fate to be killed by the rules that worked to confine and oppress her, then Frederick Winterbourne's fate must be equally tied to the rules that he had begun to question. However, while Daisy Miller outright disobeys the rules of Society, Winterbourne merely questions them, and, in the end he re-adopts them as his own.

When he comes upon Daisy Miller and Mr. Giovanelli in the Roman Colosseum, Winterbourne is taken aback with both jealousy and scorn. It is at this moment that he believes

that his chance of a relationship with Daisy is no longer there. Seeing her alone with her male companion at such a secluded place and during the middle of the night pushed Winterbourne back over the edge into firmly believing that what the others have said about her innocence must have been true. With his infatuation with Daisy no longer in play, he no longer has any reason to question the rules that have worked to limit her. He completely washes his hands of her when he exclaims, "I believe it makes very little difference if you are engaged or not!" (James 49) It is at this moment that Frederick Winterbourne walks firmly back into the traditional power structures he had begun, albeit tentatively, to criticize.

Because Frederick Winterbourne no longer questions the authority of European Society, he gets a seemingly happier outcome than poor Daisy Miller. He is able to return to Geneva and once again resume his relationship with the mysterious older married woman who lives there. Of course, there is also the strong implication that he is beholden to her and she seems to have some sort of control over him. At this point, the moral of the tale comes into question. Although it may be easy to fall into the trap of assuming that Daisy is punished for her transgressions against Society's rules and Winterbourne is rewarded for ultimately following them, the reader must look at the bigger picture. In the end Frederick Winterbourne does get to live, but as far as narrative goes, he is no better or worse off than when the novella had begun. He seems to not have truly learned any lesson, and, therefore, his character development reverts back to its original state. In the end, because he is a man, any transgressions that he has committed throughout the novella are forgotten and forgiven. He plays the role society has set out for him and is in some ways rewarded for it. In other ways, however, because he learns nothing and does not evolve as a character he becomes unimportant and forgettable.

Final Thoughts

Perhaps the best way to come to a more complete understanding regarding the issues laid out in this thesis is to return to the questions that were laid out at the start of this essay. So who gets to decide what innocence really is? On the one hand, it is people like Mrs. Costello, Mrs. Walker, and Mr. Winterbourne, although, by now, we must realize that they should not have this power because the basis for their judgment has been corrupted by bias and prejudice. On the other hand, we, as modern readers, also get to make this decision for ourselves.

Depending on how *we* define innocence will lead us to our answer. But then this leads us to the more important question, why are we questioning the innocence of this young girl in the first place? There is no need to decide whether or not Daisy is innocent, because who are we to judge her character? Daisy Miller is just a young woman who does not agree with the backwards, confining, misogynistic, classist, outdated, and often arbitrary rules that society has set before her. And as much as they try to shape her and confine her and tell her who she is and how she is supposed to act, Daisy, in a sense, wins that battle. She never bends and she never breaks in her battle for freedom. While Winterbourne is content in letting society lead his life, understandably so as it favors men, Daisy Miller would not have it. It appears as if she would rather die before she lets the world dictate who she is, and what she can do, and she maintains this attitude until the very end of her life.

It is also clear that through the language James uses throughout the novella the question of innocence becomes complicated. Because of the many ways in which he uses innocence in the story and the many meanings and definitions the word takes on, it is difficult to actually make a claim one way or the other. While James may have actually argued for Daisy's innocence and

had hoped to portray her as an innocent in the novella, the question of innocence can also be applied to many characters in the story. If indeed Daisy is innocent, sexually, morally, and mentally, what about the other characters in the story? In many ways the rules and criticisms forced upon Daisy, and even Winterbourne, caused a great deal of harm. Can we consider characters such as Mrs. Walker and Mrs. Costello “innocent?” Surely, James portrays them as guilty in some respects. Even more so Winterbourne’s mysterious married woman back in Geneva cannot be considered innocent by anyone’s standards. Yet she never comes under scrutiny by any other characters who seem so concerned with this idea of innocence. It is through these characterizations that James is making a larger statement about innocence and about the hypocrisy of which those in the nineteenth-century European upper-class are guilty.

Note

1. I opted to use a capital S for Society here, to differentiate high Society from the more common use of the word society with its more general meaning.

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