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Reactions and Responses to Daisy Miller's Behavior in the Sophisticated Europe

Tesis para optar al grado de Licenciada en Lengua y Literatura Inglesa

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INTRODUCTION

A rivalry between America and Europe has been present since the first puritan settlements appeared in the United States, literature has played an important role in this controversy. When the United States became a country in itself, if it is possible to determine when that occurred, there was always a feeling of inferiority in relation to Europe. The old continent became, in the end of the 19th century, the perfect destine for many tourists and artists. In Literature the name received by the authors that willingly left USA was “The Expatriates,” for them Europe had better landscapes to offer, as an inspiration to their creative process. One of these artists is Henry James the writer of Daisy Miller: a Study.

In what follows an analysis of Daisy Miller: a Study will be provided in terms of the responses of readers and characters towards Daisy’s behavior, trying to understand whether her conduct is a result of the new environment in which she has been placed or if it is just her natural way.¹

Europe, known as the creed of civilization, was the place to visit in that epoch because it was considered part of an instructive and even educational experience. Of course Europe’s greatness did not present in the same manner to everyone, in order to understand the magnitude of its cultural importance people needed an educational background that supported their appreciations. Clearly someone “ignorant” would play little attention to the historical achievements of the old continent.

The object of study of this work is related to the American tourist, specifically the young lady who is initiated into social life by taking a journey to Europe. Daisy Miller: a Study deals with the theme of Americans abroad, whether they are modified by their surrounding landscape or alienated due to their inability to change. What I am trying to demonstrate in the following account is that the goal of Henry James in this novella is to make readers observe their own maliciousness. In order to do this he takes an innocent young lady and gives us clues to think that she is a reckless girl, at the end, when the girl dies, he unveils the truth: she is innocent, so we face our own prejudices. The narrator of the novella, although unknown, will generally take the perspective of Frederic Winterbourne, a narrow-minded young man. This is not the only work by James in which he plays with the readers’ guilt. In The Turn of the Screw readers are constantly experiencing guilt. In a solitary house a governess takes care of two children when unexplainable situations start to develop, were sexual insinuations and phantasmagoric images appear. The reader, not knowing whether the children are evil or the governess is mentally disable, feels uncomfortable and at fault.

¹ The way in which individuals read each others’ behavior is interesting, mostly when they are looking at an alien. Americans living in Europe thought they were in a higher level from Americans living in the U.S. They were in contact with culture and so their sophistication led them to an exaggeration of the importance of the social codes, thus they looked at American tourists with apprehension. Daisy Miller is a mystery for the characters as well as the readers, everyone is waiting for her to fall and to make a mistake to prove their point, nevertheless at the end it is clear that an injustice has been committed in treating her as something she was not. The character of Daisy Miller as well as her whole family is appealing to analyze and read as books because they all represent what the expatriates run away from: innocence, lack of social manners, ignorance, and simplicity, Therefore they generate a tremendous anger on the part of the Europeanized Americans.

In conclusion this work will provide a view of Henry James as the expositor of his reader's embarrassing mental and social constructs.

The reader response theory will be used as the critical source for the analysis of Daisy Miller: a Study. According to Stanley Fish, the meaning of a text is a combination of the author's intentions and the reader's responses and reactions to these intentions, therefore the circumstances surrounding the reader are essential in his/her interpretation of a text. This concept will be applied taking the character of Daisy as the text. She is read by the other characters that react against her rebellious behavior and try to make sense out of the mysterious way in which she acts. Moreover the same notion will be applied to the author of the text, showing the way in which he "deceives" the reader on purpose to create an unexpected end, verifying that without the readers' response the text would not be complete. I will also make a link between characterization and setting because there is a relationship between these two aspects in James's novella, so I will provide a detailed explanation of this phenomenon. The objectives of this work are to show alienation as the result of prejudice, providing a contrast between characters, and finally to show the way in which readers' responses have changed from the period in which the novel had just been published to our present days.

The reason why I chose this novella is because I thought it was interesting to identify, in his early works, James's style. A style that is clearly more defined and mature in his later writings, but that shows its first appearance in works like Daisy Miller: a Study. Another factor that drew my attention to this novella was my surprise by the small amount of essays existing on it, present critics seem to have forgotten it, even though it is one of James's most widely recognized works. Finally I thought that there must be a reason why this novella, generally despised by the critics, is so loved by the common reader. In my personal opinion, this novella was James's most successful work because he turned all of his attention to the audience and to cause an effect on readers, leaving aside any technical consideration. That is why I also selected the Reader Response perspective because this seemed the most suitable standpoint for this literary piece.

I TRAVEL WRITING

In the United States Travel writing is a genre that was born as the documentation of real journeys people took for different purposes, sometimes these written accounts served as a guide for future travelers. Nowadays fiction has completely transformed this genre due to a tradition of authors who appeared during the 19th century, when America acquired a new sensibility instigated by the Romantic Movement and the transcendental perspective.

America's literature is determined by the experience of travelling because of its history, but it is difficult to declare the precise moment in which American literature started, separated from the English one. When the Puritans arrived in America they were searching for The Promised Land, a place to start again, away from the sinful England. The journey made by the Mayflower determined forever the sensibility of American people as travelers. For Puritans the two most important concepts were God and men's piety, thus their literature was mainly concerned with those subjects.

On the 16th and 17th centuries one of the first expressions of travel literature, written in America, were called "Captivity narratives," these were written testimonies of people (usually women) who had been kidnapped by the Native Americans, and later, due to their faith in God, they had escaped or they had been rescued. In these narratives authors explained their experience and their relationship with the "other people," in this case the Native Americans. There has always existed the conflicting situation between "me" and "others," and in the Travel writing genre this state of affairs, in which different cultures face each other, will be of utmost importance. Apart from the already mentioned field, during the 17th century, Travel writing was mainly concerned with exploration and colonization. It is important to mention as an example the well-known story of John Smith, the British colonizer, who wrote about his experience in the New world, and the way in which Pocahontas, a Native American, saved his life.

Puritans in their search to create their own utopia were severe in making rules concerning every aspect of life. Literature's ultimate goal was to praise God, and the concept of authorship did not exist. God was the only creator and people serve as instruments to fulfill his intentions. Concerning devotional poetry and the notion of authorship, there is an interesting poem contrasting the Puritan view by Ann Bradstreet named "The author to her book." In this text she expresses that her book is pregnant with imperfections and later she assumes the responsibility for them. She treats her book as her offspring and refers to her shame and pride for it. For puritans she is just the executer of the poem, but she is still consciously creating.

"As all suggests, the main part of the abundant literary expression we have from the Puritan period is nor what we would now call imaginative literature. History, annal, travel record, scientific observation, the diary, the sermon, the meditation or the elegy – these were the central expressions of the American Puritan mind"²

In the Puritan world fiction is practically inexistent, and this is not a coincidence if we take into account that for Puritans many artistic topics and expressions were considered sinful

² Bradbury, Malcolm, and Richard Ruland: *From Puritanism to Postmodernism*, 1991, p. 25

(for instance theatre.) Several years later Henry James, in his famous essay "The Art of Fiction," will refer to people's sense of distrust towards fiction which is actually an inherited feature from this period.

As the years went by America had a great difficulty to produce literary pieces that did not look like an imitation of the European style. Always neglected as inferiors American artists started looking for their own voice, and in the 19th century appeared a group of writers who created a literature they could finally call their own. At the beginning of this century it was still hard for Americans to compare themselves to Englishmen who had a long history of productions, but it was the beginning of a revolutionary alteration that made America one of the greatest producer of talented artists.

1.1 The Fictionalization of the Genre

In the field of Travel writing there is a substantial change in the 19th century, fiction started being included systematically in literature and as a result of this the field became more prolific. Some important authors who set the roots of American travel writing (and, in some cases, of literature in general) are Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, Richard Henry Dana, Henry James, among many others.

It is been said that many fictive narratives have taken elements from real accounts of voyages written as journals, in which people record their travelling experiences. Richard Henry Dana published his book *Two years before the mast* in 1840 as a testimony of a voyage he made on board a ship. The publication of the book took place two years after the voyage and it was written, or at least abridged, after the journey.

No pencil has ever yet given anything like the true effect of an iceberg. In a picture, they are huge, uncouth masses, stuck in the sea, while their chief beauty and grandeur, -their slow, stately motion; the whirling of the snow about their summits, and the fearful groaning and cracking of their parts, -- the picture cannot give. This is the large iceberg; while the small and distant islands, floating on the smooth sea, in the light of a clear day, look like little floating fairy isles of sapphire.³

Intense descriptions of natural items have the object to show the reader what are the sorts of things men see and experience while been on board a ship; for instance in the above paragraph the author, in a teacher-like manner, tries to put into words how amazing icebergs are, and that no picture will ever be able to portray them. Descriptions of human relations aboard are also powerfully given, showing the reader what is like to live an everyday life as a crew member.

Usually narrations founded on real events provide vast descriptions, but they, sometimes, lack attractive elements connected to the imaginative side or the symbolic aspects of a narration. On the other hand fiction allows for the absolute creativity of the artist, that is why it is said that in the 17th century Travel writing was shaped as an expression in America, but in the 19th century it achieved its conceptual maturity in the form of the novel. The distinction drawn upon fictive and non fictive writings is usually associated to events and

³ *Dana, Richard Henry: Two Years before the mast, 1842, pp. 400-401*

entities present in reality. In that sense fictive writings appear as a rich domain in literature for its detachment from the boundaries of the real world experience.

1.1.1 The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym

Edgar Allan Poe published *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* in 1838; this work of fiction can be included in the Travel writing field. The novel is about the several vicissitudes and dangers that the young Arthur undergoes in his voyage on board a whaling ship. The detailed descriptions in this novel made Poe's contemporary readers believe he was trying to trick them giving them a truthful start and completely fantastic ending. By the end of the novel it is quite clear that its significance goes far beyond reality, and it is actually pregnant with symbols. One of the symbols is the ship full of death bodies that appears in front of the *Grampus*.

On his back, from which a portion of the shirt had been torn, leaving it bare, there sat a huge sea-gull, busily gorging itself with the horrible flesh, its bill and talons deep buried, and its white plumage spattered all over with blood. As the brig moved farther round so as to bring us close in view, the bird, with much apparent difficulty, drew out its crimsoned head, and, after eyeing us for a moment as if stupefied, arose lazily from the body upon which it had been feasting, and, flying directly above our deck, hovered there a while with a portion of clotted and liver-like substance in its beak.⁴

The appearance of the sea-gull eating the body of a death man has been seen as a prophetic scene that foresees what is about to happen to the characters, especially Parker, concerning cannibalism. The sea-gull can be compared to the image of the albatross in Coleridge's poem "*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*"

His bones were black with many a crack, All black and bare, I ween; Jet-black and bare, save where with rust Of mouldy damp and charnel crust They're patch'd with purple and green. Her lips are red, her looks are free, Her locks are yellow as gold: Her skin is white as leprosy, And she is far liker Death than he; Her flesh makes the still air cold.⁵

The albatross's death also can be considered a prophecy of what is going to happen to the crewmembers of the ship. Furthermore the whole scene of the ship full of dead people in *The Narrative* represents a similar significance with Coleridge's scene of the mariner observing a ship with only two passengers that are abstractions of death and life-in-death. Death as well as fragmentation are vital symbols in *The Narrative*, it is present in the bodies that are eaten by the sea-gull, in the way in which the ship is being destroyed by nature, in the cannibalistic scene in which the body is dismembered, and in the end of the novel which seems to have being mutilated and left with a stolen end.

The metafictional dimension of the novel is also a fundamental matter. For instance the scene in which Pym disguised himself as the dead corpse of Roger to fright the mutineers:

The shirt which we had taken from the body aided us very much, for it was of singular form and character, and easily recognizable... Having put this on, I proceeded to equip myself with a false stomach, in imitation of the horrible

⁴ Poe, Edgar Allan: *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, 1838, p. 82

⁵ Coleridge, Samuel T. "*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*"

deformity of the swollen corpse... Peters then arranged my face, first rubbing it well over with white chalk, and afterward blotching it with blood, which he took from a cut in his finger. The streak across the eye was not forgotten and presented a most shocking appearance.⁶

Pym's behaviour in this scene is similar to a real actor's conduct when he is about to play a role. He uses different clothes and is anxious for his following performance. Moreover this is not the only scene in which Pym acts. When he is about to get on board *The Grampus*, at the beginning of the novel, he also wears a disguise and even changes his way of speaking to hide himself from his grandfather. Concerning the meta fictive aspect, it is attention-grabbing the fact that Poe is also playing a role. He is not taking any credit for his work; he pretends to be telling the story of a real person: Arthur Gordon Pym. Poe is trying to make Pym similar to himself in the sense that Pym is acting as a dead man, someone that does not exist anymore, and he is pretending that this non-existent person is actually alive and performing an action. In a similar way Poe does the same with his character, he becomes Arthur Gordon Pym and acts as if this non-existent entity was real. Taking this into account it could be stated that any figure participating in the production of narratives can be considered to be taking a fictive dimension.

Finally the greatest obscurity in *The Narrative* is its closing stage, which contains an ambiguous symbol that has been explained in many ways: the colour white. For instance the natives of the island, from which Pym is trying to escape, are afraid of anything containing white. At the end of the novel the appearance of this colour in a strange figure that emerges is completely mystifying.

But there arose in our pathway a shrouded human figure, very far larger in its proportions than any dweller among men. And the hue of the skin of the figure was of the perfect whiteness of the snow.⁷

The last part of the novel has gotten a great deal of interpretations mainly concerning the meta fictive nature of the narration, for example Ricardou states that the final symbol refers to a: "journey to the bottom of the page,"⁸ and in that sense the whole narrative acquires a new meaning.

Edgar Allan Poe is one of the enormous creative minds of America, and in his novel *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* he used the Travel Literature genre to portrait different experiences, provoking readers who are left to face a very complex text: a supposed real account of facts, the internal journey of the main characters, a symbolic perspective of the text and the metaphor of the creative process of writing. In this sense it is possible to see how fiction added complexity to the travel writing genre as well as to literature, as an artistic form.

1.1.2 Billy Budd Sailor

Life in the sea is not so different from life on earth in many respects, on board a ship men find themselves forming a small society, very similar to the real one. Every crew member has a function, and a system of rules to follow, there is a hierarchy in which the captain of the ship has the highest position. He has the faculty of making important decisions which affect the

⁶ Poe, *op. cit.*, p. 63

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 175

⁸ Ricardou, Jean: *The singular character of the water* Translated for "Poe Studies" in 1976

lives of all of the men aboard. The figure of the captain is generally much respected, because they are usually very experienced. On a ship, as well as in any country, when the crew members are discontented with their living conditions, or with the way in which authorities are managing power, they rebel against the establishment, and they can engage in a mutiny.

Herman Melville is, according to Borges, the kind of author whose life and work have a lot in common. Melville at the age of nineteen went on his first adventure as a crewmember of a ship; he directed a mutiny and spent a hundred days with cannibals on an island.⁹ When reading Melville's biography people might tend to believe that his narratives are down to earth and not very figurative, nevertheless the artist delivered creations of a vast symbolic content, for example in *Moby Dick* the murderous whale is completely white, and this colour has a mysterious meaning, just like in Poe's *The Narrative*.

Billy Budd, Sailor (an inside narrative) takes place in times of war, after an important insurgency called "The great mutiny" had come about on an English fleet. The plot is about a young man, extremely innocent and benevolent, who is enlisted in a warship. Later he is accused unfairly of being involved in a mutiny, and finally he is executed for having accidentally killed the man who had accused him.

Captain Vere is different from Billy in many respects; he reads a great deal of books to instruct himself, so he knows about other cultures, and social conventions. On the other hand Billy is totally unaware of the etiquette, he seems to be apart from civilization, and he remains untainted by social prejudices. While Captain Vere is a well-spoken man, who uses language in an articulated way, Billy stutters under pressure. Indeed these two characters are considerably dissimilar, but they do have something in common and that is isolation. Isolation is also an important theme in *Daisy Miller: a Study* by Henry James in which society "punishes" different people by leaving them aside, the irony is that these two characters were all alone on board the same warship, one for being extremely savage and the other for being just too cultured:

He [Vere] seemed unmindful of the circumstance that to his bluff company such remote allusions, however pertinent they might really be, were altogether alien to men whose reading was mainly confined to the journals¹⁰

One of the major conflicts of the book is the one related to justice. Many moral judgements can be made regarding the fairness of Vere's decision of punishing Billy with the death. Nevertheless intentions are not to be judged, actions are. After all the ones in charge must obey their superiors, and in this case the King, and that can only be done by forcing the crew members to observe the law. All law is created by men, it does not have a natural essence, it is a cultural product. Melville's novella also deals with the concept of individuality, and how this can be sometimes transgressed for the sake of the community.

In a list of definitions included in the authentic translation of Plato, a list attributed to him, occurs this: "Natural Depravity: a depravity according to nature,"¹¹

As a conclusion in *Billy Budd Sailor* it is possible to find a clear social critique against communities that are able to sacrifice its members' freedom for the welfare of the entire group. Limitations of the individualities are to be found in the Natural Depravity of some

⁹ Borges, Jorge Luis: *Textos Cautivos*, 1986

¹⁰ Melville, Herman: *Billy Budd Sailor: An Inside Narrative*, 1924, p. 19

¹¹ *Ibid*, p.39

men, who are essentially wicked, and will try to destroy the ones that are able to be happy as outcasts.

The narratives mentioned above are part of the tradition that every American writer goes along with. In the following pages I will examine Henry James' novella Daisy Miller: a study, and in order to do this I will use a perspective known as Reception theory by which Daisy will be read by characters and readers, as a book, to discover her real self.

II THE READER RESPONSE PERSPECTIVE

In conformity with the Reader Response criticism it is central to examine the readers' role in literature. According to the Polish philosopher Roman Ingarden texts are full of indeterminacies readers are supposed to concretize, that is to say, texts lack information that the reader must provide in order to complete its meaning. Texts are organic wholes which means that they are harmonious in their essence, thus readers' work is limited in that they must do what the work desires them to do. The interpretation is already determined; they only have to discover it.¹² On the other hand Wolfgang Iser, a German literary scholar, gives more freedom to the reader in that they can construe the literary piece differently, as long as their interpretation is consistent. Besides he declares the importance of readers: "It must be pointed out that a text can only come to life when it is read, and if it is to be examined, it must therefore be studied through the eyes of the reader."¹³

The freedom of interpretation on the part of the reader generated a large number of criticisms referring to the relativism of the notion. In response to that criticism Fish provides a concept called "The informed reader" which is an educated reader, who has a linguistic, as well as a literary, competence and who is also semantically knowledgeable. According to Fish, readers that fulfill the necessary conditions to be called "informed readers" give similar interpretations of texts, in other words they most likely will agree in their conclusions about the nature of a text.¹⁴

The unavoidable consequence of such a concept is the creation of circles of power where the ones inside the circle have complete authority to decide the correct answer to any problematic. On the other hand the interpretations given by readers who are outside the circle will be left aside even if they are "right". To deal with this perspective I will add some information and concepts by Pierre Bourdieu. He states that the field of power refers to: "The space of play in which holders of various forms of capital struggle *in particular* for power over the state, that is, over the statist capital that grants power over the different species of capital and over their reproduction (via the schools system in particular)"¹⁵ Pierre Bourdieu also develops an interesting idea regarding the field of power which is known as *Symbolic violence* or *power* which refers to the fact that power can be exercised only when it is recognized by people, and although this power is arbitrary, people submit to it without questioning its legitimacy, in other words, the unconscious manner of social and cultural supremacy :

Symbolic power- as a power of constituting the given through utterances [...] an almost magical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (whether physical or economic), by virtue of the specific

¹² Ingarden, Roman: *The Literary Work of Art*, 1931

¹³ Iser, Wolfgang: *Prospecting From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology*, 1989, p. 4

¹⁴ Spikes, Michael P. : *Understanding Contemporary Literary Theory Revised Edition*, 1954, pp.130-131

¹⁵ Bourdieu, Pierre and Wacquant, Loïc J. D.: *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 1992, pp. 114-115

effect of mobilization – is a power that can be exercised only if it is recognized, that is, misrecognized as arbitrary [...] it is defined in and through a given relation between those who exercise power and those who submit to it¹⁶

In what follows main concepts already mentioned will serve as the basis for the examination of Henry James's novella *Daisy Miller: a Study*, in order to construe an interpretation that can evince James's intention to affect readers and to make them scrutinize themselves through his literary work.

¹⁶ Bourdieu, Pierre: *Language and Symbolic Power*, 1992, p.170

III DAISY MILLER: A STUDY BY HENRY JAMES

Daisy Miller: a Study is a novella about a young American girl and her family. They take a journey to Europe where they become acquainted with a selected group of American expatriates who feel uncomfortable with their way of life.

In his writings Henry James develops a complex technique called Psychological Realism, by which he shifts the focus of attention from the outer to the inner experience breaking the reader's horizon of expectations¹⁷. In Daisy Miller: a Study the technique does not seem to be clearly applied, as in James's later works, but still some drafts of his future style can be found in this novella. Despite of the great success of this literary piece, Daisy Miller: a Study will only serve Henry James as a sketch of his future and more mature production, such as the main female characters in The Portrait of a Lady (1881) and The wings of the Dove (1902) where he will be able to present a deeper vision of women's personality. Likewise it seems relevant to highlight the name of the novella emphasizing that it is "a study" on Daisy, a study on the part of the other characters who analyze her, and a study on the part of the author who is learning how to portray a woman's persona.

3.1 Two Visions of the World

James's existence as an ambiguous person is also relevant, his liminal position, as an American/European, gives him a special viewpoint concerning the differences of these two realities. Probably that is the reason why James constantly alludes to themes such as: *The international episode* and *Innocents abroad*, to contrast his two visions of the world.

The realism of the narration is achieved through several aspects, one of them, the narrator himself, who gives the impression of being gossiping: "I hardly know whether it was the analogies or the differences that were uppermost in the mind of a young American, who, two or three years ago, sat in the garden..."¹⁸

The fact that the narrator does not know when exactly the event occurs makes this state of affairs sound like a rumor. This narrator does not participate in the story, but he knows everything concerning Winterbourne's feelings and thoughts, therefore the reader gets Winterbourne's perspective of the circumstances. Despite this fact, the narrator appears unfamiliar to Winterbourne's past and future, so the entire novella appears as a picture portraying a particular instant in the lives of the characters.

¹⁷ Hans Robert Jauss coined the term "Horizon of Expectation" to refer to the reader's criteria of evaluation of a text, that is to say, the reader's sociocultural context by which he or she assesses a work of art. Selden, Raman and Widdowson, Peter: A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory, 1993, p. 53

¹⁸ James, Henry: Daisy Miller: A Study, 1878, p.94

The reality of the novella is also linked to the fact that its plot is associated to what actually happened in the world during the 19th century. Young American girls took journeys to Europe in a sort of ritual of initiation, by which they would become acquainted with the cultured, sophisticated old world. But no matter how wealthy these young girls were, they were scrutinized at all times by the watching eye of American Expatriates. The American tourists were exposed to a number of social codes they did not manage; as a result, they were considered, according to Mrs. Costello: "...the sort of Americans that one does one's duty by not—not accepting."¹⁹

Another feature that is connected to the air of reality of the novella is the behavior of Daisy herself. She does not even try to learn the social codes of the places she is visiting; her innocence makes her believe that everyone is just acting mad. "But I do not believe it. They are only pretending to be shocked. They don't really care a straw what I do. Besides I don't go around so much"²⁰

According to Fish there is no meaning without a context, so a "literal meaning" does not exist. Considering the context, the reaction of other characters towards her conduct is totally understandable.

"Well, Daisy's all dressed," said Mrs. Miller [...]"She got dressed on purpose before dinner. But she's got a friend of hers there; that gentleman—the Italian—that she wanted to bring. They've got going at the piano [...]; it seems as if they couldn't leave off[...]" Daisy came after eleven o'clock.²¹

It is to be expected for people to think wrongly of Daisy after the situation described in the previous passage. Even today, in our society, if a young girl stays alone with a new male friend in her house, and then they get to a party at eleven o'clock, everyone would think they were not only playing the piano. I am not saying that judging people is right or wrong, I only mean that it is something that has always happened. According to Ingarden when readers actualize a work of art they add their own context of beliefs, their habits of perception, expectations, etc.²² When reading Daisy, Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker add their own experiences, viewpoints and sensibilities to signify the girl's deeds.

"I am going to the Pincio," said Daisy, smiling. "Alone, my dear—at this hour?" Mrs. Walker asked [...]"I don't think it's safe, my dear," said Mrs. Walker. "Neither do I," subjoined Mrs. Miller. "You'll get the fever, as sure as you live. Remember what Dr. Davis told you!"²³

For Mrs. Walker it is important to prevent Daisy from going out on her own at night because it is inappropriate for a young decent girl, to do it could ruin her reputation forever. On the other hand Mrs. Miller tries to prevent her daughter from a totally different situation: sickness; she does not seem to have doubts concerning her daughter's conduct or intentions. Should the reader of the novella measure these two opposing views in terms of right or wrong? Probably no. Our answers will be affected by our standards and criteria because no universal truth is to be found in reality. Mrs. Walker and Mrs. Miller have their own truths as well

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 106

²⁰ Ibid, p. 145

²¹ Ibid, pp. 135-136

²² Ingarden, Roman: Cognition of the Literary Work of Art, 1973, p.58

²³ Opcit James p.126

as all the characters in *Daisy Miller: a Study*. As the philosopher Richard Rorty states, we believe in “what we are justified in believing”²⁴ consequently neither of them is been malicious, they only mean to give a useful advice to the young girl. The notion of believing what our circumstances, history and context permit us, allows for our close observation of the expatriates’ intolerance and James’s own ideas concerning the American tourist:

The young man [Winterbourne] asked Mrs. Miller how she was pleased with Rome. “Well, I must say I am disappointed,” she answered. “We had heard so much about it; I suppose we had heard too much. But we couldn’t help that. We had been led to expect something different.”²⁵

The vision portrayed in *Daisy Miller: a Study* presents the American tourist as having the inability to appreciate cultural achievements. In Rome Daisy’s mother feels disillusioned because, probably, her lack of instruction ruins her opportunity to find amusement in a city filled with history: the centre of the Roman Empire which ruled Europe, Middle East and North Africa; An immensely significant location for Christianity; and one of the centers of Italian renaissance where famous artists resided. For Mrs. Miller Rome turned out to be just another city and she cannot understand why people make so much fuss about it.²⁶

American expatriates considered themselves sophisticated. America was too simple for them so they decided to overcome that plain lifestyle; they felt as if they were getting to a higher level in the chic Europe. America was the place in which they were born by incident, but Europe was the place they had chosen in order to live their lives, therefore they took care of its values, maybe more than real Europeans, in order to preserve it just as they had found it. In a way it could be considered a new search for the Promised Land, only this time instead of puritan Europeans searching for the Eden in America, we find Americans looking for paradise in Europe.

The contrast between sicknesses affecting Americans and the expatriates suggests dissimilarity between these two sensibilities, under James’s perspective: “She’s got dyspepsia,” said Randolph. “I’ve got it too. Father’s got it. I’ve got it most!”²⁷ Americans residing in USA suffer from indigestion, an illness connected to the lower parts of the body and to feces. On the other hand Mrs. Costello suffers from headaches; her problems are related to the upper parts of the body particularly the head. In other words, whereas Americans seem to be linked to somewhat less elegant diseases, expatriates are linked to problems of the mind where knowledge and thoughts are supposed to dwell.

Expatriates in Europe were part of an elite in which Daisy did not fit. For a circle of power to exist, according to Bourdieu, people need to recognize this power and legitimize it. Daisy does not submit to this power because she does not recognize their right to it, and as a consequence of this she ends up being alienated from society: “The most effective literary work for Iser is one which forces the reader into a new critical awareness of his or her customary codes and expectations.”²⁸ According to Iser’s ideas Daisy could be considered the most effective work of art possible in the period. She shows a different way of existence, although she is rejected, she is still making readers (characters that read her) question their

²⁴ Rorty, Richard: *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 1979, p. 9

²⁵ *Opcit James p.123*

²⁶ Concepts discussed in class

²⁷ *Opcit, James p.123*

²⁸ Eagleton, Terry: *Literary Theory: an Introduction*, 1983, p.68

own ideas about life. For example Winterbourne is affected by the arrival of Daisy in his life and he observes her as a creature that threatens his worldview.

3.2 Reading Daisy

Daisy Miller: a Study was a great success when it was first published, this literary piece, one of James's first compositions, brought him a great deal of fame. In his words: "Daisy, at least, among my production, might approach success, a sweet tribute I hadn't yet received and was never again to know"²⁹ The reasons for this success might have been of a varied sort. Firstly the situation depicted in the novella was characteristic of the period: American young girls took these journeys; expatriates were hard on their fellow country people; and Europeans, embodied in the gentle character of Giovanelli, appeared as somehow benevolent. Secondly the novella is not lengthy and is told in a light manner, thus reading it is not a time consuming activity. Thirdly the characters are described with the air of reality that I have already mentioned above. And finally, taking Iser's notions, this novella allows for the careful examination of readers' own social notions and ideas.

For instance Winterbourne's reactions towards Daisy are founded on what he has heard about Americans, so while he analyses Daisy, he tends to make generalizations: "were they all like that, the pretty girls who had a good deal of gentlemen's society?"³⁰ At first Winterbourne examines Daisy trying to understand her behavior, he is mystified by her natural ways and he likes the fact that she is not afraid to disobey the social patterns, but as long as she does it with him. "you're a very nice girl; but I wish you would flirt with me, and me only," said Winterbourne.³¹

Winterbourne feels the need to classify Daisy because his protestant ethos urges him to do so. During the whole novella he studies her to confirm his own beliefs concerning right and wrong. In that sense the novella could be compared to The Scarlet Letter³² in that the protagonist is also isolated because she does not behave according to the mainstream ideas of the Puritan society portrayed by Hawthorne. Daisy did not survive to see what would have happened to her if she had lived and stayed in Europe. Maybe she would have lost her vitality becoming a part of the landscape just like Hester Prynne.

Winterbourne's terrible task of classifying Daisy involves everyone related to the book; in this way the reader is bound to make the same mistakes Winterbourne makes, in order to scrutinize themselves through him. In an early stage of the book Winterbourne had already come up with a first impression concerning this young lady, for him she seemed to be a "coquette"³³ although he had just met her. Later he realizes that there is some innocence in her as well as a lack of worldliness that diminishes, in some way, the appellation from coquette to "[a] pretty American flirt"³⁴ Up to this point Winterbourne feels quite satisfied

²⁹ James, Henry: *The Art of The Novel – Critical Prefaces*, 1937, p.267

³⁰ James, Op. Cit. p. 102

³¹ Ibid, p.137

³² Hawthorne, Nathaniel: *The Scarlet Letter*, 1850.

³³ Ibid, p. 98

³⁴ Ibid, p.102

for having unveiled Daisy, or as the book states: "Winterbourne was almost grateful for having found the formula that applied to Miss Daisy Miller."³⁵ In my opinion, Winterbourne's requirement to categorize Daisy is the way he finds to confirm his beliefs about life, Daisy is an element that questions his whole world view, and he needs to corroborate that she is somehow impure to confirm that his entire perception on existence was right.

It is easy to notice how Winterbourne refuses to accept Daisy's real self: "He had assented to the idea that she was "common"; but, was she so, after all, or was he simply getting used to her commonness?"³⁶ Winterbourne is so attached to social patterns that he considers Daisy's behavior enough to regard her as ordinary, thus he prefers to believe that he has become accustomed to her commonness than take a chance to see her real nature.

In the second part of the novella Winterbourne's opinion of Daisy changes drastically. Now, apart from all his objections regarding her behavior, his male pride is hurt. Winterbourne had heard about Daisy's scandal in Rome from his aunt's letters and he is quite disappointed with the current situation. From now on, he will no longer refer to Daisy with curiosity and wonder, but with resentment and anger.

During the whole experience of *Daisy Miller: a Study*, we are incapable of discern completely the object of this study, but we are able to know Winterbourne, the student. By reading his reactions and conversations with Daisy some of her essence is transmitted to the reader. In this way we learn about her innocence, but also about Daisy's awareness of her own social position. Winterbourne's need to enclosure Daisy is what allows us to observe two situations: Daisy's call for freedom and men's desire to possess women. Mrs. Costello, for example, is strong but she accepts, in a submissive way, her reality as a woman: "Of course a man may know everyone. Men are welcome to the privilege!"³⁷

Unlike Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker, Daisy defends her right to be who she is in every context of her life, and she refuses to think of men as superiors: "I have never allowed a gentleman to dictate to me, or to interfere with anything I do."³⁸ It is worth to mention that she does not refer to people in general, but precisely *gentlemen*, so she is aware of the rule she is breaking and, at the same time, she knows how much this annoys the young man who regards himself as the right person to offer advice. In this sense, Daisy appears as a female heroine, who resists the social order's confinement for women. But Daisy is not only been a "feminist" in that she wants to diminish gender differences, she also proves to be quite more worldly than the self assumed sophisticated expatriates. She likes to meet people from different countries: "I know ever so many people, and they are all so charming. The society's extremely select...English, and Germans, and Italians."³⁹ She is not afraid of having a friendship with some "third rate Italians"⁴⁰ proving to be pluralist, which irritates the expatriates' circle.

***It would therefore simplify matters greatly to be able to treat her as the object of one of those sentiments which are called by romancers "lawless passions"*⁴¹**

³⁵ Ibid, p.102

³⁶ Ibid, p.117

³⁷ Ibid, p.121

³⁸ Ibid, p.128

³⁹ Ibid, p.127

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.121

⁴¹ *Ibid, p.130*

In the previous passage it is declared openly that Winterbourne needed to *simplify* the state of affairs. He and his worldview had been affected by this lady, and now he needed to find a reason to stop questioning himself. He just wanted to make it easier for him, in order to keep living his life as he did before. For that reason he concluded that she was no more than an "easy lay." Nevertheless he was not completely convinced of her lack of decorum, because, after all, he was an intelligent man, who knew that there was no concluding truth to condemn her yet; again he "asked himself whether Daisy's defiance came from the consciousness of innocence, or from her being, essentially, a young person of the reckless class."⁴² Up to this point the reader can have an empathic relationship with Frederick Winterbourne, who may even look benevolent giving her the benefit of the doubt. But at the end we are able to see the truth, and Winterbourne's blunder (and our own) is exposed:

It was as if a sudden illumination had been flashed upon the ambiguity of Daisy's behavior, and the riddle had become easy to read. She was a young lady whom a gentleman need no longer be at pains to respect.⁴³

In the preceding passage Winterbourne lastly resolves what Daisy is. This scene, at the coliseum is very meaningful because in this place Daisy's death penalty is finally signed. As to Daisy, Winterbourne is not doubtful anymore, he laughs freely, possibly evoking all the time he spent, trying to find some integrity in an unworthy woman. But Winterbourne's "victory" does not last much. At the end, when he learns Giovanelli's account of the events, and Daisy's message for him, he faces his horrible mistake: she was, after all, an innocent creature. "One day he spoke of her to his aunt—said it was on his conscience that he had done her injustice."⁴⁴ Most likely many readers had done her injustice too. Personally, I believe readers understand Daisy's nature before Winterbourne does, and that is what makes the tragic ending so dreadful: firstly the author conducts us towards the real nature of Daisy, and our eyes are opened to see the unfairness committed against her; and secondly we are left to see how Winterbourne, our fellow prejudiced, remains blind and incapable of distinguishing the truth until it's too late.

3.3 Characters and Places: a Symbolic Relationship

Daisy's disastrous initiation ritual is a voyage that will take her to the grave. In this journey she visits a number of places and all of them provide traces of her puzzling personality. The first place she visited with Winterbourne is the Chateau de Chillon. In this scenario Daisy appears distant and uninterested. In fact she is more excited about travelling by steamer than by visiting this "old castle"⁴⁵ as she calls it. Winterbourne, who referred to the castle as "ancient monument,"⁴⁶ gives the impression to be fairly pleased in this place, thus when seeing Daisy's lack of interest he suffers an awful disillusionment: "But he saw that she cared very little for feudal antiquities and that the dusky traditions of Chillon made but a slight impression upon her." It is remarkable the way in which these two characters are contrasted.

⁴² Ibid, p.144

⁴³ ***Ibid, p.148***

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.152

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.103

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.103

On the one hand, Winterbourne the heir of traditions and culture, and on the other Daisy the natural being, unimpressed by intellectual accomplishments.

In the second part of the novella Winterbourne and Daisy find each other in Rome, one of the most important cities in history. In Rome, Daisy and her family show again their detachment from culture. Mrs. Miller is not interested in Rome, in fact she feels disappointed; Randolph detests it, as well as he detests anything that is not American; and Daisy adores it but only because of the "society." Her liking the city has nothing to do with any intellectual purpose. Rome is fundamental to demonstrate the decay of Europe; it is portrayed as a city in ruins, a city that is practically dead. Daisy and her family were not impressed by the city, the reason for this was that they were appraising Rome in the present time, without its historical value, and that made it just another European city. On the contrary, the expatriates were fond of Rome because of their snobbishness. They did not appreciate it because they felt a real admiration for it; they were only acting as they were supposed to act according to tradition.

James provides a symbolic relationship between characters and settings. A symbolic link is made between the characters' essence and what they represent. In the case of Daisy she is strongly connected to nature. The way in which Daisy is rejected by society represents how nature and the values associated to it have been left aside by people. Nature used to be linked to the satisfaction of the soul, for some people, through nature you could achieve proximity to some form of God. But in the society portrayed in the novella these transcendental values are no longer significant, the achievement of shallow objectives, like a social positions, have become the ultimate goal. The process, by which society turned its back to deeper matters becoming trivial and position-oriented, can be clearly illustrated by the expatriates, in *Daisy Miller: a Study*, who are connected to castles and important symbols of Europe's power, as well as rigid attitudes.

The first important place in Rome is the Pincio. In the following dialogue the character's contrast of ideas is extreme and by some means humorous. Mrs. Walker, as well as Winterbourne, is horrified to know that the young lady will go and take a walk with her Italian friend Giovanelli in the evening. Mrs. Walker and Mrs. Miller seem to speak a different language when they talk:

"I am going to the Pincio," said Daisy, smiling. "Alone, my dear—at this hour?" Mrs. Walker asked... "I don't think it's safe, my dear," said Mrs. Walker. "Neither do I," subjoined Mrs. Miller. "You'll get the fever, as sure as you live. Remember what Dr. Davis told you!"⁴⁷

In this conversation the word *safe* has different connotations for the two ladies. For Mrs. Walker, Daisy's action, of going out alone in the night, is to risk her reputation, and probably Mrs. Walker considers social exclusion as bad as death. On the other hand Mrs. Walker refers to a very different situation, for her, the great danger of her daughter has to do with the climate and the effect of natural circumstances which can kill her. At the end, nature proves to be more powerful in Daisy's fate, whilst her ostracism did not make much impression on her. It is also worth noticing Mrs. Miller's answer in this conversation and others. She refers to Dr. Davis as the best doctor, "At Schenectady he stands at the very top; and there's a great deal of sickness there, too."⁴⁸ She tends to praise local figures that are unknown outside her sphere, which illustrates how provincial she is.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.126

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.123

"My dear young friend," said Mrs. Walker, taking her hand pleadingly, "don't walk off to the Pincio at this hour to meet a beautiful Italian." "Well, he speaks English," said Mrs. Miller.⁴⁹

In the preceding conversation, again, it is unfeasible not to perceive how these two women are radically opposed. It has a hilarious effect to read how Mrs. Miller comprehends quite erroneously what Mrs. Walker states. In this conversation she tries to give some relief to Mrs. Walker by explaining that Mr. Giovanelli is not a savage, he speaks English, and so there will be no risks. She is unable to unveil the meaning behind Mrs. Walker's words, because their minds do not operate with the same conceptions about life.

When Daisy and Giovanelli are in the Pincian Hills overlooking the Villa Borguese, Winterbourne decides not to interrupt them and leaves; he clearly does not fit in there. According to Carol Ohmann this scene serves as an evidence of the distance between Daisy and Winterbourne which is enormous⁵⁰, they are so remote to each other that Winterbourne cannot stand the places that characterize Daisy, as well as she does not take any pleasure in castles and antiquities. In the Pincio he feels so out of place that he willingly leaves.

The church of St. Peter's is a site that appears briefly in the novella. In this place Winterbourne and his aunt see Daisy and Giovanelli, and make comments regarding the young lady and her behavior. Daisy is a matter of discussion in the expatriate circle.

Of the observation excited by Daisy's "intrigue," Winterbourne gathered that day at St. Peter's sufficient evidence. A dozen of the American colonists in Rome came to talk with Mrs. Costello, who sat on a little portable stool at the base of one of the great pilasters.⁵¹

This location represents all the incongruities of religion and the harshness of Calvinism. In this church Daisy's scandal is explicitly commented, every person gets near Mrs. Costello to talk about the intrigue. The God they follow is not a merciful one but a punisher. On the other hand, as Daisy appears with Giovanelli in this church, the idea of a possible engagement between them becomes stronger for the readers as well as for Winterbourne. So this scene grows to be a false prophecy delivered by the author, maybe, to make the ending a bit more striking.

The Palace of the Caesars is a location in the novella where nature plays the main role. In this site we can see Daisy in her true colors:

He encountered her in that beautiful abode of flowering desolation known as the Palace of the Caesars. The early Roman spring had filled the air with bloom and perfume, and the rugged surface of the Palatine was muffled with tender verdure... Daisy was strolling along the top of one of those great mounds of ruin that are embanked with mossy marble and paved with monumental inscriptions. He stood... inhaling the softly humid odors, and feeling the freshness of the year and the antiquity of the place reaffirm themselves in mysterious interfusion.⁵²

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.126

⁵⁰ Ohmann, Carol: "A Study of Changing Intentions", *American Literature*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 1964, p.8

⁵¹ *James, op cit. p. 142*

⁵² *Ibid*, pp 144-145

In the narration above Daisy appears, again, as an element of the natural environment, she seems to fit better under these circumstances than in a sophisticated milieu. The adjective *freshness* used in the narration to characterize the year's season can, also, be used in Daisy, as one of her greatest virtues; this characteristic of hers keeps her apart from the other women of the novella, who suffer from a lack of vitality.

Another interesting point in the description of the scene is the reference to an *interfusion* or the mixture of two elements: *the freshness of the year* and *the antiquity*, or, in other words, nature and culture. This allusion can be appreciated as Winterbourne's secret hope of conciliating his being with Daisy's. Moreover the notion of blending may have, in fact, a sexual connotation. Winterbourne's desire for possession trespasses the atmosphere as an elementary component of his character as a male figure, however Daisy refuses to be possessed, classified or enclosed by anyone.

Finally, following Daisy's journey, we arrive in the most significant place: the coliseum. In this scene Winterbourne visits the coliseum by midnight and starts making a soliloquy of a poem called "Manfred" by Byron. According to The Genteel Reader and Daisy Miller⁵³ Winterbourne's attitude of admiration towards the importance of the place is not spontaneous at all. In fact he is doing what anyone with his education and position would have done in the coliseum. His wonder is a "stock response" there is nothing impulsive or natural in his attitude of marvel. After his soliloquy, Winterbourne discovers Daisy and Giovanelli sitting in the crosses' base observing him; he is so shocked by this situation that he is unable to say a word. Daisy cries: "Well, he looks at us as one of the old lions or tigers may have looked at the Christian martyrs!"⁵⁴ This phrase is very meaningful because Winterbourne's eyes are really condemning her, and the result of this scene will be her death. He is a lion who is about to devour her blameless being for her uncommitted sins.

"I believe that it makes very little difference whether you are engaged or not!" He felt the young girl's pretty eyes fixed upon him through the thick gloom of the archway; she was apparently going to answer. But Giovanelli hurried her forward... "Don't forget Eugenio's pills!" said Winterbourne as he lifted his hat. "I don't care," said Daisy in a little strange tone, "whether I have Roman fever or not!"⁵⁵

In the coliseum Winterbourne laughs at Daisy and finally concludes that she is a dreadful woman. Daisy notices the unfairness committed against her, but she has no time to answer, as a result we will never know if she would have defended herself or not. Daisy's last statement, regarding death, illustrates how distant she feels from fatality as most youngsters do; in fact, it is generally regarded as "unnatural" for someone to pass away at a young age, which is why Daisy refers to death in such a fearless manner, she actually never thought that this would be her last chance to say anything. Daisy is actually a martyr who receives a condemnation and finally departs this life. The result of this ironic ending is somehow twisted, in that the young heroine, the one who seemed the most vital of the story, dies.

⁵³ Randall III, John H: "The Genteel Reader and Daisy Miller", American Quarterly, Vol. 17, No. 3, 1965, pp. 568-581

⁵⁴ James, op cit p.145

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.149

3.4 Henry James and the Psychological Manipulation of Readers

The title of the novella is somewhat suggestive; "a study" has an objective and a subjective side. At first sight the title of the novella gives the impression to refer to a, somewhat, scientific analysis of a person called Daisy Miller. When I state: scientific analysis is because "a study" is not an utterance that is typically employed in an everyday situation. Nonetheless, as we read the book, there is a narrator who obtained his/her knowledge from an unknown and unreliable source. Then the reader becomes aware of the fact that "a study" actually means a personal, therefore subjective, impression of the character of Daisy. In this way the reader gets inside the story, and begins to know and "study" Daisy Miller, nevertheless this woman moves from a shallow girl to a mystical creature.

"A study," usually, observes the evolution of a certain phenomenon or subject, and the way in which it is influenced by the different circumstances that surround it. In James's "study" the object does not really change, it remains static, but the analyst (the narrator, Winterbourne or James) seems to be the one who changes his mind about the object. James's characterization is modified drastically, from part one to part two, as if he had discovered something new while writing.

The study is not performed by Mrs. Costello or Mrs. Walker, they only needed a first impression to conclude that Daisy was not worth a major analysis. Giovanelli does not make a study either; he only enjoys her company being her little toy. So, who studies Daisy? In my opinion, James does. The author, in the first part embodied by Winterbourne but later detached from the young man, is the one who studies Daisy. At first, she is related to a sequence of typical features attached to Americans, therefore it has a humorous effect to read about her and her family. But, as the story progresses, the author starts to link her with more transcendental elements finalizing with the consecration of the girl.

3.4.1 The Evaluation of Daisy Miller: a Study

Daisy Miller a Study is an ambiguous novella concerning its characters as well as its plot. On the one hand Daisy is a reckless girl of questionable manners, and on the other she is almost a mystic unpolluted creature; in the same manner Europe and its cultural importance range from praise to condemnation. Concerning this fact, there are several possibilities: maybe James wrote the book when he did not have enough experience, therefore he was unable to observe his "contradictions"; or perhaps he just did it on purpose to provoke a certain effect on readers. According to most of the critics James's work lacks cohesion. In her essay A Study of Changing Intentions Ohmann states:

It remains a narrative of imperfect unity, a work that shows unmistakable signs of shifting authorial intention and attitude [...] James's idealization of his heroine is a matter of gain as well as loss. It resolves certain problems about Daisy's death. More importantly, it adds to the emotional appeal of the second part of the nouvelle. In other words, even if James may have lost something in intellectual consistency by introducing the poetry of Daisy, even if he does to some extent throw away his original comedy of manners, his symbolic natural imagery nonetheless intensifies our response to his history.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Ohmann, *op cit* p. 11

Most of the critics have considered the novella an inconsistent work, but they have recognized that James improved his writing style later. In my opinion the ending of the novella is the result of several circumstances: James's immaturity as a writer, and his focus on the reader's response. The master of the ambiguity is delivering a work that is a contradiction in itself, which is a feature that we will encounter in his future works. Ambiguity is a resource that James will use frequently in his writing career. In The Turn of the Screw, one of James's most important novels, he presents an ambiguous situation in which nothing is what it seems to be, and in which the reader does not know whether he is understanding correctly what it is been said. In this sense, James plays with the readers' expectations, surprising them with unforeseen outcomes. In this way The Turn of the Screw shows how James uses ambiguity and other techniques to affect, in a psychological way, the reader, making him feel guilty for having judged wrongly some innocent creatures.

The development of Daisy Miller: a Study shows the way in which James falls in love with his main character. Daisy, firstly depicted as a wild American, ends up as a metaphysical subject, who dies as a martyr. More important than the lack of unity in the work, is the author's search for a bond with the reader, which is successfully accomplished. The popularity of the novella evinces how effective were James's techniques to reach the audience. After all, this "minor work" was the one that gave him the greatest recognition of his times.

The evaluation of Daisy Miller: a Study, on the part of the critics and the audience, has varied enormously through the years because of the natural social changes that have taken place. When the work was published, its controversial plot provoked fervent reactions; as a result the critics tended to focus more strongly on the moral issues of the novella, leaving aside the technical aspects of James's style. In this way the evaluation of the novella depended on the social viewpoint of the critics: on the one hand the novella was considered an outrage on American girlhood and on the other it was seen as a necessary disapproval of the behavior of American girls:

It is perhaps well that he has made this study, which may have some corrective effect, and which should show European critics of American manners and customs the Light in which the Daisy Millers are regarded by American themselves⁵⁷

With each passing year the novella became less scandalous, which it was its main attribute. Those years have also shown that this novella will always be a classic, because it portrays the kind of characters and incident necessary to make it a best seller, nevertheless it has been considered, by the critics, a minor piece compared to other works by James, such as The Turn of the Screw, The wings of the Dove, and The Portrait of a Lady.

It [Daisy Miller: a Study] was immediately popular following its release, and continues to be one of James's most widely recognized novels. The point of the narrative seems to have lost its edge over time, considering that most of Daisy's actions are not as shocking in today's oversexed society. Nevertheless, it remains an enjoyable and memorable read.⁵⁸

3.4.2 The Status of the Novella Today

⁵⁷ Grant, Richard "North American Review 128," January 1879, p.101

⁵⁸ Kneisley Jennifer: http://thecelebritycafe.com/books/full_review/999.html

Travel Writing has suffered many changes and we may wonder why some books from the past are still relevant to readers from the present. In order to answer this question it is necessary to have a clear conception of the techniques and goals that dominate our present literature in general terms, and the way in which it is possible to define a post modernist work of art.

The typical postmodernist work of art is arbitrary, eclectic, hybrid, decentred, fluid, discontinuous, pastiche-like. True to the tenets of postmodernity, it spurns metaphysical profundity for a kind of contrived depthlessness... Suspecting all assured truths and certainties, its form is ironic and its epistemology relativist and sceptical. Rejecting all attempts to reflect a stable reality beyond itself, it exists selfconsciously at the level of form or language... it draws attention to its own 'intertextual' nature... Finally, and perhaps most typically of all, postmodern culture turns its distaste for fixed boundaries and categories on the traditional distinction between 'high' and 'popular' art, deconstructing the borderline between them by producing artifacts which are self-consciously populist or vernacular... There is no better or worse, just different.⁵⁹

According to Terry Eagleton's characterization of the postmodernist work of art, we can see that Daisy Miller: a Study does not show any connection to this kind of artifact (maybe only in the irony and discontinuity) because its lack of deepness does not allow for a more profound reflection on Literature itself and its boundaries, which appears as one of the main goals in postmodernist writing. On the contrary, James's work focuses on social boundaries and it does not question art itself. So we may ask ourselves, why is Daisy Miller: a Study still read? In my personal opinion, the subject of traveling is what keeps the novella being a classic. Travel literature has evolved tremendously throughout the years, but we can still find a fundamental element, ubiquitous in this kind of narratives: the movement. Motion is a basic characteristic of Travel literature, not only the physical one, but the psychological as well. Although the imaginary or psychological journey may seem motionless or static it is completely dependent on the movement of the mind and the way in which our own psyche is able to create a journey, therefore it is not less real than the conventional corporal displacement. Considering that traveling appears as an intrinsic aspiration or need of the human being, there is no wonder why Daisy Miller: a Study continues to be a literary piece enjoyed by the audience, because it portrays an experience so dear to the human race.

It would seem somehow unfair to attribute the never ending success of the novella to its subject only, if this were the case, any narrative about travelling would be as popular as Daisy Miller: a Study. Of course it is of utmost important to take into consideration the writer's unique style, the ambiguity that pervades the novella with its black humor and its tragic ending, and the way in which the discontinuity of the work is able to surprise the reader.

Another subject (intermingled with the subject of travelling) that makes the novella still relevant is the rite of initiation. Probably every culture around the globe has some way to celebrate or mark the transition from childhood to adulthood. So, in Daisy Miller: a Study, it is possible to observe an experience that is as personal as it is social, and that we have all lived in a variety of ways. Therefore the universal subjects that encompass the novella make it timeless and placeless, which are the perfect qualities for a book to last forever.

⁵⁹ Eagleton, *op cit*, pp. 200-202.

CONCLUSIONS

As a final remark, I reassert that I chose the Reader Response criticism because, to me, one of the most important observable aspects of the novella was the author's intention to find a connection with the readers, to make them "fill the gaps" and achieve his goal. I tried to deliver as many elements as possible to prove that Henry James wrote his novella to manipulate our minds into believing what is not.

According to this investigation most of the critics attributed the change in the novella, from part one to part two, to a sort of immaturity on the part of the author. However, as I stated in my original assessment, I tried to prove that the novella was intentionally built in this way to cause an effect on readers, and I think I succeeded in doing such. Let's consider that Daisy Miller: a Study is not an isolated work, there are other literary pieces by James that show the same manipulation of the mind, besides there is a reason why he is known as the major expositor of the Psychological Realism because his analysis of inner experiences provokes the breaking of the readers' horizon of expectations, which is exactly what happens in this novella.

One of the interesting points in this analysis was to discover the insistent relation between characters and settings which charged every scene with a metaphoric significance. The cautious examination of this aspect made me value the way in which the author carefully chose each location, especially the coliseum, to make every moment in the novella meaningful.

This investigation was really instructive for me, not only because I was able to explore James's novella, but because it allowed me to get to know a whole tradition. Travel writing is the genre that characterized every movement in civilization, from real accounts to imaginary journeys. In this sense having explored texts like The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket, Billy Budd Sailor, Moby Dick, and On the Road, enriches to a great extent my understanding of the genre and gives me the tools to contrast any piece of travel writing with one of these works that are masterpieces of all times.

In writing this investigation project it became obvious that the Feminist criticism would have contributed a great deal in the analysis of this literary piece. So the lack of this perspective appears, to me, as one of the major weaknesses of this project. I only referred in general terms to male dominance and women's search for freedom, but it was actually one of the most important subjects in the novella.

Finally I would like to state that the value of my investigation resides in that it presents an unusual interpretation of a piece of writing considered a classic. I think it is always positive to re evaluate the works from the past, not only reasserting truths about them, but being able to find new perspectives to measure these artistic elements. We should not leave the classics in the library, assuming that all their secrets have been exposed. Meaning depends largely on the readers, therefore time will always bring innovative angles of study, by which new truths will be born.

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