

Inferiority Who Wants to Be Brave: Daisy Is a Role Model for Winterbourne

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Daisy Miller is one of the influential works of Henry James, which portrays the subtle relationship of Daisy and Winterbourne. This essay will prove that Winterbourne initially only liked Daisy's beautiful appearance. With his own observation, he gradually and truly falls in love with Daisy, and I think he longs to become a free and unrestrained person like Daisy, unaffected by worldly gaze.

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A Brave Person Who Is Responsible for Her Own Thoughts

The author thinks Daisy is a person who is responsible for her own thoughts and is not influenced by others. She follows her own heart. So, she thinks she is a true hero, a brave person. Firstly, Daisy has strong critical thinking abilities. Daisy reprimands Winterbourne for not visiting her earlier, but swiftly moves on to other topics. She mentions her plan to stay in Rome throughout the winter, unless they succumb to the fever. Initially, she had feared that Rome would be dull and suffocating, but she now finds it delightful due to the presence of charming individuals and the vibrant "select" society comprised of foreigners. Unlike other travelers, Daisy appears unconcerned about the enigmatic Roman fever. Instead, she focuses on her own interpretation of social success, immersing herself in the captivating Roman "society". Daisy and Winterbourne engage in conversation, during which she expresses her astonishment at Mrs. Walker's insistence on her abandoning Mr. Giovanelli and joining her in the carriage on a previous occasion. Daisy scoffs at the notion that this would have been the "proper" thing to do, as Mr. Giovanelli had already invited her for a walk in the gardens. Winterbourne remarks that an Italian gentleman would never have asked an Italian lady to stroll through the streets with him. Daisy appreciates that she is not bound by such customs and questions why she should alter her behavior for others. It is not that Daisy disregards all notions of social etiquette and appropriateness; rather, she adheres to her own understanding of what is proper. For her, abandoning Mr. Giovanelli would be a breach of social decency in itself. Winterbourne perceives Giovanelli's behavior as influenced by stereotypes associated with "forward" American women, although Daisy appears unperturbed by this.

Secondly, Daisy is not afraid of the eyes of others and will not be swayed by the thoughts of others. And in the face of people who disagree with her, she is polite to defend her own opinion, rather than blushing and arguing with others. Winterbourne goes to fetch Daisy, who appears thrilled to introduce Mr. Giovanelli to Mrs. Walker. Mrs. Walker invites Daisy to join her in the carriage, but Daisy cheerfully declines, stating that she is content

where she is. Mrs. Walker explains that it is not customary to behave this way, to which Daisy exclaims that it should be. When Mrs. Walker suggests that Daisy walk with her mother instead, Daisy asserts that she is old enough to make her own decisions. Mrs. Walker retorts that Daisy is old enough to be gossiped about. Despite the tension, Daisy continues to smile and questions Mrs. Walker's meaning, refusing to comply with her request. Winterbourne starts to feel uncomfortable as Daisy claims she doesn't care to know what Mrs. Walker implies. It is unclear whether Daisy is oblivious to the trouble she is causing or simply chooses to ignore it. Even if Mrs. Walker educates Daisy about local customs, Daisy fails to see why she should conform to them, as she has her own customs influenced by her origins and her independent nature. While Daisy's defiance seems admirable, in a society with strict rules, it is considered "vulgar" and "wicked". Daisy begins to blush, captivating Winterbourne. She asks him if her reputation necessitates getting into the carriage. After a moment of hesitation, Winterbourne decides that honesty is the best approach and advises her to comply. Daisy laughs loudly, declaring that she will embrace impropriety. She turns away to walk with Mr. Giovanelli, demonstrating her commitment to asserting her own free spirit, even if it means damaging her reputation with Mrs. Walker.

A Person With Low Self-Esteem Who Is Easily Influenced by Others and Does Not Dare to Embrace His Own Ideas

In my opinion, Winterbourne is an inferior person who does not dare to defend his own opinions, and he is easily influenced by the opinions of others. First, Winterbourne always questioned his own judgment, in other words, he always questions the results of his observations and thoughts. "She seemed to him, in all this, an extraordinary mixture of innocence and crudity" (James, 1995, p. 26). Winterbourne has accompanied Daisy on a tour of the castle across the lake, spending the day together. He has just informed her that he must return to Geneva the following day, prompting an almost tantrum-like reaction from Daisy. She concludes that there must be a woman in Geneva to whom Winterbourne is returning, and she passionately begins to insult this imagined woman, much to Winterbourne's surprise. He is unaccustomed to women expressing their opinions so openly. While jealousy and protectiveness exist in his world, they are typically masked by socially acceptable behavior, which Daisy seems unaware or unconcerned about. This ignorance of societal expectations makes Daisy appear more innocent to Winterbourne, as she seems completely oblivious to the prescribed behavior for young ladies. However, Winterbourne adopts the language of his aunt, for example, to label Daisy's behavior as crude, a term often associated with Americans for their perceived lack of subtlety and sophistication compared to their European counterparts. Winterbourne continues to observe Daisy, constantly having to revise or complicate his judgment of her based on new information or observations. Another example, "He was angry at finding himself reduced to chopping logic about this young lady; he was vexed at his want of instinctive certitude as to how far her eccentricities were generic, national, and how far they were personal" (p. 51). Winterbourne has failed several times to run into Daisy or to meet her at her home. He continues to muse over her character, and prior to this passage he wonders if she is too thoughtless to think of him at all, or if she is angrily defiant about his and other people's judgment about her. His inability to decide between these two options makes him generally angry at his failure to understand Daisy. Winterbourne is a very logical person, and he is usually confident in his ability to reason out a problem—indeed, this is how he has approached the "problem" of Daisy for most of the novel. Only now does he truly grow "vexed" at how little his investigations have been fruitful or satisfying. He still cannot understand or know Daisy. Even worse, he has trouble determining even what kind of unusual behavior she

espouses: Does it have something to do with her American origins? With her own, individual character? With some combination of the two? Winterbourne has been confident that waiting and watching Daisy can be just as revelatory as plunging into experiences with her, but now he is beginning to doubt whether or not that is the case. From the above examples, it can be seen that Winterbourne has been hesitant about his judgment of Daisy, and the root of this hesitation comes from his lack of trust in his own judgment and thoughts.

Second, Winterbourne cares deeply about worldly perspectives and is easily swayed by other people's opinions. Although he will occasionally defend his opinions, he will question himself as a result.

He could not deny to himself that she was going very far indeed. He felt very sorry for her—not exactly that he believed that she had completely lost her head, but because it was painful to hear so much that was pretty and undefended and natural assigned to a vulgar place among the categories of disorder. (James, 1995, p. 49)

While touring Rome with his aunt and other expatriates, Winterbourne becomes privy to the gossip circulating about Daisy, along with their judgments and condemnations of her behavior. In some ways, Winterbourne shares their concerns due to his similar social background, which influences his perception of Daisy's actions, leading him to believe that she is going "very far indeed". However, he does not agree that her behavior stems from any sinful or malicious intent. He continues to view her as innocent and "natural". Despite Winterbourne's attempts to categorize and understand her, he consistently fails, leaving Daisy in a realm of mystery and uncertainty. Even as her closest observer, he finds her motives inscrutable. This is why Winterbourne distinguishes between being "vulgar" and simply being ignorant or innocent, as he believes the latter absolves Daisy of most of her social improprieties.

An Inferior Person Who Aspires to Be a Brave Person

As the novella progresses, Winterbourne grows, largely from the cult and unconscious imitation of Daisy. At first, Winterbourne is an inferior person who was almost afraid to embrace and assert his ideas. Daisy has always been a brave person with strong critical thinking and daring to express herself. The author thinks that's the real reason why Winterbourne is drawn to Daisy. So, deep down, Winterbourne adores Daisy's bravery and freedom. He really wants to be a brave man like Daisy.

From the beginning, Winterbourne thinks Daisy is very innocent. It's just that he always questions his own judgment. Winterbourne meditated a moment. "They are very ignorant—very innocent only. Depend upon it they are not bad" (James, 1995, p. 29). Upon Winterbourne's arrival in Rome, Mrs. Costello updates him about the earlier arrival of the Millers and their scandalous behavior, particularly Daisy's habit of attending parties with an Italian man sporting a mustache. Winterbourne appears to carefully consider his aunt's judgment, although he does not fully embrace it. While he contemplates the evidence presented by his aunt, it is evident that his own experiences with Daisy also influence his perspective. Winterbourne does not outright challenge his aunt's condemnation but rather seeks to provide an explanation. He views "ignorance" as a trait that is not necessarily positive but justifiable in terms of "innocence", rather than being rooted in malicious intent. Winterbourne attempts to defend the moral character of the Miller family while refraining from justifying their behavior, as he believes it is a matter of social impropriety rather than moral wrongdoing. He places significant importance on his ability to impartially describe and classify the Millers, striving to be an unbiased judge in the situation. However, Winterbourne fails to fully comprehend, or perhaps acknowledge to himself, the extent to which his own fascination with Daisy influences his judgment process.

In the end, Winterbourne still thinks Daisy is innocent. “She was the most beautiful young lady I ever saw, and the most amiable”; and then he added in a moment, “and she was the most innocent”. Winterbourne looked at him, and presently repeated his words, “And the most innocent?” “The most innocent!” (James, 1995, p. 58). At Daisy’s burial in a Protestant cemetery in Rome, Winterbourne encounters Giovanelli, who appears pale and sickly, no longer displaying his usual clever and stylish demeanor. Winterbourne confronts Giovanelli, blaming him for bringing Daisy to the Coliseum. However, Giovanelli defends himself, albeit unsatisfactorily, by asserting that Daisy always found a way to do as she pleased. Surprisingly, Giovanelli’s words of praise for Daisy alleviate Winterbourne’s anger. The repeated use of the word “innocent” solidifies it as the most fitting description for Daisy, while also raising doubts about whether she and Giovanelli were truly lovers. Giovanelli strongly insists on describing Daisy as innocent. Throughout the novel, Winterbourne has experienced numerous cycles of believing, doubting, and tentatively accepting Daisy’s innocence. Unlike Giovanelli, he presents the word as a question. Winterbourne realizes that any belief or judgment he holds about Daisy can only be posed as a question, rather than stated with certainty. He has believed that by closely observing Daisy and logically analyzing her actions, he would unravel the mystery surrounding this captivating American girl. However, he has not only failed to do so but has also failed to fully live his own life in the process.

As a result, Winterbourne considers Daisy to be innocent. It shows that he admires and yearns for such qualities, as well as the self-temperament and courage to defend her own thoughts. In fact, Winterbourne also wants to be a brave actor who dares to break the world’s vision and bravely defend his thoughts and opinions.

References

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