



Desire, Death and Characterization in Henry James' *Daisy Miller*

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Abstract

This paper offers a close textual analysis of Henry James' classic novella, *Daisy Miller*. The analysis explores the conflict of desire the female protagonist is exposed to in the society, and how the woman's desire is linked with death. James' *Daisy Miller* depicts the struggle of a woman to articulate and demonstrate her experience of ideal lifestyle in a foreign environment. In this realist fiction, the female protagonist is seen in constant conflict with both the men and women surrounding her as she sticks to the path she feels is ideal for her. She finds herself battling with a new culture different from her own. At the end, the research concludes that Daisy's death in the novel is an attempt by the author to achieve a "pure" work of art. His motive is clear: he does not intend to deviate from what his society considers pure literature. His attitudes on gender and sexuality seem largely to conform to the accepted social structures of his time.

Keywords: *Desire, Death, Characterization, Culture*

1. Introduction

First and foremost, desire is a "psychological movement" and "a driving force" that implies "finality" (Oughourlian, 2010: 17). For Derrida, it is an "affirmation" (Alvis, 2016: 17), a psychoanalytic principle asserting that whatever a subject most forcefully rejects is, in fact, what the subject most innately desires to affirm. Jacques Lacan associates desire with "lack." Rene Girard provides a fundamental primer on desire and its implications for personal and social life. His analysis of what he calls the "pathologies of desire" is surprisingly relevant to our own time and place (Ross, 2017: 1). He describes desire as a product of mimesis, which leads individuals to love, like, want, and admire what another individual possesses. Jonathan Dollimore argues that there is an intricate relationship between an individual's desire and death, in that the former is a psychic urge resulting from lack, deficiency, and suffering, which only attains "ultimate freedom" in the latter (173)—the other pole of life that represents true completion and the final putting-to-rest of man's never-ending state of desire (Nuru, 2023: 32).

This paper offers a close textual analysis of Henry James' classic novella, *Daisy Miller*, by looking at the intersection of desire and death. It examines the principal female character of the novella by placing her on the scale of Jonathan Dollimore's theorization of

death and desire. Dollimore's theory (2001) focuses on "will to life" and how it is manifested as desire which springs from lack, from deficiency, and thus from suffering" (173). According to him, desire ultimately comes as a result of mediation is "a condition of continual, restless, longing – 'a striving that is bound to frustrate itself' (173). Freud has provided a down-to-earth conceptualization of desire. His analysis relies on the individual's inner dynamics, emphasizing on childhood experiences. However, this study employed Dollimore's theorization of desire for its apt explication on the relationship with death.

Generally, literary texts produce or elicit desire. They evoke desire in the reader while reading. Literary texts, it might be said, are "machines of desire". Not only do they generate desire (such as the desire to read on), but they are generated by it - by the writer's desire, for example, to tell and this desire is "rooted in a plural and shifting self, a self that is both fictional and inimitable" (Abdullahi, 2017:13). In this respect it might be useful to turn Freud's famous question of female desire, as Bennet and Royle (2004) posits, "what does a woman want?" (quoted in Jones 1958, 2:468) – and Gayatri Spivak's reformulation of it as "what does a man want?" – into a question about literary texts: "What does a text want? Does it want to tell us something or conceal something? Does it want to make us want it? How?" (180). However, desire can also be seen from the reader's perspective too. A reader desires solutions, she desires to get to the end of the story, she desires to be entertained and moved by the story. Boone in 1987 has shown that classic nineteenth-century narrative usually ends with the apparent satisfaction of desire (the reader's, the character's or preferably both). But as Freud has taught us, this end of desire is not the end of the story: as he speculates in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, "there is something in the very nature of sexual life which "denies us full satisfaction" (Freud 1985e, 295).

Daisy Miller chronicles the story of a young American girl who is neglected by her family, left to carve her own way through European society, and finally "cruelly sacrificed by expatriated snobs with misogynistic double standards" (Haralson and Johnson, 2009:222). Generally, James represents an aesthetic response to the social conditions of modernity in American and European societies. However, his attitudes on gender and sexuality, in this text in particular, seem largely to conform to the accepted social structures of his time, as he has spurred the women of his time to a vast discussion in which nobody felt very deeply, and everybody talked very loudly. The thing went so far that the critical reader response of the society almost divided itself into "Daisy Millerites and anti-Daisy Millerites" (Haralson and Johnson, in Stafford 111–112). Daisy Millerites, see her as a sympathetic, misunderstood character, who has uncommon spirit and defied, societal norms, anti-Daisy Millerites attack the character of Daisy Miller for her perceived indecency, recklessness, lack of morality and disregard for social conventions. For anti-Daisy Millerites, Daisy's behavior is irresponsible and indicative of a flawed character. More so, James's representation of the demise of a young American girl became a sensation of 19th-century publishing and brought its author fame and notoriety.

The plot of *Daisy Miller* provides an ideal framework for exploring and delving into the psyche of a woman, particularly concerning the intricate relationship between desire and death. Therefore, this research aims to explore the intersection of desire and death in the characterization of Daisy, the principal female character of the novel. The research is qualitative, involving extensive reading on the subject area and subsequent deductions based on the researcher's inferences and understanding.

Review of Critical Studies on James' *Daisy Miller*

Valette (2015), on his point, analyzes James' *Daisy Miller* based on Sigmund Freud's theorization in his essay "Civilization and its Discontents", where he (Freud) states that "the liberty of the individual" does not contribute to the betterment of the society and its culture. Valette contends that *Daisy Miller* presents cultural "cheerfulness" in an individual, particularly an individual blundering heedlessly through social standards, such cheerfulness comes across as childish and lacking in intelligence to an observer. This kind of cultural ethno-centricity, Valette further argues, is a typical American trait. The culture is so highly individualized as a group that they seem to expect things to adapt to them rather than realizing they should be the ones adapting. Despite the cost to individual freedom, good culture demands justice that all individuals be judged equally, allowing for no leniency no matter how much the individual in the circumstance may demand it. *Daisy Miller* narrates the innocent, cheerful, and informal manner typical of Americans in conflict with complex European societies. As American culture places a high value on cheerfulness and likeability as distinguishing individuality, it is a stark contrast to the rigid formality of the English society. Inevitably, this causes a conflict which results in the ostracization of the unsuspecting American in cultured international societies.

Citing Daniel Young (2013), Ohmann (1964) psychologizes Daisy through Freudian lens which shows that her thoughts are revealed mostly through her activities and interaction with the world. As Ohmann writes, "Daisy often speaks in the language of extravagant, if unoriginal, enthusiasm" and "in an idiom that is homely and matter-of-fact. When Winterbourne asks, 'Your brother is not interested in ancient monuments?' she rejects his formal phrasing and says simply, 'He says he don't care much about old castles'" (3). In addition to her speech, Daisy is primarily analyzed by how others perceive her. Winterbourne, while captivated by Daisy, with "the most charming nose he had ever seen" (James 208), also dismisses her as "very unsophisticated" and "a pretty American flirt" (James 208). While Daisy is portrayed with a level of subtlety, she still largely exists as an object of desire, and her inner truth is only revealed by her language and what others think about her; the reader has no direct access to her thoughts.

Haralson and Johnson (2009), in their study of James, contend that it is easy to read *Daisy Miller* in opposition to how it was first received, and to see Daisy as a naïve girl, neglected by her family, left to carve her own way through European society, and finally "cruelly sacrificed by expatriated snobs with misogynistic double standards" (222). Their study revealed that it is now a more favored reading of the novella, but it, too, turns Daisy into a type, symbolic of innocence rather than vulgarity. Recognizing the limitations of both these interpretations can help unravel the dialectic of type and individuality that makes *Daisy Miller* such a success. It is with this background set by Haralson and Johnson that Carol Ohmann (1964) analyzes the comic portrayal of different ways of living, different manners of the novel. He argues that the social settings with which the characters are identified, in the ways they speak, as well as in what they say, the various characters range themselves along "an axis that runs from the natural to the cultivated, from the exuberant to the restrained" (3). Ohmann's study reveals Daisy's sensibility which has very obvious limitations, which is hinted clearly in the statement that Europe is "perfectly sweet."

Deviating from both Haralson and Johnson and Ohmann, Fixer (2018) moves on to find evidence of feminism in the life and death of Daisy Miller. Her death symbolizes society's unwillingness to see and to accept feminism. Her example is rightfully

summarized as, “James thus ended Daisy Miller, but her ghost lived on.” The implications of her actions, all her blatant rebellions, innocent disregard for social customs, and “vulgar” flirtations, are met with contempt and disapproval, and yet she is recognized now, finally having her place in society, as a young feminist.

Characterisation of Daisy in *Daisy Miller*

The analysis of the character and characterisation in this section focused on Daisy – the female protagonist of Henry James’ *Daisy Miller*. By observing and analysing the thought process, behaviour, speech and manner of communication of Daisy, her complex nature, which constitutes the intrigues of the novella, is unpacked and brings to the surface. This provides the basis for her psychological examination in respect to the question of death and desire. Daisy is a young American girl from Schenectady, New York who travels with her mother and small brother to Europe for basically what looks like an extended stay. She is “a beautiful young lady” (50), whose age is never stated, but she is old enough “to be talked about” (92). She is always perfectly dressed, typically in white muslin with “frills and flounces” (51), and habitually carries a parasol or fan. Daisy is eager to be noticed in the European society, but she is not concerned about their norms and customs, their ways of. Invariably, she fails to understand how the European society could see anything wrong in what she does. At the same time, she enjoys making an impression to assert herself. Daisy says of herself: “I’m a fearful frightful flirt!” (99), and it is precisely the vivacious spirit of her “uncultivated” chatter that makes her such an appealing character.

Daisy is an innocent, young American lady who found herself in alien society of Europe. She is Henry James’s quintessential American girl, the girl he would write about repeatedly, possessing that unique American sense of freedom, which in Europe, at the turn of the century, was nothing less than scandalous (Bloom, 2001). Daisy has no familiarity with the rigidity of European social convention nor, it turns out, any capacity to develop sensitivity to complicated social mores. Daisy looks at people openly, but she is not without modesty. She is introduced as “an American girl” (50), which makes her representative of a type. With a father in big business, the family no doubt belongs to upper social class. Daisy is summarily a girl of the later eighteen-seventies, sent with such a mother as hers to Europe by a father who remains making money in Schenectady, after no more experience of the world than she got in her native town. She is cultivated but not rude, reckless but not bold, “inexpugnably ignorant of the conventionally right, and spiritedly resentful of control by criterions that offend her own sense of things, she goes about Europe doing exactly what she would do at home, from an innocence as guileless as that which shaped her conduct in her native town” (Haralson and Johnson, 2009:215). She knows no harm and she means none; she loves life, and talking, singing, dancing, and “attentions,” but she is no flirt, and she is essentially and infinitely far from worse. Her whole career, as the reader is acquainted with it, is seen through the privity of the young Europeanized American – Winterbourne - who meets her at Vevey and follows her to Rome in a fascination which they have for each other, but which is never explicitly a passion.

Daisy is the figure who changes most through this story. She later comes to have a tenderness for Winterbourne; and she also moves towards a greater self-awareness that brings, if not maturity, at least a pained recognition of her own failure. She loses innocence without gaining wisdom, or even a reciprocated love. United to Winterbourne, one is meant to feel, she might well have developed out of her intellectual flimsiness. Winterbourne is

later convinced of Daisy's innocence but also that the Byzantine moral code of Europe is evidence of depravity and not, as Europeans contend, of sophistication. Finally, James concludes the story by telling us: "Nevertheless, he went back to live at Geneva, whence there continue to come the most contradictory accounts of his life" (82). The insensitivity of her treatment by the American community, as well as the indications that she had heartfelt feelings for Winterbourne, add a tragic pathos to her untimely death.

2. Method

This research is essentially qualitative. Therefore, it entails extensive reading on the subject area and consequent deductions based on the researcher's inference and understanding. It is also a desk work oriented research without involving field work, questionnaires or interviews. The theoretical approach adopted for this research Jonathan Dollimore's (2000) argument of *desire* and *death* are central to the analytic approaches while Kate Millett's (1999) theory of sexual differences (politics) serves as supplement. The benefit of doing this is twofold: first, it allows for an in-depth study of the principal female characters that illustrates how a shared, underlying ethos make the works illustrative of Dollimore's models of desire, and second, the primary texts are opened up to explore how far they may be said to reinforce or question gender role stereotypes in this regard. Though this attempt to James' *Daisy Miller* makes use of frequent references to Dollimorian taxonomy of desire, references to Freud, Derrida and Lacan are made for literary analogy and interpretation.

3. Results

3.1. Findings

Desire and Sexual Politics in *Daisy Miller*

The conflict of desire between cultural forces and a young American girl in an alien society of Europe runs through the pages of *Daisy Miller*. This section explores this conflict between the female protagonist's desire to flirt around with men and the rejection she gets from other characters on the basis of tradition in her new environment. With differing norms and values, Daisy stands strong and true to her desire, revealing her own derivative and self-reflexive attributes. A reading of *Daisy Miller* reveals that Daisy is constantly in conflict, between her desire to flirt around with 'gentlemen', and what she had come across of the culture of Europe. In discussing Paglia (a feminist and social critic who authored *Sexual Personae* and other texts), Dollimore (2000) argues that men create a culture as a "defence against nature", and, since women are identified with nature, culture is also "a defence against female nature". James or the men around Daisy may not see her as "nature", but their reaction towards her shows that they do not take to be the equal of men. This is a valid argument and it is adopted to analyze James' characterization of Daisy and the perception of the men around her. In *Daisy Miller*, this culture creates a crisis and open confrontation as the "female nature" refuses to succumb to its dictates.

Daisy Miller chronicles the story of a young American girl who has suffered from derision and condemnation in a European society for chasing after her desires - an unrestricted movement with men and moonlit meetings together. The story opens one summer in Vevey, Switzerland where the young Daisy meets an American fellow with the name Winterbourne. In her first appearance, Daisy is introduced with a saucy of delicate dressing that suggests her first encounter with the new environment. She is wearing a "white muslin" cloth and carrying an "embroidered parasol" (3). At this point, Winterbourne

feels free to conceive himself as culturally more "advanced" than Daisy. But his experience with Daisy confounds and complicates this conception, producing a conflict of desire between him and this "young American flirt" (14). Daisy is first and foremost an American girl, and the subject of the conflict ensues when she is let loose in an alien European surrounding. She has remained adamant to her American lifestyle and refused to switch to the European ways as she is urged to do so in order to protect her reputation in the society. No doubt, Daisy likes Europe, apart from the lack of society because she had been used to "a great deal of gentlemen's society" (57) in New York. She declares that "Europe was very sweet" and that "she was not disappointed" (13), but she asserts that: There isn't any society; or, if there is, I don't know where it keeps itself. (13).

However, Daisy's delicate behavior of flirting around with Geovenally is constantly scrutinized in the society. Winterbourne once told her that "flirting is purely American, it doesn't exist here" (60), thus Daisy's open romance with Giovanelli, though there are no traces of its cruelty and indecency, leads to aspersions on her personality, while the men surrounding her enjoy great deal of freedom in their vicious relationship as Winterbourne's liaison with Mrs. Walker, is condoned, occasioning only a mild gossip. This is what Kate Millet contends in her thesis. She descends on the society that create incidents of psychological gesture of ascendancy against women only. In *Daisy Miller*, there are no evidences where male characters are castigated for flirting around with women. This points to a society that valued men above women, in which men had social and political power and women's role was to serve men's interest. The society regards Daisy's flirtation with Geovenally as a indelicate and indecency. This is seen as when Winterbourne's older mate once approached the trio of Daisy, Winterbourne and Giovanelli and told them they are being gossiped about, Daisy declines to be rescued and states her preference to walk with Giovanelli, mocking Mrs. Walker's lecturing tone. Winterbourne finds the whole scene unpleasant, particularly when Daisy asks his opinion and he finds himself forced to tell her the only truth he knows. Daisy is clearly hurt, but she simply laughs and says that "If this is improper . . . then I am all improper, and you must give me up" (93). She leaves on the triumphant Giovanelli's arm. More so, the older women with who Winterbourne is closely related reject Daisy only on the grounds of her delicacy. Winterbourne's aunt in particular, Mrs. Costello, cannot understand how such a common girl has picked up such good taste in dress, and she condemns Daisy's intimacy with the courier Eugenio. Winterbourne admits that he has already offered to introduce Daisy, but his aunt refuses, shocked that Daisy has agreed to go to the castle with him on such short acquaintance. She warns Winterbourne that he has lived too long abroad and will make a mistake in pursuing Daisy. She tells him that:

On the other hand, Mrs. Costello also culturally influences Daisy's perception of Winterbourne's psyche by gravely distinguishing between the intuitive "natural" morality practiced by Daisy and the social codes that serve as markers of decent class among American circle in Europe. Mrs. Costello often addresses the Millers as, "hopelessly vulgar" (39), because for her, "vulgarity" is a moral as well as an aesthetic failing which offends the notion of behavior as a created system, "a set of "rules" composed to distinguish "civilized" people from those who scandalously act upon their "natural" or intuitive impulses", and which therefore stands as the superior standard of judgment. Therefore, Daisy's disregard for this set of rules guiding courtship appear in this regard not the fruit of moral/cultural decay or bad upbringing. This is demonstrated on Daisy's remarks on how much she is looking forward to meeting Winterbourne's aunt, but she is

obviously affected when she infers her rejection. At another point, Daisy has made it clear to Winterbourne that she would not succumb to the dictates of any gentleman, implying that neither of the men that surrounded her has control over her. For this reason, the Europeanized characters feel that Daisy is an outcast who should be denied into their family in order to sustain their standards of respectability.

Here, it can be seen that the cultural society of Europe sets out the standards of how the female gender should behave. Daisy does not toe to the dictate of this society as she refuses to change her habit to its norms; she often says that "I don't see why I should change my habit for *them* (59: original emphasis). For that, most of the people work against her and see no reason for the possibility of her being born-again. However, a society does not work like that: there is the need for tolerance and respect for individual differences especially in culture and gender socialization. In spite of this, Daisy insists on her right to continue with the lifestyle and seek satisfaction for her desires, pursuing happiness through her courtship with Giovanelli. She rebels against her place in the society and even against patriarchal religion when she refuses to stop courting Giovanelli and continues flirting around with him in the society. Daisy asserts her right to follow her desires as much as other men like Winterbourne does.

Escaping entrapment once again, Daisy continues to fantasize her 'love' in Rome, thus preparing the way for her romantic liaison with Giovanelli on terms of social parity. She flirts with any man "she could pick up, sitting in corners with mysterious Italians; dancing all evening with the same partners; receiving visits at eleven o'clock at night" (54), and because Winterbourne insists that Daisy is "simple" (28), he fails to see that her romantic sprees are governed by a cultural logic of their own, and remaining true to her values, Daisy is rewarded by an equal union with the man she loves. This is to say, Daisy, concerned with her rights only, may be considered a heroine for daring to be consistent with her lifestyle in an alien encounter with the foreign Europe, despising and ignoring bitter society and women of the other culture.

James' *Daisy Miller* depicts the conflict of a woman's desire in an alien society. It portrays the struggle of woman to articulate and demonstrate her experience of ideal lifestyle in a foreign environment. In this realist fiction, the female protagonist is seen in constant conflict with both the men and women surrounding her as she sticks to the path she feels is ideal for her. She finds herself battling with a new culture different from her own. The novella presents how the female central character struggle in a foreign environment, conflicting with issues of customs and traditions.

Death and Desire in *Daisy Miller*

This section discusses how the female protagonist's desire is linked with death in *Daisy Miller*. It considers how death signals the end of natural progression of Daisy and impose a limit on the young woman's expressions of *desire*. Dollimore (2000) argues that the urge towards satisfaction of desire, pushed to its limit, is an urge toward death, while Dollimore speaks categorically of the destabilization of the boundaries between self and Other evoked during the moments of desire, James literally kills Daisy to free his conscience. His desire to make a convincing plot persuades him to kill her. However, this desire is represented by Daisy's self-transformation and for certain forms of capital such as an age-defying feminine body and a physical strength that eludes her in life in the

European society. The main reason why Daisy dies is that Henry James decided to make a literary production that deals with woman's death.

No doubt, Daisy's unfortunate death makes the plot of the novella intriguing. It would have not made any artistic sense if Daisy had finally repented and accepted the Europeans code of conduct. But because of James' desire to produce a work of literature that conforms to the social and moral codes of his society, he creates a natural death for Daisy. In investigating what is supposed to be Daisy's fundamental "error" (desire to be herself in an alien society of Europe), the relationship between Daisy's death and James' desire to produce "pure" work of art (an artistic production that does not compromise his social consciousness) is unveiled here.

The literary presentation of Daisy is in line with the subject of concern in Europe in the late 1800s and early 1900s (Haralson and Johnson, 2009:375). In the times of monarchy, religion, and aristocracy, there had been a clear, long-standing hierarchy that put every group and every individual in its right place. At that time, the society was undergoing a revolution in its social order and individual behaviours. The society had become a hustle and bustle of free and equal individuals that were dragged together into a ceaseless whirl in search of an excitement that was nothing but the mere internalization of the endless and purposeless agitation of the whole social body. It had become unrelenting thoughts and desire, appetites and frustrations. Individuals now want to enjoy all that is enjoyable, including ideal pleasures. Such was the discourse of the era and it characterized the major literary corpus of that time.

In this novella, Daisy is the formidable embodiment of that desire. She follows her conscience and craves for an ideal courtship. She negotiates between personal preference and ideal sources of excitement. When she is cautioned by Winterbourne about her moonlight meetings with Giovanelli in Italy, Daisy retorts thus: "**I don't care...!**" (75). This is the only traceable "error" of Daisy: her fateful moonlit visit to the Colosseum with Giovanelli. However, there is no evidence that Daisy becomes physically intimate with Giovanelli, nor is there an objective sign upon which Winterbourne can base his damning inference. But for James, it would be a very good reason for sentencing her to death. It is true that desire, as Dollimore (200) contends, leads to sufferings and these sufferings leads to "unrest", "uneasiness", and "melancholy" (173). This is so because every satisfied desire gives birth to another. As such, desire can never be satisfied and this dissatisfaction, as Dollimore further explains, leads to the pain and suffering. However, in this novella, there are no evidences of Daisy's dissatisfaction, and she died of a natural cause: Roman fever infected by mosquito.

Unlike Emma Bovary in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Daisy is not destined to remain unsatisfied in her longings to flirt around with men. There is no account of her emotional yearnings going unfulfilled, and there is no evidence that Daisy is being consumed with her secret desire of her life force which ultimately pushed her to the final appeasement of desire - death. It is just reported that Daisy is seriously ill and a week later, Daisy dies and is buried in a small Protestant cemetery, surrounded by spring flowers. At her funeral, Giovanelli enigmatically tells Winterbourne that Daisy was "most innocent" (77).

In essence, Daisy does not fulfill the ideal typography of Dollimore's formulation of the instinct connection between desire and death. This is so because James did not build the plot of his story along the lines of a female character with excessive desires which the world can never satisfy, whereby, he (James) could then move on demonstrate how his female character's dissatisfaction causes extreme pain and suffering in her, and how it seems that the ultimate freedom from this dissatisfaction lies in death. With this, it is seen

that Daisy's death is just a creation of James. His motive is clear: he does not intend to deviate from what his society considers pure literature. His attitudes on gender and sexuality seem largely to conform to the accepted social structures of his time.

4. Conclusion

Although these conclusions can easily be drawn in novels of desire like *Madame Bovary* cited above, they are not so obvious in *Daisy Miller*. Daisy's desires seem to have been fulfilled, and she dies not in a state of yearning or want, but from natural causes. As such, there is no obvious link between her desire and death. To find this connection, the study looked at the psyche of the author, James, and makes the argument that Daisy's death is connected to James' desire for social conformity. The argument is that James lived at a time when women who were "liberated" and pursued their pleasures without care were disparaged and disliked by the society. Since James' heroine is exactly such a woman, James had to kill her so as to "rescue" his reputation from death. James needs to "heal the wound of difference" between himself and society. In essence, Daisy dies that James' social standing may live.

Obviously, these relationships between women and society involve politics, the politics of gender, and female subversion. The novel, as the study has shown, explores these issues of female sexuality and the politics that surround societal attitudes towards women's desires, and how they go about satisfying these. What society approves of is that women should seek satisfaction only in marriage and not outside it, whether before or (and especially not) during. Failure to do this, leads to the woman destruction, symbolised by death, which, as the two novels depict is the fate of the heroines. All of these socio-political and psychological aspects, as appeared in the novella, are expressed through characterisation, which, therefore, becomes a strong asset at the disposal of an author. James employed this tool to explore social, political and psychological issues. It allows James to make in-depth and thorough exploration and depiction of ideas and perspectives than other tools such as setting, plot or narrative.

Henry James' *Daisy Miller* chronicles the conflict of desire in the central character, Daisy Miller. The novella portrays a struggle of the central female character to articulate her desire of flirting around with men in an environment where such behavior is not welcome- her experience of ideal lifestyle in a foreign environment. Henry James' *Daisy Miller* is viewed under this study as a writer who chronicled a story of strict morality and showed how it is impossible for a woman to breach this morality without consequences. The clash between strict morality and free expression of personal will of the central female character are thoroughly explored. The study reflects on the basic human need of the harmonious collaboration of morality shaped by Daisy's individuation as a member of society and the whole and free personal expression grounded on her life purpose of discovering her true *self*. The intrigues that haunts the human conscience and fosters feelings of frustration in the heart of James' character, which results in extreme inner conflict, have been brought forth in the course of the analysis.

In a nutshell, this study has brought together the links between characterisation, desire, death and sexual politics by showing the ways in which desire is at the centre of character formation and sexual politics as subscribed to by both individual (whether this be a fictional character or a real one, such as the author). The study reveals that Henry James' *Daisy Miller* chronicles the struggle of Daisy to articulate her desire of flirting

around with men in an environment where such behavior is not welcome. The study unveils the hypocrisy of the society in castigating women for expressing themselves while shying away from men. In essence, Daisy finds herself battling with a new culture different from her own in Europe, choosing to stand with her chosen values as opposed to the society's customs and traditions.

More so, the study has found that Daisy dies because James decided to make a literary production that deals with woman's death. Therefore, it is argued that James kills Daisy for fictional, or even, social reasons to escape from social critics' derision and condemnation. The study reveals that the death of Daisy, which suggests her limitation in expressing her desire, is a creation of James rather than the female attempts to escape from dissatisfied romantic relationships. This is so because, as the study revealed, Daisy died of a natural cause: Malaria fever.

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