CHAPTER-V

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Daisy Miller was first published in the Cornhill Magazine. It had been, as James himself wrote to his mother “a really quite extraordinary wit”. It was the story to which James’ name remained attached in the public mind even long after he had done much more important work. It is a slender little tale and its interest is centered in the personality of his heroine and the frosty expatriate appropriately named Winterburne. The story aroused controversy.

The whole idea of the story of Daisy Miller is the little tragedy of a light, thin, natural, unsuspecting creature being sacrificed, as it were, to a social rumpus that went on quite over her head and to which she stood in no measurable relation. The story was not dramatic in the sense of the theatre but there was a drama latent in it.

The conflict between the American and European values interested James and he deals with the same in Daisy Miller. On one side are the Americans guided in their actions by moral conscience, intolerant of laxity in others, devoid of understanding and tinged with that austere puritanism
of whose ‘chill touch suasion and plausibility’ fall dishonoured. On the other side were the Europeans, charming, cultured but specious, subtle and corrupt. The struggle that went on between the two sides was not a simple one. The two worlds revolve round each other, drawn by irresistible laws of attraction, yet inherent in them were forces that could only make for mutual destruction. James liked to believe that victory would lie with the righteous. His world represents a definite period in modern history when the first generation of American heiresses began to enter the European market and offered an insidious temptation to old families anxious to buttress their decaying fortunes. Princely titles could be rescued from oblivion and their grand possessors from poverty by a timely alliance with American wealth. But the American girls brought together with their wealth a different set of values. They were less trammeled by tradition and freer in their human relationships but they bristled with moral prejudices and puritanical convictions.

James wrote *Daisy Miller* in Boston during the three months that followed the death of his mother in January, 1882. That time he lived in bare, ugly rooms in Mount Vernon Street which he found comfortable and pleasant. There his thoughts dwelt constantly on his mother. After
completing the play James read it to the Boston socialite, Mrs. John L. Gardner.

In the beginning James had the play privately printed in order to circulate it more easily among the London managers. He then published it in the *Atlantic Monthly*. And later it appeared in book form under the imprint of James. R. Osgood. It was first rejected by Houghton and Mifflin. James made some minor revisions in the play between its private printing and its publication.

The play *Daisy Miller* rewrites the original story considerably. Eugenio, the courier of the tale, becomes the villain of the piece and the shadowy lady in Geneva, briefly alluded to in the story as the friend of Winterbourne, becomes all important Madame de Katkoff of the play. In the novel Daisy dies of malaria and is buried in cemetery of Rome. But in the play we are left with the promise of an early marriage between Daisy and Winterbourne. Joseph Warren Beach says about the idea or motive of James,

> The prevailing idea, or motive, of James is the radical opposition of the American and the European ways of taking life. In *Daisy Miller* the European point of view is
represented by the young American who, in the course of a long schooling at Geneva, has lost his understanding of American character, and who comes too late to appreciate the candid innocence and loveliness of the somewhat "fresh" American girl.  

James possessed great intelligence, a rare sensibility, and a peculiar sympathy with the refinements of tradition breeding. This sympathy accounted for his ready acceptance of European values. European values, attractive as they might appear in the externals of life, were dangerously allied to moral corruption and were fundamentally hostile to the absolute idealism professed by the American puritan.

The conflict between the two worlds interested James and provided the material for many of his stories. He settled in England in 1875 and preoccupied himself with the impact of the older civilization of Europe on American life. To this period belongs his simpler and popular play, *Daisy Miller*.

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James' pictorial conception of his themes is well exemplified in the series of stories presenting the American abroad. The formula is most frequently something like this: a simple, candid, but very fine and lustrous soul seen against a dense murky background of sophisticated manners and ways of thought. Most often it is an American woman that is thus set in relief against the European background. Such is the subject of Daisy Miller and The Portrait of a Lady in the earlier period, and, in the later period, of The Wings of the Dove and The Golden Bowl. James makes no secret of his fondness for the "sinister" and the "portentous" as colours in his picture; these colours, combined with the mystery which is a still more constant source of interest, contribute to the rich complexity of which he is so fond. And they serve moreover to heighten the contrast involved in the subject, to create an effect of chiaroscuro. Most effective pictorially are the figures of Isabel Archer in The Portrait of a Lady, Milly Theale in The Wings of the Dove and Daisy in Daisy Miller. But the secret of this effectiveness lies more in the background than in the main foreground subject. As much art went to the creation of Eugenio and Madame De Katkoff as to that of Daisy in the Daisy Miller. The relation of Winterbourne and Daisy suggest that of Gwendolen Harleth and Grandcourt in Daniel Deronda, it will be only
to remind us how much more convincing and more effective James made this background of the cold and the dark. And the superiority of James in painting the characters arises largely from stronger consciousness of its being a question of painting.

In transferring the tale to the dramatic form its freshness is lost and a rather artificial comedy is substituted which, for all its defects, reveals its author's skill in dialogue and characterization. The dialogue in James' plays is sometimes long, frequently subject to qualifying parenthesis, abrupt transition, and breaking off without completion. The characteristic dialogue of his mature work is of a quite different order. The speakers, in the first place, are very little differentiated as to language and manner of speech, or, for that matter, as to any of the more obvious marks of character. They are all of the same degree of culture and intelligence. They are general persons of great social expertness. There is nothing formal or pedantic in their language, nor on the order hand any tincture of solecism, dialect or localism, unless it be those of London. They speak almost without exception what we may suppose to be the purest of London drawing-room slang. This must be qualified to the extent that they are often making points so fine they are obliged to take on some of James' own metaphysical vocabulary of analysis as we see this type of dialogues in *Daisy Miller*.
Mme. de Katkoff. It has made me feel very kindly toward them, as you see from my interest in those young ladies. Don't judge them by what they seem. They are probably just the opposite, for that is precisely the case with yourself. Most people think very cold, but I have discovered the truth. You are like one of those tall German Stoves, which present to the eye a surface of smooth white porcelain, without the slightest symptom of fuel or of flame. Nothing at first could seem less glowing; but after you have been in the room with it for half an hour you feel that the temperature is rising - and you want to open the window. ²

Daisy Miller is James’ first major dramatic composition in which he approached the task of writing with a profound respect for the medium he intended to employ. He brought to the drama conscious artistry, aesthetic refinement, sensuous subtlety and an elaborate perceptiveness. According to him to express the truth as it appeared to the creative temperament freedom is essential. He didn’t ignore the importance of the moral purpose of writing but he believed it should be implicit, non-palpable and any attempt to preach it must inevitably destroy the integrity of a work of art. We find the freedom from convention and flexibility in his works. The only thing James was prepared to attach to his writing was that it should be interesting. He was serious about the craft of story-telling. He desired to achieve in art completeness about any given situation. He aimed at an ultimate artistic perfection which should reveal the reality of an imagined situation. Never for one moment he underestimates the difficulty of achieving such completeness. The perpetual concern with completeness explains James’ fastidious care in writing, his search for the exact phrase to convey his meaning, the right image or metaphor to communicate an emotion to the reader. He was the first novelist to believe that how a thing was said was just as important as what was said.
There are very few literary figures who have been subjected to conflicting evaluations in the way Henry James has been. Leon Edel says in the "Twentieth Century Views" James has been likened to Goethe, to Shakespeare, to Racine - and to Marivaux. He has been called a 'tragic visionary and a melodramatist'. A rootless expatriate, who came to write "more and more about less and less", he is also called 'the wisest man of his time'. However, James was not neglected by his contemporaries; he was immediately recognized as a major writer of some sort, and within his own time he received the genuinely appreciative acclaim by William Dean Howells. He was a deft 'analyst' of the human heart. As an 'analyst' he was supposed to be potentially hostile to all that was fine and spiritual in man and thus it came to be understood as a term of condemnation. Howells praised James for his scrupulous analysis of motives and feelings. Claude Bragdon, An American critic also praised James as the most modern writer because his art was concerned with a depiction of human nature, not in its idealistic beauty but as it failed or flourished in the highly organized society. *Daisy Miller* is the play which is centered upon Daisy's nature. Daisy is underbred, completely uncultivated, and devoid even of the elements of natural taste. This constitutes her pathos. Her operative
principles might be colloquially expressed as a passion for dating and an imperviousness to the remotest suggestion of petting. James’ subjects are the ‘voiceless little tragedies’ of the soul; the dilemmas of super refined, the intellectual enthusiasm of young men and woman, and the abortive love of spinsters which are relevant to modern life.

It was before the success of *Daisy Miller* that James had met Ivan Turgener, Balzac and George Eliot. If from Balzac James had learned how to set a scene and launch of drama, and from Hawthorne how to suffuse the drama with charm, and from George Eliot the value of endowing his story with intellectual illumination, he learned his most important lesson of all from Turgnev. This was to make his work flow from his personages. The Russian writer provided James with the concept of the ‘organic’ novel; he helped James to see that the work need not be a haphazard story, but one in which characters live out their natures. This might be called ‘psychological determinism’, and James was to become perhaps the greatest( and often misunderstood) exponent of it in his work.

Henry James became famous both in America and in England as the author of *Daisy Miller*. He wishes to dramatize *Daisy Miller* for the
sake of theatre. But the fear of turning aside had unmade him for so many
days. It was Mallory and Daniel Frohman, the owners of Madison Square
in Newyork, who came forward and invited James to dramatize his highly
successful short-story *Daisy Miller*. He wrote in his journal,

\begin{quote}
After long years of waiting, of obstruction
I find myself able to put into execution the most
cherished of all my projects - that of beginning to
work for the stage. It was one of my earliest
I had it from the first. None has given me
brighter hopes - none has given me sweeter emotions.
And then, in a moment of self questioning, he
adds: "It is strange nevertheless that I should
never have done anything - and to a certain
extent it is ominous. I wonder at times that
the dream should not have faded away.\end{quote}

But his dramatization of *Daisy Miller* was turned down by the Madison
Square Theatre and, promptly discouraged, Henry James returned to the
writing of fiction. He feels that to venture into the theatre was to forsake

\footnote{3. *Ibid.*, p.}
this private religion; it involved obtaining approval of one's creations from men with a greater concern for the pocketbook than for "audible vibration" - except as the vibration means box office returns; of actors interested in the work largely as a vehicle for exhibiting their own talents; and finally it involved a search for the approval of a heterogeneous public for which one had to dot 'one's' is as with pumpkins' - an image he used later in describing the simplicity of statement to which he felt the drama reduced him. The reticent, secretive, aloof literary alchemist of Bolton Street and De Veve Gardens, a feted London "lion" moving in the world as a conscious observer and recorder, rebelled at the very things which are the life of the stage. If he could have become a dramatist as he had become a man of letters he would have long before turned to play writing. As it was, he found himself in a state of conflict that became increasingly acute with the passage of the years.

Daisy Miller is a comedy in three acts. Artificial comedy is substituted in the play. Of all kinds of literature comedy has the widest appeal. Wit and humour that can bridge the deepest intellectual and even emotional differences. But James' Daisy Miller is definitely a comedy but it is
a tragedy as he wrote the play with a clear vision. A comedy might turn to tragedy says L.J. Pottis:

What we see may be comic, but we never see the whole of anything; if we saw more, or with a clear vision, the comedy might turn to tragedy; and even then the thing itself would not be tragic 4

The protagonist of the play, Daisy wanders around Europe with an absurd mother and a horrid little brother in whom James' conception of the 'hotel child' finds alarming expression, she is almost singular among her creator's women in being underbred, completely uncultivated, and devoid even of the elements of natural taste. This constitutes her pathos. Her operative principles might be colloquially expressed as a passion for dating and an imperviousness to the remote suggestion of petting. Her attitude of dating had made her to face many comments from the other characters.

Mrs. Costello. That's very easily done: she's

Winderbourne. Ah! She's a little American Flirt

Miss Durant. She's a vulgar little chatter box.

Winterbourne. Ah! She's a vulgar little chatter box.

Mrs Cortello. She's in no sort of society!

Winterbourne. Ah! She's in no sort of society!

Miss Durant. You would never know her in America.

Winterbourne. If I should never know her in America, it seems me a reason for seizing the opportunity here.  

Frederick Winterbourne, a gentle man from America who has settled in Europe meets Daisy in the garden of a hotel in Geneva. He loves Daisy and becomes more attentive towards her throughout the play. He always praises her charming beauty. Despite severe warnings by his aunt Mrs Costello and niece Miss. Durant that Daisy is a loose girl Winterbourne goes ahead of winning her hand. Daisy’s company had made him learn that she was fond of gentleman’s society. Which irks him. He says on her relationship with men.

"Oh, she's not serious; she is only amusing herself" 6

But his strong inclination to win her heart never dies. Madame De Katkoff, a middle-window, who loves Winterbourne says to him on Daisy,

She looked to me very innocent - with those eyes 7

Daisy inclines towards Giovanelli, an Italian adventurer. Winterbourne who admires Daisy hates to see her misjudged by Mrs. Costello, Miss. Grant and Mrs. Walker. Daisy's mother encourages Daisy to date with gentlemen. Daisy, a representative of American girlhood who engages with different men has been vigorously denounced as an insult to American girlhood. But as per Winterbourne's assessment she is a girl of absolute innocence. He reiterates this notion to all other characters throughout the play and he comes out with a positive result.

The point of concern is that Daisy, the enviable girl picks up gentlemen as she likes, goes around with them, scolds them - and would be most cruelly hurt and shocked by any imputation against her delicacy. The American community, as represented by Mrs. Costello, Miss Durant and Mrs Walker, anxiously and crudely conforming to continental canons in these matters, more and more disapproves. Daisy is eventually ostracized.

6. Ibid., p.144
7. Ibid., p.142.
But she too is one for whom, for long, a vulgar imputation can mean noth-
ing. With the full weight of the censure she has incurred does come home. 
She puts her chin up and goes right ahead.

In Rome, Daisy accompanies Giovanelli in an inspection of the Co-
losseum in moonlight. Winterbourne who loves her condemns her visit 
along with Giovanelli. Daisy gets irked by Winterbourne's comments and 
says.

He despises me! well, I don't care! (Aloud) It was 
lovely there in the moonlight. 8

Perturbed Winterbourne observes Daisy’s mentality and deeds. He 
has hitherto had the sensibility to understand her innocence. But his travel 
throughout the Europe along with Daisy seems to him so shocking that he 
concludes Daisy's morals to be definitely impaired. He feels that she must 
be 'a young lady whom a gentleman need no longer be at pains to respect.'

James changes the plot at this juncture in the play. In the novel 
Daisy after hearing the derogatory marks crumples, returns to her hotel, 
and in a few days is dead due to malaria. But in the play, the story ends

8.Ibid., p.163
with a happy note that Winterbourne and Daisy are married. They propose to go back to America after forgetting all nightmarish past. Joseph Warren Beach pays his tribute to Daisy,

I mean Daisy Miller, whose peculiarity lies in her possession of a rare spiritual beauty quite unaccompanied by social tact and artistic discernment. 9

Louis Auchincloss says on Daisy that,

It was a triumph over the “shy, sweet, modest” Newport of his youth, but the heroine of “Daisy Miller”, his sole-best, was to win the last round, for it was always to irritate him that his name became synonymous with hers 10

Daisy Miller. as a play is the first and last success of Henry James. He was disillusioned by the debacle of his plays. James personally writes to Julian R. Sturgis, a correspondent:

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The whole general disillusionment has come over me ...
when I was younger that was really a very dear
dream with me - but it has faded away with the mere
increase of observation - observation I mean, of the
deadly vulgarity and illiteracy of the world one enters,
practically, in knocking at a manager's door. Beside I
think, I confess, less highly of the drama, as a
form, a vehicle, than I did - compared with
the novel which can do and say so much more." 11

This brings us up finally against the most extraordinary things of all
in this odd chapter of his life: namely, that his comedies are the least funny
things in the whole Jamesian canon. If he gave up the character, if he es-
chewed problems of social significance, all that was really left on a stage
that had not yet seen the "sex comedy" or the "mood" drama or the theatre
of the absurd or the drawing-room comedy, the sprightly graceful piece
where each line creates a laugh. But James' dialogue seems to depend for
its kicks entirely on characters who display a mild form of impudence:
imperious older ladies who order about young men and women; mock

11. Leon Edel, The Complete Plays of Henry James, (PHILADELPHIA &
NEWYORK: J.B.LIPPINCOTT COMPANY, 1949) p.44.
villains who candidly admit their wickedness. Leon Edel thus concludes on James' dramatic years,

These plays are thus more than literary curiosities. They must be read in the light of theatre for which they were written and the audience for which they were intended, as well as in the context of James' creative life. They can be read - some of them - for intrinsic merit, for some of their scenes of high comedy, for the drollery or depth of the characterizations, for the intensity of the drama 12

12. Ibid., p.69.