

Transatlantic Flirtation and Cultural Insecurity: A Postcolonial Reading of Cosmopolitanism in Henry James's *Daisy Miller*

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Abstract

This article interrogates cosmopolitanism in Henry James's 'Daisy Miller', arguing that transatlantic mobility and travel expose America's residual postcolonial insecurity. Fear of transatlantic acculturation undermines the national ideology and identity of the American Adam, as incorruptible in his fundamental innocence. By tracing the language of contagion surrounding biological pollution, this analysis examines how anxieties surrounding transatlantic flirtation, acculturation, and sexual union, in James's text, expose America's post-revolutionary fear of cultural permeability and fragility. When cosmopolitanism reveals American culture to be porous, this threatens its ideological self-definition, attesting to the imaginary and mythologized nature of the founding Adamic belief. I argue that 'Daisy Miller', focuses on the question of what happens to Americans when they have lived too long in Europe and how acculturation affects self-knowledge. Told from the perspective of Europeanized Americans, these American expatriates in the cosmopolitan residences of Geneva and Rome appear unaware of the extent of their acculturation until the naïve all-American girl Daisy, through her unfamiliar and highly ambiguous manners of flirting, *appears* to disrupt codes of female propriety and the Europeanized Americans' perceived nativist loyalty. The novel acts as provocations to American characters who have very fixed ideas about what national identity is, and this article will trace how transatlantic flirtation and the subsequent relationships it produces, become a disruptive force. This article will show how fear of cultural flirtations derives from fear of potential sexual contact and thus interbreeding.

Keywords

Cosmopolitanism, Transatlantisim, Postcolonial, Border-crossing, Interbreeding, Flirtation

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This article interrogates the literary transatlantic geographical phenomenon of cosmopolitanism in Henry James's fiction and the way it provokes a national American insecurity, by exposing lingering cultural ambivalence. 'Daisy Miller' is a text that centres around a cosmopolitan interaction during transatlantic mobility and travel. Set during the 1870's, an epoch where "people...were either just arriving from 'abroad' or just embarking on a European tour" (Wharton *A Backward Glance* 61), the form of statelessness the text explores is that of the "white Euro-American elite mobility" (Molz 2). The term 'cosmopolitan' derives from "the Greek word kosmopolites" meaning "citizen of the world" (Molz 1) and for James, this sense of transatlantic exchange and consequent national fluidity creates cultural interpenetration and contagion. Both geographically and sexually, cultural contact and the crossing of national borders and boundaries brings about the risk of miscegenation. Cosmopolitan statelessness, this article claims, results in the blurring of cultural identification and distinction that, within 'Daisy Miller', produces a specifically transatlantic ambivalence. In particular, when transatlantic traffic makes the perceived *hard* geographic and metaphorical cultural borders between countries and continents permeable, national self-definition and understanding come under pressure. The following close reading and analysis align with Jonathan Freedman's observation that when "identities start to circulate across" the Atlantic, "what is to be 'English' or 'Italian' or 'French' is as much up for grabs as is what it is to be 'American'" (8). This article analyses how transatlantic traffic or the "cultural exchange...in persons" (Maudlin 2) and bodies in James's text facilitates heterosexual exchanges, encounters and flirtations that undermine and threaten American national ideals.

Methodology

This article argues that foreign incursion, whether sexual, moral, or political, induces an anxiety for American characters. In particular, when external contaminators characterised as exotic, dirty and a seemingly dark otherness appear erotic and sexually appealing, James renders the self-enclosed national identity of inherent innocence as

endangered. Otherness derives from the polarising binaries of national character attributes that become heightened during a cosmopolitan exchange. The perceived difference becomes a tool with which to measure and affirm American exceptionalism. Within the novel, the misreadings, anxieties, and paranoia that international fraternization triggers derive from the postcolonial angst associated with confronting cultural differences that cannot easily be categorised and defined. The following close reading claims that the transatlantic ambivalence evident in 'Daisy Miller' is indicative of what Kariann Akemi Yokota calls the nation's perceived "postcolonial period", or the transhistorical "process of unbecoming British" (10). Postcolonialism "calls attention to the negative heritage of colonial or national practices" (Rowe 79), whilst to unbecome refers to how Anglo-American "colonials-turned-citizens had to create an interstitial space between their former identity as British subjects and the new political and cultural context in which they now found themselves" (Yokota, 11). The colonial heritage referred to, is thus America's British imperialist legacy and then, genealogically speaking, the European immigrant-turned-settler (Yokota, 20). The "implicit supposition that there is a clean break between" the moment the American "community loses its status as a 'colony'" and when it "becomes a 'nation'", becomes destabilized by James (Watts 1). Yokota explains how the revolutionary nation's anxiety in being British by origin but American by political force, induced doubts concerning national insignificance. For instance, "like people of other nations emerging from colonialism" (238), the "American elites placed a premium on adopting elements of European culture as a way of establishing their own legitimacy" (8-9). American transatlantic ambivalence signifies a paradoxical "emulation and resentful adoration" of its colonising authorities and this is discernible in 'Daisy Miller', through the New World's concurrent reverence and jealousy of Europe's history of tradition (240).

Whilst Yokota's research is invaluable to my analysis, interrogating the cultural postcolonial relationship between America and its transatlantic forbearers risks, however, confusing postcolonial "methods, models and terminology with geopolitical realities" (Rowe 80). The 'geopolitical realities' to which John Carlos Rowe refers, includes "those blind spots commonly overlooked within a trajectory of grand national narratives" (Giles 16), namely "the historical fact that the United States pursued colonial policies in conjunction with its anti-colonial revolution" (Rowe 79). Rowe warns against "conclud[ing] hastily that because the United States emerged from the eighteenth-century anticolonial struggle, it qualifies as a postcolonial state" (79). However, Yokota *does* disclaim that America cannot qualify "in the traditionally defined 'family of postcolonial nations'", as it is "the British version of high culture...common to all of Western Europe" that she reads as America's source of "postcolonial anxiety" (239). In categorising post-revolutionary America as an example not of "Third World", but "Second World postcolonialism" (Watts 8), this article is interested in how the nation as "the 'settler' colony... [is] a site of very particular dual inscription; a place that is colonized at the same time as it is colonizing" (Lawson 157). As such, the following close reading refers to revolutionary Anglo-America's postcolonial struggle as a self-qualified inhabitation.

Perceived national innocence and purity in 'Daisy Miller' is the aspect of American identity that cosmopolitan traffic threatens. Accordingly, the following analysis relies heavily on R.W.B Lewis's twentieth-century reading of nineteenth-century literature, in which he proposed the identity paradigm of the American Adam. Intended to circumvent the mythic narrative describing national founding as "rightful" and "noble" (99 and 89), this Adamic figure encouraged and embodied a

conceptualisation of American exceptionalism, that is the “belief in America’s special character and role in the world” (Friedman n.p.). Moreover, the concept of America as the “proud city built on rocks stronger than oceans”, with its protective “city walls”, establishing its national identity and existence as impenetrable, separate, and distinct from cultural instability (Reagan, n.p). Adam Philips’s and Ruth Bernard Yeazell’s analysis of flirtation and female codified behaviours helps elucidate how the feared obliteration of national borders through interbreeding thwarts America’s existence as a separate, insular continent. In James’s fiction, the anxiety surrounding female sexuality and transgression becomes metonymic of feared *national* intactness. The implications that this has on the entire culture are projected onto the American female, where her symbolic “virgin purity”, which cannot withstand “contamination”, must be regulated (Bernard Yeazell 42). Female chastity becomes “imagined as a kind of boundary making, a virtue especially critical to preserve at moments when other boundaries seem vulnerable” and “serve[s] as a talisman against danger” (23). However, as this article will show, in ‘Daisy Miller’ American *male* resistance to foreign potential sexual partners becomes just as important. As such, control over these transatlantic flirtations and relationships exposes the residual postcolonial anxiety whereby America suppresses its cultural newness and thus vulnerability.

Prevention of possible transatlantic interbreeding coincides with European demonization, whereby in having the potential to reveal the immateriality of Lewis’s “archetypal” American, cosmopolitan sexual relations become a threat (5). However, harsh condemnation of the Europeanized culprit is counteractive, as in attempting to restore national unity, and “in resorting back to these myths as a way to show their strength of identity”, Americans “inadvertently draw attention to how fragile this identity is” (Mitchell 7). In particular, Paul Giles’ formulation of the American political imaginary, of the idealised (and mythological) self-perception of its secure boundaries, national strength, solidarity, and insularity, and how the transatlantic passage complicates this, functions to demonstrate the artificially contrived and maintained Adamic propensity that is under interrogation. Othering of the European counterpart becomes the American character’s strategic deflection, and Giles explains how transatlantic interactions expose this. When American self-definition occurs through a process of external cultural *comparison*, American identity reveals itself as illegitimate and *imagined*.

In addressing how the narrative voice and point of view direct the transatlantic comparative perspective, it is evident that James establishes hemispheric affiliations to be irreducible to a set of binary characteristics. Whilst American characters attach themselves to and perform nationalistic qualities (out of a postcolonial inferiority complex), those very qualities contain multiple meanings and associations that are distinct from national truisms. My close reading of James’s ‘Daisy Miller’, focuses on the question of what happens to Americans when they have lived too long in Europe and how acculturation impacts nativist identification. Told from the perspective of Europeanized Americans, these American expatriates in the cosmopolitan residences of Geneva and Rome appear unaware of the extent of their acculturation until the naïve all-American girl Daisy, through her unfamiliar and highly ambiguous manners of flirting, *appears* to disrupt codes of female propriety and the Europeanized Americans’ perceived nativist loyalty. The following close reading interrogates the ways in which James plays with the transatlantic-postcolonial relationship through the racial discourse employed to differentiate the light Americans from the darker Europeans. ‘Daisy Miller’ features American societies affected by a resounding puritan moralism, with a unique narrative

perspective. The American expatriate Frederick Winterbourne, through his altered cultural affiliation and thus inability to discern national expression in others, determines both the narrative perspective and its misreadings of the American innocent, Daisy Miller. Therefore, James's text is a novel that acts as a provocation to American characters who have very fixed ideas about what national identity is, and this article will trace how transatlantic flirtation and the subsequent relationships it produces, become a disruptive force. Fear of cultural flirtations derives from fear of potential sexual contact and thus interbreeding. The rhetoric surrounding reproduction, threatening female sexuality and miscegenation, communicates America's residual feelings of insecurity, where cultural incursion, whether through biological exchange or border crossing, reignites fears of national vulnerability, and postcolonial contingency.

'Daisy Miller' – A Tale of Cosmopolitan Exchange

Adeline R. Tintner observes that "what has been overlooked" within James's "development of the international theme, especially in its earlier phases", is the latter's metamorphosis into the cosmopolitanism theme (1). In particular, for Jonathan Freedman, when there occurs a "complex cultural politic", or a "critique of thinking in narrow and reductive categories", the Jamesian "project of redefining identity transnationally, relationally... [and] cosmopolitanally - ought neither to be denied or discounted" (11). 'Daisy Miller' is both written and set in the Rome of 1878 and begins as a comedy of continental manners and ends as a tragedy, signified by Daisy's malaria-ridden fall. James's text explores the anxiety-inducing circumstance fellow cosmopolitan writer Edith Wharton, identifies as "when [America] risked its dignity in foreign lands" - in particular, the Old World settings of Vevey and Rome (*The Age of Innocence* 123). 'Daisy Miller' focuses on the question of what happens to Americans when they have lived too long in Europe and how acculturation affects self-knowledge. The text embodies "cultural anxieties about American culture encountering Europe and becoming tainted by the confrontation" whereby "physical departure" from the former to the latter, as well as "the geographic dimension of the Atlantic Ocean...carried a concomitant rejection, or at least shaking, of steadfast national character" (Burns 46 and 43). For instance, despite "America and Europe [being] placed in a system of binary oppositions" (Asiatidou 830), the cultural contact transatlantic travel produces, creates a blurring of perceived cultural attributes. This cosmopolitan condition is most pronounced in 'Daisy Miller', when the hybridized Europeanized American or "American modified by a long European sojourn" (Bell, *Meaning in Henry James* 52), features the text's hegemonic *American* identity. Motivated by adoration and imitation of the European forebearer's legacy and feared monopoly of high-culture, the Europeanized American settlers soon forget and misinterpret what it is to be a nativist American. Daisy's status as the *true* American appears 'other', consequently being overlooked due to the unfamiliarity of her manners. Society's view of Daisy's "mystifying manners" ironically (and erroneously) figures as the text's central transatlantic interaction (James 50). Because of a cultural misunderstanding, the "imported model of womanhood" that Daisy represents, falls foul to "continental manners [that] are unknown" and thus foreign (Eakin 142 and 143). In showing this, "James emphasizes that it actually is the community itself that has adopted the European ways and thus cannot recognize Daisy's true American virtues" (Ringwelski 9). The American girl's arrival into an assimilated society exposes the permeability of American cultural identity. The process of othering becomes misconstrued; distinction and condemnation of cultural abandonment during

cosmopolitan permeation becomes misdirected. Consequently, this is a text where the feared foreign contaminator and compromised individual is misjudged, as Daisy becomes othered due to a self-reflexive attempt of the hegemony to deny and deflect its porous and dislocated national affiliations.

Narrated from Winterbourne's perspective, a Europeanized American with a "habit of scanning bodies for the marks of their national...or even species specificity" (Wardley 243), 'Daisy Miller' traces Winterbourne's struggle to identify the cultural integrity of the ingénue American girl during her European travels. The question surrounding Daisy's American allegiance centres around Winterbourne's uncertainty about whether her flirtation derives from sexual knowing or is, in fact, an innocent nativist behavioural expression. In particular, James uses the ambiguities of flirtation to demonstrate the extent of the cosmopolitan compromise. The scrutiny surrounding Daisy's sexual purity, which James ultimately reveals to remain physically intact, derives from a self-conscious concern over the Europeanized Americans' own acculturation. In particular, Winterbourne and society's "want of instinctive certitude as to how far her eccentricities were generic, national, and how far they were personal" lays bare the inherent hypocrisy of the "American colonists", who out of denial and insecurity, project onto Daisy their own native disloyalty (45 and 43). When the expatriate Winterbourne professes: "Flirting is a purely American custom; it doesn't exist here" yet simultaneously doubts and others Daisy as "the queerest creatures in the world", his obsessions with reading (and misreading) her 'marks of nationality' reveal his own alienation from his nativist logic (40).

Daisy's resulting villanisation derives from fear of transatlantic miscegenation, both in terms of Daisy's prospective contamination during her "intimate" relations where "the girl goes about alone with her foreigners", and then the implication this has on the American-born Winterbourne, in his proximity and desire for her (24 and 27). She even becomes "regarded by her compatriots as abnormal" (44) in her miscalculated sexual misconduct, implied through late-night meetings with the "dusky" (47) Giovanelli. Because of this, fear of "destabilize[d] racial purity" arises (Martin and Person 5) and it is possible to read 'Daisy Miller' as a tale of "evolutionary abyss" (Scheiber 81) where James's emphasis on differing "specimens" and cultural "type[s]" (James 37 and 10) permeates, communicating fear of national pollution. When the Americans define themselves against Europeans "as a new and unprecedented race - *homo Americans*...reborn as Adams and Eves" (Spender 45), exceptionalism must remain protected from external contaminators and influences. Transatlantic cross-contamination induced by contact with "social and environmental hazards of foreign locales" (Wadsworth 113), features as a "scientifically considered...sanitary point of view" (James 47), where disease and the feared exchange of bodily fluids not only implicates breeding potential but also hygienic comprise. 'Daisy Miller' betrays postcolonial anxiety surrounding "the physical dangers of miscegenatory alliances" between the Old World and New (Walton 146) as in tracing how the language of contagion coincides with the 'darker' race of Italian men, it becomes clear how the Europeanized Americans retain insistence upon American insularity by establishing hemispheric continents as racially distinct.

Projected fear of cultural pollution and augmentation exposes a "vulnerability of self-deception" where the American identity relies upon the "power of its embodied myths" (Fogel 9) to suppress the post-revolutionary feeling of being a "culture of inferiority" (Yokota 240). Perceived threats to national security, reminds the nation of its feared insignificance and thus penetrability, and out of defence, America turns to mythic

notions of nationhood. When James's "Europeanized Americans' respectability is...at stake", their self-affirming displays of "national...background" and "strict morality[...]" become imperative towards the maintenance of their "American identity as essential and natural" (Asiatidou 831). However, this process of regulation ironically lays bare the immateriality of the identity model and the 'self-deception' as deriving from mythic narratives of national founding, such as an Adamic innocence and the purity of American self-containment. When Daisy *appears* to flout such national ideals through flirtation, she provokes a misplaced and belated postcolonial fear of international infiltration, challenging the security of American self-perception and its ideological parameters. This is hypocritical as the Europeanized Americans in their cultural immersion *already* reveal how "the rupture of the liminal space of the Atlantic shifted individual identities [and] the transatlantic passage unhinged national identities" (Burns 45). For instance, as readers we remain trapped in Winterbourne's blinkered prism of dual-affiliation and cultural augmentation that James characterises as "cynical" in its deductions, questioning the degree to which we should believe or *resist* such readings. The cultural rebuttal of Daisy arises from and reflects the Europeanized society's American denaturalisation, and ultimately reveals the contingency of American national identity.

Transatlantic Mobility and Ambivalence

For James, the hegemonic American identity that Winterbourne, Mrs. Costello and Mrs Walker collectively embody is one riddled with transatlantic ambivalence. Whilst they simultaneously propagate *mythic* Adamic innocence and impenetrability, their Europeanization betrays a cultural malleability. Resultantly, the state of being a "real American" (James 8) is immediately identifiable as paradoxical and unstable in 'Daisy Miller'. In their hybridized cultural condition of national retention and European acculturation, James renders the American expatriates to be "aporias [and] epistemological[ly]" liminal in their "cosmopolite tendencies" (Guillain 2). For instance, the "insular little colonies" (Tuttleton 482) consisting of a plethora of "American colonists in Rome", *pride* themselves on being "very exclusive" (James 13). "The minutely hierarchical constitution of the society" (13) to which they belong must "exclude or eradicate in order to preserve itself" from a version of "culture that threatens the very stability of their 'purer'" heritage as an 'unprecedented race' (Trachtenberg 143-144). Here, the Europeanized Americans appear to retain a commitment to "the pre-existing fabric of American" origin and identity (Guillain 3). Emphasis upon national exceptionalism demonstrates postcolonial anxiety whereby nativist defences evident in declarations such as "American men are the best" (James 5), illustrate how "cultural inequality [historically] lingers on after political independence" (Poe and Yokota n.p.). Yokota elucidates the latter, by explaining how early (and later) citizens of the New Republic "were interested in how Europeans saw them and...in being recognised as equals to the Europeans" (n.p.). The Europeanized Americans fail to "abandon their culture of inferiority" (Yokota 240) by displaying reverence "while residing abroad... [and] studying European society" (James 37). This process of cultural comparison, in turn, demonstrates a "reluctan[ce] to sever ancient ties" (Tamarkin 94) or "old templates of dependence" (Poe and Yokota n.p.) towards "European standards of gentility" and authority.

James demonstrates the extent of his character's continental acculturation upon describing how in both Geneva and Italy, "American travellers [were] extremely numerous", so much so that Europe becomes "characteristic of an American watering

place” (James 3). In particular, this cosmopolitan presence recreates, projects and, “evoke[s] a vision, an echo, of Newport and Saratoga” onto the foreign continental landscape (3), demonstrating the pervasiveness of American travel during the nineteenth century whereby, as Alex Zwerdling explains, “every major European city soon contained an American colony” (142). Set during a period of improved transatlantic travel where the average distance between America and Europe was significantly reduced, James’s society is populated by “diversely born” (James 37) individuals consisting not only of American expatriates but also “Russian Princesses” and “Polish little boys” (3). The “analogies or differences” (4) that these expatriates acquire when imitating and “studying European society” (36) derive from exposure to “features that are much at variance” (4) with American consistencies, resulting in the alteration and blurring of cultural distinction. Winterbourne exemplifies this cosmopolitan effect upon claiming to have “met an American who spoke like a German” and conversely “Germans who spoke like Americans” (8). Jasmina Starcevic defines the term “Europeanized Americans” as those who “embody ‘Europeanness’ as an indiscernible trait, not simply visible on the surface of the subject’s body” (v). The process of Europeanization is thus one of *acculturation*, which affects the individual’s mentality. James expresses the extent of Winterbourne’s Europeanization by establishing Winterbourne’s initial ignorance regarding his status as a cosmopolitan representative of how “increase in American travel...forced re-examination of oneself and one’s identity” (Martin and Person 1-2). For instance, despite “Geneva having been for a long time his place of residence” (James 4), Winterbourne considers himself thoroughly American, seeing the newly arrived Randolph as “a fellow countryman” and Daisy his “countrywoman” (5 and 7). Nevertheless, for James, Winterbourne’s cosmopolitan compromise is discernible in the admission that “he had lived at Geneva so long that he had lost a good deal; he had become dishabituated to the American tone” (10). Indeed, Randolph also doubts Winterbourne’s nationality by interrogatingly questioning, “are you an American man?” (5). Winterbourne’s altered ‘tone’ and hemispheric affiliation, we will see, induces and corrupts (out of nativist guilt) his cultural epistemological reading of Daisy.

American Femininity and National Stereotypes:

When Winterbourne first meets Daisy and learns how “she’s an American girl” he instantaneously and superficially projects onto her a nativist cultural stereotype of Adamic innocence (5). Despite having known her “half an hour” (10) Winterbourne’s instinct is to read her moralistically through American narratives of Edenic innocence inspired by how “some people had *told* him that, after all, American girls were exceedingly innocent” (15 *emphasis added*). For Winterbourne, the “fair countrywoman” whose unquestionably “white” (144) hue and physically “untouchable” (Walton 144) air, epitomized by her attire of “a hundred frills and flounces”, personifies female chastity (James 6). Here, Daisy’s dress figures as a symbol of implied sexual purity, as according to Hermione Lee, “veils...and layers” of clothing in late-nineteenth-century society, like “undergarments were meant to keep the family [dignity] insulated against dangerous infections, and to protect...the young girl” (30). As such, Daisy appears both hygienically pure, and virginally impenetrable. In particular, “Winterbourne views Daisy as a representative of the female American youth” (Asiatidou 826) as upon discerning the identity of an “American girl of so pronounced a type like this”, he arrives at the conclusion, “how pretty *they* are!” (James 6 *emphasis added*). By replacing the personal pronoun ‘she’ with the collective ‘they’, Winterbourne’s confuses the distinction

between a national stereotype and the individual. Here he is projecting onto the latter the expectations of the former (10). As an addition in the 1909 text, James also refers to Daisy as an “unspotted flower” (New York Edition n.p.), drawing upon the iconography of American mythological origins. Like Lewis’s “American Adam”, Winterbourne sees Daisy as the “pure” and “unperturbed” (59) female Adam, whose “untrodden ways” (40) establishes her as “fundamentally innocent” (5). When Winterbourne affirms, “American girls are the best”, James draws on the language of American exceptionalism to communicate Winterbourne’s residual nativist loyalty (‘Daisy Miller’ 6). Characterised as a “little metropolis of Calvinism” (4), the Europeanized American colony adheres to a residual form of puritanism that is moralising in its approach to behaviour, especially that of sexual behaviour. Historically speaking, Puritanism (as a radical form of Calvinism) had a profound impact on the formation of American patriotism, whereby the New World’s first settlers saw the virgin territory as an occasion for establishing a purified version of Christian practice. With James’s “implication that Geneva is a center of straitlaced Puritanism” (46), not to mention the theological denomination’s birthplace, Americans are thus able to substitute and enact the New World’s mythologized “premorale state” from within the Old World (Lewis 59). Thus, Winterbourne’s views imply that as an American girl Daisy must be uncorrupted and uncorrupting.

Daisy’s modesty anticipates the female ideal embodied by other Jamesian heroines. In the 1878 novel, *The Europeans*, James writes of his New England female, “it was impossible to be more of a lady than Charlotte Wentworth” (*The Europeans* 46), where her unwavering adherence to female passivity meant that her “imagination took no journeys whatever” (45). However, upon discovering Daisy’s vitality and self-proclaimed identity as a “fearful, frightful flirt” (‘Daisy Miller’ 39), Winterbourne begins doubting her sexual innocence and “attempts to define the reality of the American girl” (Eakin 15). When Daisy is “flirting with any man she could pick up; sitting in corners with mysterious Italians; dancing all the evening with the same partners” (James 36), Winterbourne reflects how, “it was impossible to regard her as a perfectly well-conducted young lady” (33), considering how “he would never have proposed to a young lady of this country to walk about the streets [alone] with him” (39). Daisy admits to the innocence of being a “little...flirt” when she asks, “Did you ever hear of a nice girl that wasn’t?” (40 and 39), but Winterbourne perversely misreads her vivacious conduct as an indicator of compromised morality, virginity, and above all innocence. When “flirting creates the uncertainty” associated with sexual “ways of knowing or being known” (Philips xviii), Winterbourne resultantly finds it hard to decipher and interpret Daisy. Flirtations beg the question of “what happens further”, disrupting codes of behaviour expected by an Adamic American girl (James 27). However, part of Winterbourne’s confusion derives from the fact that he commits an act of cultural misreading when he measures American female propriety against that of the European feminine ideal, where the latter refrains from such practices. “A species of sexual banter or teasing” (Fogel 61), flirtation, as a practice, complicates Winterbourne’s determination of the cultural ‘type’ and “formula that applied to...Daisy” (James, 11). “The mysteries of the young girl’s sudden familiarities” suggest impure sexual knowing, implying “a vulgar... laxity of deportment” (22 and 10) which would align her with the specifically un-American and “foreign concept” (Bell 58), the French “coquette” (James 11). However, Winterbourne remains conflicted and persists in simultaneously seeing her as sexually un-knowing, with flirtation symbolising only pre-cursory (and non-actual) exchanges of sexual attraction.

Cultural Penetration, Miscegenation, and Misinterpretation:

Winterbourne's commitment to proving Daisy's mythically perfect sexual morality becomes clear when James reveals the underlying fear of miscegenation. John Paul Eakin argues that in his writings, "James...drew upon a well-established assumption of the nineteenth-century American society [that] Women functioned as an all-purpose symbol of the ideals of the culture, the official repository of its acknowledged moral code" (5). As "the value of these young women was measured by their power to ... regenerate society" (6), female sexual purity directly implicates and secures the future of the nation. In 'Daisy Miller', the anxiety surrounding romantic fraternization communicates fear of that which Bernard Yeazell identifies as the outcome of flirtation's "biological urge" (233). When the consequence of flirtation is "a form of exchange between people" (Phillips, xxii), and ultimately sex, there inevitably follows an increased risk of "reproductive chances" (Gersick and Kurzban 550). In particular, reproductive abilities determine the future 'purity' of the American bloodline. Consequently, the national character must maintain its insular embodiment against external and foreign contaminants because the "cultural stakes embedded in transnational exchange, result[s] in anxiety about American culture losing its uniqueness and cultural purity" (Burns 46). In 'Daisy Miller', the implication flirting has upon the American girl's innocence and thus the security of national perception and self-definition originates from what Priscilla Walton deems as "the instability of Italy as a 'white' country" (142). When in James's fiction, "darkness is often equated with disease" (142), Daisy's transatlantic counterpart Giovanelli embodies this. In accentuating Giovanelli's corruptive forces as a "foreigner" associated with "darkness" and a 'dusky' skin tone, James demonstrates a fear of hereditary as well as cultural entanglement and border dissolution (27 and 21). Winterbourne (and the rest of society) chastise the "pale" Daisy: they "wondered what on earth had been in Daisy's mind when she proposed to expose herself" (41 and 30, emphasis added) to potential corruptive forces. This language of contagion renders Italians as a separate alternative culture, and indeed a race, with the power to taint and infiltrate. As such, James is drawing on notions deriving from the imperative "to create a physiological blueprint that would explain the meaning of racial difference and restore a sense of social and material order [to provide] a means of controlling potentially disturbing cultural issues by relocating them in questions of physiology" (Vrettos 3). Dennis Pahl even suggests that "contamination...metaphorically suggests sexuality" (143) as it evokes an exchange of biology that endangers Daisy's American 'race' with being "sullied...by her relations with [Giovanelli's] darkness" (Walton 145) and "attests to the fears that surround interethnic mixing...stand[ing] as further testimony to the rigid boundaries and codes of purity" *perceived* by American identity (146). Therefore society sees Daisy as embodying the potential to welcome dangerous cross-cultural liaisons by becoming a carrier, both physically in terms of female reproduction, and hygienically, risking individual *biological* descent.

In declaring "flirting is a purely American custom" where "it doesn't exist here" (40), James reveals "the instability of Winterbourne's socio-cultural identity" (Pahl 147). Winterbourne "views Daisy as an emblem of the foreignness of his own native land" (Pahl 145), wherein failing to register his own native custom, James demonstrates the extent of Winterbourne's cosmopolitan compromise and thus of American alienation. The fact that Mrs. Costello also forgets how her own granddaughters "in New York were 'tremendous flirts'", further attests to cultural immersion (James 15). For instance when Winterbourne inquires about the validity of such American customs her defensive and

ironic denial reads, "I should like to see my granddaughters do them!" (James 15). Here James foreshadows how the uncertainties surrounding Daisy's moral and virginal integrity arise out of cultural confusion. Winterbourne is measuring and consequently judging Daisy's conduct from the perspective of a foreign and transatlantically distinct culture, which anticipates the erroneous outcome of his determination in the text's climactic scene. He interprets Giovanelli and Daisy's late-night liaison at the Colosseum "with a sort of horror" in that "the ambiguity of Daisy's behavior [sic] and the riddle has become easy to read. She was a young lady whom a gentleman need no longer be at pains to respect" (47-48). Here, the national reconfiguration that occurs as result of transatlantic incursion and subsequent romances reveals how "relationality and mobility threaten to introduce instability into what have traditionally been self-enclosed systems" (Giles 20). In being more aware of the European cultural register dictating how flirting "means something else" abroad, the 'American' collective also misjudges Daisy's behaviour, viewing her as a corruptive force (40). Daisy seems to represent a paradoxical understanding of American identity and as such with Winterbourne and the Europeanized American hegemony's nativist affiliation at stake, they try to control her behaviour to suppress acknowledgement of American permeability and plurality. In being regularly "attended by Mr. Giovanelli" in public, Mrs Walker desires Daisy to "obey her summons" and stop her flirtatious behaviour (38 and 33). Mrs Walker's control suggests operational interference, especially when in "beckoning" Winterbourne to sanction her bidding, they forcefully remind Daisy, "when you deal with natives you must go by the custom of the place" (33 and 40). This suggests a level of orchestration lies behind "regulating and normalizing...behaviour" (Fogel 11) to maintain an American-esque consistency. However when the "child of nature" (James 'Preface' 400) refuses to adjust her behaviour and declares "they are only pretending to be shocked" (46), she "intuits that society is much more concerned with appearances [and] the *look* of respectability and...innocence" (Fogel 64, emphasis added). Here, Daisy recognises that the anxiety concerning her behaviour stems from an unacknowledged cultural alteration evident in the fact that they condemn her for behaviour that is acceptable in their home nation. In trying to control Daisy, the nativist American identity exhibited by the hegemonic society in 'Daisy Miller', appears to be one of "tradition" in that the rigidly applied manners represent nationalistic efforts of "trying to regain its former purity and to cover the unities and certainties which are felt to have been lost" (Hall qtd by Martins 2). Daisy's expulsion from the society is a Jamesian critique of its uncertain and vulnerable patriotic affiliation "as it trie[s] to strengthen its national identity by attacking individuals" who appear to expose this hypocrisy (Ringwelski 9). The need for a unitary and pure national expression thus is a self-reflexively damaging and deconstructivist process that lays bare the contingency and apparent absence of inherent cultural affiliation. Daisy and the reason why her manners remain 'mystifying', remind the hegemony of that which they try to repress, their embodiment of a *literal* culture of 'insecurity'. The Europeanized Americans by virtue of their failure to perceive Daisy's *true* innocence, have already made the national identity porous by succumbing to the postcolonial reverence of the colonising culture, confirming the latter's authority over their own American acceptability of flirtation.

Consequently, society seeks to exclude Daisy, deeming her a cultural other where she becomes "regarded by her compatriots as abnormal" (44). James illustrates most profoundly the self-conscious nature of her demonization when the Europeanized Americans "ceased to invite her; and ...intimated that they desired to express to observant Europeans the great truth that, though Miss Daisy Miller was a young

American lady, her behavior [sic] was not representative” (44). Here, James renders their motivation inauthentic, providing “proof of [their] extreme cynicism” (33). They want to protect their own view of national intactness and security by projecting onto Daisy how they themselves have compromised the American consistency and insularity by having become Europeanized and thus making permeable borders of cultural security, previously (and mythically) perceived to be ‘pure’ and impregnable. In particular, the Europeanized collective defines Daisy as un-American to hide how *their* “handicap is substantial”, as “American[s] without knowledge of America” (Eakin 14). Here, society deflects its cultural augmentation by ascribing national disloyalty onto the ambiguities of Daisy’s flirtations. After contracting a “terrible case of the fever” (malaria or “Roman Fever”) and dying, Winterbourne interprets Daisy’s infection-ridden end as a sign of her sexually compromised identity, seeing it as a morally induced venereal punishment whereby “Winterbourne had...begun to think simply of the craziness, from a sanitary point of view” (49 and 48). However, Winterbourne and society fail to register her sexual intactness, as indicated in the closing realisation that he “was booked to make a mistake”, where Giovanelli has to point out that Daisy was all along “the most innocent” of American girls. This confirms James’s critique of the hypocritical villanization of Daisy’s mistaken national failings (50). Only after this does Winterbourne finally acknowledge, “it was on his conscience that he had done her injustice” and, that which he has been resisting; the fact his national identity and perception has been radically augmented from having “lived too long in foreign parts” (50 and 51).

Conclusion

Ultimately, in being preoccupied with Daisy, the Europeanized Americans overlook the fact that they have already made vulnerable the parameters of American cultural distinction. *They*, in their hybridisation, already render America both poriferous and immaterially imagined as distinct and ‘exclusively’ maintained. As such, their judgment and fear of cultural contamination, which Daisy’s behaviour and seemingly moral (and sexual) laxity with Giovanelli appears to induce, is redundant. The Europeanized Americans’ split initiative between following the code of national conduct and the codes acquired whilst abroad consequently results in a warped reading of Daisy, which the reader must look beyond. James’s ultimate message is that belief in America’s insularity and impenetrability is mythic in its origin, and Daisy’s transatlantic *implied* relationship with Giovanelli is that which unveils this uncomfortable truth about the American hegemony. Through James’s transatlantic examination and challenging dichotomy, he deconstructs mythic notions of the distinction between the Old World and New.

Therefore, in ‘Daisy Miller’ the transatlantic movement of bodies radically disrupts America’s self-image by revealing its mythological derivation. This deconstruction then jeopardizes hemispheric attributes created to affirm American exceptionalism, reflecting authorial ambivalence towards the legitimacy of imagined transatlantic binaries. Although they are unable to succeed in their transatlantic union, the unconsummated attraction between the Giovanelli and Daisy flirtation, simultaneously attests to the *possibility* of cultural penetration. Transatlantic relationships hold the power to reveal the undeniable possibility of American cultural perviousness, rendering hemispheric affiliations and characteristics as irreducible to a set of polarizing confines.

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