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A Whole Mind, an Unconquered Eye: Self-Reliance and Freedom in Henry James's *Daisy Miller*

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Abstract. Looking at Henry James's literary contexts can fruitfully help shed light on his work. Brilliantly versed in the literary traditions of his time, he was influenced by American, English, French and Russian writers. This article traces the influence of Emerson's notions of freedom, natural spontaneity, innocence and self-confidence as expressed in his essays "Nature" (1836) and "Self-Reliance" (1841) in *Daisy Miller* (1878), whilst it investigates the ways James's novella articulates the all-important dichotomy of self-sufficiency (individual freedom, autonomy, innocence) vs. social conformity (fear, heteronomy, hypocrisy) at play in the narrative. Daisy is the female embodiment of self-reliance as conceptualised in Emerson's homonymous essay – a free, innocent, uncultivated, wild, and unsophisticated spirit – and so she is never afraid. Epistemology turns out to be central to the conception of the novella, since Winterbourne and the American matriarchs are shown struggling to grasp the protagonist's puzzling innocence and true nature. As Daisy is a wild being living in accord with Nature as conceived by Emerson, the novella is punctuated by critical moments where the heroine is most at home when enmeshed in the green world, particularly in the outdoor scenes in the Château de Chillon in the Swiss Alps, the Palaces of the Caesars, the Colosseum and the Protestant cemetery in Rome.
Keywords: epistemology, fear, self-reliance, freedom, green world

[es] Una mente íntegra, una mirada indomable: independencia y libertad en *Daisy Miller*, de Henry James

Resumen. Analizar los contextos literarios de Henry James puede arrojar luz sobre su obra. Versado de un modo magistral en las tradiciones literarias de su tiempo, se vio influido por autores norteamericanos, británicos, franceses y rusos. El presente artículo rastrea la influencia en *Daisy Miller* (1878) de las nociones de libertad, espontaneidad natural, inocencia y confianza en uno mismo tal y como las expresara Emerson en sus ensayos "Nature" (1836) y "Self-Reliance" (1841), a la par que investiga de qué modo la novela corta de James articula la dicotomía esencial entre autosuficiencia (libertad individual, autonomía, inocencia) y conformidad social (miedo, heteronomía, hipocresía), claves en el relato. Daisy es la encarnación femenina de la confianza en uno mismo esbozada en el ensayo homónimo de Emerson: se trata de un espíritu libre, inocente, agreste, salvaje y sencillo que nunca tiene miedo. La epistemología es medular en la concepción de la novela, pues James muestra cómo Winterbourne y las matriarcas norteamericanas tratan de apresar la desconcertante inocencia y verdadera naturaleza de la protagonista. Puesto que Daisy es una criatura silvestre que vive en consonancia con la naturaleza del pensamiento emersoniano, el relato está jalonado por momentos clave en que la heroína encuentra su hogar en una estrecha comunión con el universo natural, de un modo especial en las escenas al aire libre en el Castillo de Chillon en los Alpes suizos, en el Palacio de los Césares, el Coliseo y el cementerio protestante de Roma.
Palabras clave: epistemología, miedo, confianza, libertad, mundo natural

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1. Introduction: Henry James's Literary Contexts

First published in 1878[2] to wide popular acclaim, *Daisy Miller* is the first of Henry James's great portraits of the American female and his greatest popular success, possibly on account of the fact that "it draws on a myth of beauty,

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[2] *Daisy Miller* was originally published in two instalments in the *Cornhill Magazine*, the prestigious British magazine for fiction, thanks to Leslie Stephen (Virginia Woolf's father), in June-July 1878, as James notes in the prologue to his novella in the New York Edition of 1907-1909. Stephen "paid him 95 pounds" (James 1999, 94).

innocence, grace, and promise menaced by predatory worldliness" (Poole 2013, vii) that "goes back to the Garden of Eden and popular folk tale" (vii) and holds endless fascinations for the human imagination.[3] A turning point in James's literary career, the "most prosperous child" (Poole 2013, vii) of his invention, as he called it in his New York Edition Preface, helped him establish himself as a professional man of letters on both sides of the Atlantic in his mid-30s. As evidenced by his own letters penned at that time, he was determined to make a living out of writing. However, in a letter addressed to his brother William James dated 15 June 1879, he complains that he had received "simply the usual 10% – which, as it sells for twenty cents, brings me but 2 cents a copy" and "a cheque for 200$" (James 1999, 108) from the Harpers. Even if he was "gaining woefully less money than fame" (James 1999, 108), for "[a] man's 1st successes are those, always, by which he makes least" (108), he still felt a sense of promise as to what the future had in store for him, "thinking of all the excellent things I mean to do in the future" (109). In the same spirit, in another letter to William Dean Howells dated 17 June 1879, he insists that he has made "200$ by the whole American career of D.M. (…) The truth is I am a very bad bargainer & I was born to be victimized by the pitiless race of publishers" (James 1999, 111). Both letters are expressive of James's Janus-faced artistic personality in that they disclose "the Flaubertian aesthete and the avid businessman; searching high cultural distinction and a financially remunerative popular success" (Freedman 1998, 18). Though he did not make a fortune, James made his name thanks to the vast popular success of *Daisy Miller*, a true international sensation.

This article aims to trace the influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson's notions of freedom, natural spontaneity, innocence, and self-confidence as expressed in his essays "Nature" (1836) and "Self-Reliance" (1841) in *Daisy Miller* and, more specifically, to investigate the ways James's novella articulates the all-important dichotomy of self-sufficiency (individual freedom, autonomy, innocence) vs. social conformity (fear, heteronomy, hypocrisy). What could be termed 'the DNA of Jamesian fiction' is encoded in *Daisy Miller*, a novella set in romantic settings, in Switzerland and Rome. At the core of *Daisy Miller* is the fable of "a young American woman [who] embodies values that the Old World threatens to maim, distort, degrade, and destroy" (Poole 2013, vii-viii). As a point of fact, James's fiction essays several variations on the so-called "International Theme," in which "naive Americans encounter a Europe that seemed both endowed with cultural wonders and suffused with a sinister, often sexual, knowledge of the world" (Freedman 1998, 7). The "International Theme" was made possible by forces such as technological development and the increasing mobility of people thanks to steamships, at a moment when "capital, communications, and culture began to circulate more freely across boundaries both geographical and imaginative" (Freedman 1998, 8), all of which resulted in "migrations of culture and language across national boundaries," migratory movements and diasporas, and "the rise of mass culture" (Freedman 1998, 9). James was a man of his time and hence receptive to "fluid, transformative models of identity" (Freedman 1998, 11), which he conceived of as being not a fixed or stable reality, but as something in the making, extremely malleable, particularly in a world that was being reshaped by profound social changes and an internationalised economy where leisure, travel and mass culture played a crucial role in identity formation.

In this regard, in an essay titled "Americans Abroad," published in October 1878, shortly after the first appearance of *Daisy Miller*, James writes: "Americans in Europe are *outsiders*; to be known in Europe as an American is to enjoy an imperfect reciprocity. (…) The great innocence of the usual American tourist is perhaps his most general quality" (James 1973, 519). To sophisticated Europeans living in James's time, Americans may have seemed "very vulgar," though a distinction is to be drawn between expatriate residents and tourists, between "the conscious and unconscious" Americans, as there were "different forms and degrees of being an 'outsider'" (Poole 2013, viii). However, even if Americans may appear vulgar to Europeans, James highlights innocence as their most notorious, praiseworthy trait. Daisy Miller herself is an outsider travelling across Europe, an innocent young woman and a free spirit amidst an Old World full of conventions that seem to be alien to her sensibility. But how are innocence and integrity to survive unscathed in a world of pretense and deceiving appearances? While travelling in Europe, Daisy Miller's innocence and wildness – after all, she is deliberately named after a flower with clear "Romantic associations" (Meyers 2007, 94) – stand in sharp contrast to the conventions, urbanity and sophistication of the dwellers of the Old World, most notably those of the Italian gentleman Mr. Giovanelli and the expatriate American elites (Mr. Winterbourne, Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker, among them) settled in Geneva and Rome. Daisy is "an easy target for scorn" (Poole 2013, xi) on the part of the "matriarchs in charge of the manners and morals of polite society in New York (…) and in Rome" (xi). What is more, she is also "a recalcitrant object of desire" (Poole 2013, xi) to the men around her, including her Europeanised compatriot Mr. Winterbourne and the Italian Giovanelli, as well as "a puzzling case of neediness" (xi), since such an innocent creature is in need of being saved from "predatory worldliness" (vii). It is with overt defiance that Daisy constantly "flouts the conventions" (Poole 2013, xiii) of the matriarchs, who anticipate that she will be "'ruined', an outcast, a social pariah" (xiii). At any rate, as Martha Banta has observed, the subject matter of James's fiction is "ultimately gendered," as it is mostly concerned with "social relations between women and men" (1998, 21).

One of the most remarkable aspects about James's identity as a cosmopolitan man of letters and "literary polymath" is "the breadth of [his] literary acquaintanceship" (Freedman 1998, 16, 12). Inscribing him in a vast cons-

[3] Alice Bartlett, with whom James "had gone riding in the Roman Campagna" in 1873 and "read Tasso's poetry twice a week" (James 1999, 90n.1), is credited with having given the author the germ of *Daisy Miller*. See *The Complete Letters of Henry James*, edited by Leon Edel, volume IV, 262n.

tellation of texts and authors – i.e., looking at his literary contexts – can fruitfully help shed light on his work. He was friends with some of the most important writers and intellectuals of his day, including Edith Wharton, Edmund Gosse and William Dean Howells, to name but a few. When 26-year-old James first visited England as an adult in 1869, he was "armed with introductions to the world of poetry and art from his friend the Boston anglophile and cultural authority Charles Eliot Norton" (Horne 2005, 69). He got to meet William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Matthew Arnold, George Eliot, Robert Browning and Lord Alfred Tennyson, all of whom he had read, admired and "loved through their works" (Horne 2005, 70) from the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Brilliantly versed in the literary traditions of his time, he was influenced by American writers (particularly by Hawthorne and Emerson), English writers (Austen, Dickens, Eliot, Trollope), French writers (Balzac, Maupassant, Zola) and Russian writers (Turgenev) (Freedman 1998, 12), though this list is not exhaustive by any means. He absorbed their lessons and transmuted them in the living fabric of his own writing. One such decisive influence in his work is Ralph Waldo Emerson, a friend of James's father whom Henry James senior deeply admired.[4] It was thanks to a letter of introduction provided by Emerson that James senior would meet Thomas Carlyle during his 1838 transatlantic voyage to Europe. Yet the Emersonian connection with the James family was much deeper. According to Fred Kaplan, Emerson "sometimes stayed at the James home on his New York visits" (1999, 13). Emerson's son, Edward Waldo Emerson (1844-1930), was friends with the James brothers and spent the spring of 1861 in their Newport home (James 1999, 540-541). Evidence from James's letters reveals that, years later, he would have the opportunity to spend time with the Transcendentalist thinker on two different occasions, first in Paris and then in Rome. In a letter addressed to Charles Norton Eliot dated 19 November 1872, James explains that he had spent a few hours conversing with Emerson while touring the rooms of the Louvre: "I dwelt in a serener air for a couple of hours this morning, in walking thro' the Louvre with Emerson. (…) Even when he says nothing especial, his presence has a sovereign amenity & he was peculiarly himself this morning" (James 1999, 50-51). A few days later, Emerson and his daughter would resume their journey and set out for Egypt. In the winter of 1873, James would briefly meet with Emerson again in Rome as the Concord sage and his daughter Ellen stopped in the Italian city "on their way back from a restorative trip to Egypt" (Kaplan 1999, 145). James "did his duty briefly, lending them his pass to the Vatican museums" (Kaplan 1999, 145). That was the last time both men met, yet Emerson would remain a vital presence in James's mind. Clear evidence of the author's admiration of Emerson is the fact that he devoted two essays to the Transcendentalist thinker: a review of *The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldon Emerson. 1834-1872*, originally published in the *Century Magazine* in June 1883, and a review of the Bostonian philosopher James Elliot Cabot's *Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1887), originally published in the *Macmillan's Magazine* in December 1887. Both essays testify to the centrality of Emerson to James's literary imagination.

2. "I'm Not Afraid": Fearless Daisy

This article traces the presence of Emersonian thought concerning freedom, self-confidence and innocence in James's *Daisy Miller* and investigates how the self-sufficiency vs. social conformity dichotomy operates in the novella. Whereas Daisy is the female embodiment of self-reliance as conceptualised in Emerson's "Self-Reliance" – a free, innocent, uncultivated, wild, and unsophisticated spirit – the people around her are shown struggling to grasp her true nature, even though, in a sense, it is transparent and visible at first sight. In this connection, sight is possibly one of the senses central to the novella's overall conception. Daisy looks at other people and she is the object of others' scrutinising gaze. As Adrian Poole lucidly suggests, "[o]ne of the tale's subjects is all this looking, gazing, surveillance" (2013, xi) and what seems to trouble most of all is "the ease and directness with which Daisy looks at others and receives their gaze, her confidence" (xi), probably because she has nothing to hide and everything to discover. It is no wonder that the unshrinking directness of her gaze should make other people around her feel uneasy. In constant motion, Daisy is a child of nature: artless, spontaneous, talkative, the opposite of the "still and silent maiden modestly averting her gaze from spectators" (Poole 2013, xii). On the contrary, she reciprocates other people's gaze with overt frankness and directness, such is the unstudied innocence of her heart.

Readers watch Daisy through Winterbourne's eyes for much of the time, through the lens of the central consciousness presiding over the novella. This is how James describes Winterbourne's first observations upon Daisy: "They were wonderfully pretty eyes; and, indeed, Winterbourne had not seen for a long time anything prettier that his fair countrywoman's various features – her complexion, her nose, her ears, her teeth" (James 1995, 14), in words that show how his "acquisitive perception itemizes Daisy's features in such a way as to make her an object" (Weisbuch 1998, 108). Daisy is thus "the subject of Winterbourne's inquiry rather than ours" (Bell 1991, 54) and "[w]e can never arrive except by guesswork at the truth about Daisy; she can only be seen from the outside through the lens of Winterbourne's special viewpoint" (Bell 1991, 54). Readers never get to have an unmediated experience of her self; all they have is hints and guesses as to her true self instead. Most importantly, "[w]e are never allowed to know her unspoken thoughts but only the reflections about her uttered to him by others, and only his surmises" (Bell 1991, 54).

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[4] According to Lawrence Buell, Emerson admired certain "striking individuals" (2003, 80), among whom was "the cranky but somehow endearing Swedenborgian Henry James, Sr." (81).

Inasmuch as characters – isolated spheres closed on the outside – are shown struggling to make sense of each other, it is not far-fetched to affirm that epistemology is one of the fundamental threads interwoven in the overall conception of *Daisy Miller*. James leads readers into "the destabilized, the epistemological vertiginous" (Freedman 1998, 15), towards the dominions of a hermeneutics of suspicion in the face of realities – people's conduct, things populating the world, events – that reveal themselves to be inscrutable to the naked eye. According to Bell, Winterbourne is "the first of those Jamesian witnesses whose efforts to truly know the Other, to understand the Other's story, are representations of the writer's – and the reader's – bemused efforts to solve the mystery of character and plot" (1991, 54-55). As Weisbuch rightly observes, Winterbourne commits evil since he "misapprehends and ultimately refuses gendered Otherness" (1998, 109). Because he "itemizes, categorizes, or fictionalizes Daisy, he refuses her the reality and integrating wholeness that makes women – and men – people" (Weisbuch 1998, 109). Thus, it all comes down to an epistemological problem, as James ultimately draws readers' attention to the "barbarisms of perception" (Weisbuch 1998, 114) we are all prone to.

The "whole question of typological definition" (Bell 1991, 55) is indeed central to James's novella. Charmed and perplexed in equal measure by her intimidating confidence and by "the ambiguity of Daisy's behaviour" (James 1995, 82), Winterbourne is prompted by his "typological compulsion" (Bell 1991, 61) and "analytic attitude" (Poole 2013, x) to ascribe her to a distinct category. Winterbourne is literally afraid of epistemological uncertainty; his mind will not allow for any kind of conceptual indeterminacy. In his desperate need for a category, Winterbourne essays several variations that fail to pinpoint Daisy's type for good. Thus, "a coquette" (James 1995, 20), "extremely innocent" (19), "a pretty American flirt" (19), "rather wild" (26), "completely uncultivated" (27), "an extraordinary mixture of innocence and crudity" (43), and "an inscrutable combination of audacity and innocence" (58) are all tentative labels he deploys to capture and express her nature. Always struggling to find *le mot juste* that will define Daisy best, he seems to hold his labels in a kind of quarantine, for lack of a better term. Incidentally, it is no accident that Winterbourne's "need to make imprisoning divisions" (Bell 1991, 58) leads his classifying mind to choose foreign words and expressions to avoid using embarrassing English ones (Bell 1991, 58-59) when trying to make sense of Daisy's behaviour. As argued by Bell, the categoriser's "uneasy journey from one concept to another is the story's profoundest plot and at the same time a dramatization of our reading experience" (1991, 60).

Innocence constitutes one of the core concepts around which James's novella is articulated. In a letter addressed to Eliza Lynn Linton dated 6 October 1880, James highlights the centrality of innocence to Daisy's character. In an illuminating passage he writes:

> Poor little D.M. was (…) above all things innocent. It was not to make a scandal – or because she took pleasure in a scandal – that she "went on" with Giovanelli. She never took the measure, really, of the Scandal she produced, & had no means of doing so: she was too ignorant, too irreflective, too little versed in the proportions of things. (…) The keynote of her *character* is her innocence – that of her *conduct* is of course that she had a little sentiment about Winterbourne that she believed to be quite unreciprocated… (…) The whole idea of the story 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 & to which she stood in no measurable relation. (…) She never had a thought of scandalizing any body – the most she ever had was a regret for Winterbourne. (James 1999, 122-123; emphasis in the original)

Daisy Miller is the Emersonian woman made flesh, though. She abides by the exhortation with which Emerson opens "Self-Reliance": "Ne te quaesiveris extra" (2003b, 175), which he renders into English as "Do not seek yourself outside yourself" (203), and also by the conviction that "Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind" (178). In Emerson's view, self-reliance is a complex constellation of attributes that can be said to comprise: a complete adherence to one's nature, for "no man can violate his nature" (2003b, 183); an iron self-trust and a determination to "detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages" (2003b, 176); a desire to "live in truth" (2003b, 193), i.e., a love of truth and honest thought, since "truth is handsomer than the affectation of love" (2003b, 179); virtue and honour, as "[h]onor is venerable to us because it is no ephemera. It is always ancient virtue. We worship it to-day because it is not of to-day" (2003b, 184); absolute freedom of spirit, which entails freedom of speech and action – "What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think" (2003b, 180); and the will not "to postpone [one's] life" but, to borrow Thoreau's words, to suck the marrow of life before it is too late. When we first see Daisy in the novella, it is through Mr. Winterbourne's eyes: "a pretty American girl coming to stand in front of you in a garden with all the confidence in life" (James 1909, 10). Notice how the New York edition adds "with all the confidence in life," which is a most eloquent addition to the original – "a pretty American girl coming and standing in front of you in a garden" (James 1995, 12). Confidence is associated with the heroine from the very outset. Likewise, in his landmark essay "Nature," Emerson contends that "few adult persons can see nature" (2003a, 38) and that "the sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and heart of the child" (38). Most importantly, he aligns virtue with beauty and nature: "Beauty is the mark God sets upon virtue. Every natural action is graceful" (2003a, 45). Daisy Miller is innocence and spontaneity incarnate, she acts by following the dictates of her conscience alone, and is absolutely indifferent to the conventions that deprive individuals of their precious freedom. "I have never allowed a gentleman to dictate to me, or to interfere with anything I do" (James 1995, 56), she says in words that reveal a real spirit of independence, an indomitable being of Nature.

Because Daisy is, in James's words in his preface to the 1909 New York Edition, "a child of nature and of freedom" (v), a wild and innocent human living in accord with nature, there is no room for fear in her soul.[5] The novella is punctuated by evidence that Daisy is fearless in a number of ways. As Emerson claims in "Self-Reliance," children, who observe human character and relationships from the vantage point of "unaffected, unbiased, unbribable, unaffrighted innocence" (2003b, 178), are the best model to follow in one's adult life, for they embody "the healthy attitude of human nature" (177). It is adults, "clapped into jail by [their] consciousness" (2003b, 178), not children, that experience fear and uncertainty as they get progressively trapped in a world of arbitrary conventions and prejudices. It could be claimed that Daisy is a fearless spirit that acts by solely following the dictates of her conscience and remains indifferent to social norms. "I'm not afraid," she says time and again throughout the novella, which is pervaded by massive evidence of her spirit's independence. Lack of fear is discernible in the unstudied naturalness of her behaviour, the unshrinking frankness and directness of her gaze, in her unchaperoned walks with the flamboyant Italian Giovanelli (first in the Pincio gardens in Rome and then in the Colosseum), in her spending time all alone or alone in other gentlemen's company, and in her disregard for the norms of propriety and decorum championed by the American matriarchs both in New York and Rome. "For myself, I had no fear; and she wanted to go" (87), observed Mr. Giovanelli unsympathetically at the end of *Daisy Miller*, once the poor girl had died of Roman fever after he had taken her to a nocturnal visit to the Colosseum that proved fatal to her health.

Daisy Miller ends up being buried in the Protestant cemetery in Rome, "beneath the cypresses and the thick spring flowers" (James 1995, 87), with Mr. Winterbourne coming to the realization that he "had done her injustice" (88), as he had turned a deaf ear to the message she had sent him shortly before her death. He had failed to grasp her real innocence, despite his attempts at reducing her to a deadening category. It is only too late that he realizes he had been insensitive to her genuine innocence on account of his having "lived too long in foreign parts" (James 1995, 88), such is the deadening effect of the Old World's conventions on the young American gentleman. As Poole perceptively notes, James "rebukes Winterbourne for failing to recognise Daisy for what she was, all too simply, in her mighty innocence and conceivable potential" (2013, xix). His inability to arrive at certainty has been the ultimate source of the drama in the novella. In what becomes "a drama of perception that has malignant, even horrific consequences in the lives of those perceived" (Weisbuch 1998, 106-107), Winterbourne's "overly intellectualized searching out of the moral fault of another" (105) constitutes "immorality" and "an unpardonable sin" (105).

"Their mind being whole, their eye is as yet unconquered, and when we look in their faces we are disconcerted" (2003b, 177), writes Emerson apropos the whole person in his essay "Self-Reliance," in words that can be rightly applied to Daisy's self-sufficing soul. By the end of the novella, she reveals herself to have been completely misunderstood by Mr. Winterbourne. Maybe that was part of James's plan for his novella from the outset. Emerson writes: "To be great is to be misunderstood" and so "every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh" (2003b, 183) was misunderstood. Back in the lap of Earth, Daisy – the young woman named after an ephemeral flower – revolves with the elements that comprise a vibrant world, "the centre of things" (Emerson 2003b, 185). As Emerson claims in "Self-Reliance, "[e]very great man is a unique" (2003b, 199). To borrow the Transcendentalist's words, Daisy is one such unique human being, one who is aware that "power is inborn" (2003b, 202) and abides "in the simple and noble regions of [her] life, [and] obey[s] [her] heart" (2003b, 199) regardless of where it might lead her.

3. Daisy and the Green World

A figure of "pure poetry" (1909, viii), as James would call her in his New York Edition Preface emphasising her earth-bound existence, spontaneity and innocence, Daisy Miller might be said to be most at home when in touch with the green world, which is in accord with Emerson's thinking on nature – humankind's true *oikos*. James is not an author fond of describing natural landscapes, yet they do filter through the interstices of the narrative at some critical points in a most subtle manner. In this regard, there are few scenes in James's novella where Daisy is shown as being literally a "child of nature," but those moments are eloquent force fields radiating ripples of meaning across the story. One such moment is Winterbourne and Daisy's excursion by steamboat to the Château de Chillon in the Vevey of Rousseau, in the Swiss Alps, shortly after they meet at the hotel they are staying in. An autobiographical substratum is discernible in the description of this romantic setting, since in 1860 the James family had been to Geneva, where the 17-year-old Henry was enrolled at the Academy. In a letter addressed to Thomas Sergeant Perry dated 25, [28] March 1864, he wrote thus: "It is very pleasant up here but rather lonely, the only other inhabitants being Shakespeare, Goethe and Charles Lamb. (…) I am lucky in having Goethe all to myself, for I am the only one who speaks German" (James 1974, I, 96). Significantly, the young James preferred books to the natural surroundings, however impressive the scenery might have been.

The following excerpt shows Daisy enjoying the excursion to the Château de Chillon in a natural environment that remains undescribed yet is evoked in between the lines:

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[5] For Thoreau, wilderness is also synonymous with virtue: "In short, all good things are wild and free" (1906, 234), he writes in his well-known essay "Walking."

> Daisy Miller was extremely animated, she was in charming spirits; but she was apparently not at all excited; she was not fluttered; she avoided neither his eyes nor those of anyone else; she blushed neither when she looked at him nor when she felt that people were looking at her. People continued to look at her a great deal, and Winterbourne took much satisfaction in his pretty companion's distinguished air. He had been a little afraid that she would talk loud, laugh overmuch, and even, perhaps, desire to move about the boat a good deal. But he quite forgot his fears; he sat smiling, with his eyes upon her face, while, without moving from her place, she delivered herself of a great number of original reflections. (James 1995, 40)

Whereas Daisy appears to absorb the sensory stimuli of her surroundings, bombarding her from all directions, as betrayed by her being "extremely animated" (James 1995, 40), Winterbourne experiences uneasiness and fear, and finally directs her gaze to Daisy's face not without a sense of pride at her beauty and "distinguished air" (40). Contrary to his expectations, her companion knows how to behave in public to conform with tacitly accepted norms of decorum and, what is more, she is capable of intelligent conversation. What the content of her "original reflections" (James 1995, 40) might have been remains a puzzle to readers. At any rate, James does not afford readers a glimpse of the natural milieu – no description in passing of the Swiss Alps that captivated the imagination of the well-off in the 18th and 19th centuries, as Robert Macfarlane explains in *Mountains of the Mind*: "As the thriving Empire brought with it greater domestic stability, prosperity and comfort, Victoria's burghers became increasingly fond of risk-taking" (2004, 87) and the Alps were the place to go. People were excited by "the *terra incognita* of the Alps which was buried in the heart of civilized Europe, previously hidden from view by the camouflage of altitude" (Macfarlane 2004, 180). Shortly after Daisy and Winterbourne get off the steamboat, they set out on a tour of the Château de Chillon, or rather of the picturesque remains of what used to be a castle.

As Jeffrey Meyers (2007) observes, even though he is mentioned by name only once in James's novella, Lord Byron is a remarkable presence in *Daisy Miller*, particularly in two outdoor scenes where the protagonist is closer to the natural world than to the human-made world. His spirit clearly "dominates the Château de Chillon, on the eastern end of Lake Geneva, beneath the snow-capped peaks of the Swiss Alps – and the ancient Colosseum in the center of Rome" (Meyers 2007, 96). Despite being romantic places, both sites have "blood-soaked histories and reek of death" (Meyers 2007, 96). Both foreshadow Daisy's tragic end. Like James's protagonist, Byron would also die of a malarial fever, aged 36. The Château de Chillon was equipped with a torture chamber and dungeons where prisoners and heretics were chained to columns. Accompanying Byron on a visit to the castle, Shelley thought it was a monument of "cold and inhuman tyranny" (quoted in Meyers 2007, 96). One of the prisoners was François Bonnivard (1496-1570), a Swiss patriot and historian who challenged the Duke of Savoy in his attempt to control Geneva and was imprisoned in the dungeons of the castle from 1530 to 1536. Upon his release, he was unable to enjoy his freedom, used as he had become to living in such terrible confinement (Meyers 2007, 96). He became the protagonist of Byron's "Prisoner of Chillon" (1816), where the poet wrote apropos Bonnivard's incapacity to get rid of the sense of despair that would accompany him for the rest of his life: "And the whole earth would henceforth be / a wider prison unto me" (Byron 1867, 149, XII.5-6). In the course of their excursion to the castle, Winterbourne tells Daisy "the history of the unhappy Bonivard [sic]" (James 1995, 42), but she "cared very little for feudal antiquities" and "the dusky traditions of Chillon made but a slight impression upon her" (41). Whereas Daisy seemed to enjoy the excursion, to Winterbourne's eyes the trip was "slightly spoiled" by her "dismissal of his pedantic explanations" (Meyers 2007, 97).

The second outdoor scene where Daisy is seen as embedded in the green world takes place in Rome, in the Palace of the Caesars, "that beautiful abode of flowering desolation" (James 1995, 77) or, as the New York Edition reads, "that supreme seat of flowering desolation" (James 1909, 82). Once again, readers get to see the young woman through the eyes of Winterbourne, who happens to come across her in a place filled with echoes from deep history. Daisy is depicted as being part of the diurnal course of the green world. Nature and culture coexist side by side in a place that is literally a book full of inscriptions. It comes as no surprise that she should move "at her ease" amidst the ruins, the "mossy marble" and "tender verdure." As argued by Horne, James's "imagination was intensely pictorial as well as verbal" (2005, 80), which accounts for the dexterous descriptions he provides in his fiction. As illustrated by the following quotation, James appears to indulge himself in the pictorial description of the place, in one of the cities he would visit time and again throughout his life:

> The early Roman spring had filled the air with bloom and perfume, and the rugged surface of the Palatine was muffled with tender verdure. Daisy moved at her ease over the great mounds of ruin that are embanked with mossy marble and paved with monumental inscriptions. It seemed to him he had never known Rome so lovely as just then. He looked off at the enchanting harmony of line and colour that remotely encircles the city – he inhaled the softly humid odours and felt the freshness of the year and the antiquity of the place reaffirm themselves in deep interfusion. (James 1909, 82)

As James wishes to emphasise in this passage, the old and the new coexist in effortless harmony in Rome, a spatio-historical site ubiquitously populated by signs. Endowed with a form of nonverbal literacy, James is shown reading the landscape with skilled, penetrating eyes, and translating the fabric of the physical world into a verbal artefact of lasting value. If we are to believe the main insights of the new materialisms (Barad 2007; Bennett 2010),

matter is not dead or inert stuff, but quite the opposite – vibrant, agentic, and communicative instead. Winterbourne's consciousness registers such vitality intrinsic in the fragment of the world close to hand. All his senses – sight and touch above all the rest – appear to be involved in a moment of enhanced perception and mindful observation. Partaking of the thing-power suffusing every little thing around him, he joins the feast through breathing: "he inhaled the softly humid odours" (78). James's passage can be interpreted as being a most eloquent example of the material-semiotic entanglement of perceiver and perceived, a mutual entanglement where "both observer and observed are merging and interpenetrating aspects of one whole reality" (Bohm 1980, 9). In ecophilosopher David Abram's view, "[t]he simple act of perception is experienced as an interchange between oneself and that which one perceives – as a meeting, a participation, a communion between beings" (2010, 268). As the authorial consciousness is shown absorbing a myriad of details coming from all directions in Rome, it becomes obvious that "sensory perception is the environmental engagement of every organism at its most basic" and "a concrete form of our 'transcorporeality'" (Sullivan 2014, 81, 84). Human beings are literally *embodied* minds dwelling in a world populated by other sentient bodies and so perception reveals the porous borders separating the perceiving self and the perceived world humans are *a part of*, *not apart from*. Thus, James's passage gestures towards the tenuous border between the self (*res cogitans*) and reality (*res extensa*), which gets increasingly blurred to the point of indistinction.

The third outdoor scene where Daisy is shown as being part of the natural world takes place in the Colosseum, a semi-wild or undomesticated place in the heart of Rome. In Canadian poet Robert Bringhurst's view, *wild* means "undomesticated, unmanaged, uncontrolled by human beings" and "extremely sophisticated" and "self-sufficient" (2006, 261, 262). The Colosseum is a site where culture meets nature and seeks to impose some kind of order upon it. Yet as a vortex where present and past are fused, it is a multilayered space where the wild resists domination on the part of humans, which partly accounts for the emphasis in James's description of the Colosseum on the "villainous miasma" (81) and "nest of malaria" (83) intrinsic to the amphitheatre. Ruins figure prominently in Romantic aesthetics, which cherished them as expressive of an irrecoverable past and as a reminder that everything is ephemeral. It is no coincidence that, like the ruins of the Château de Chillon, the Colosseum, another place associated with Lord Byron, occupies such a central position in James's novella. It is in this history-laden place where Winterbourne comes across Daisy and Giovanelli on a nocturnal visit to the monument. Once again, readers see the protagonist through the lens of Winterbourne's consciousness:

> When (…) Winterbourne approached the dusky circle of the Colosseum, it occurred to him, as a lover of the picturesque, that the interior, in the pale moonshine, would be well worth a glance. He turned aside and walked to one of the empty arches, near which, as he observed, an open carriage – one of the little Roman streetcabs – was stationed. Then he passed in among the cavernous shadows of the great structure, and emerged upon the clear and silent arena. The place had never seemed to him more impressive. One half of the gigantic circus was in deep shade; the other was sleeping in the luminous dusk. As he stood there he began to murmur Byron's famous lines, out of *Manfred*; but before he had finished his quotation he remembered that if nocturnal meditations in the Colosseum are recommended by the poets, they are deprecated by the doctors. The historic atmosphere was there, certainly; but the historic atmosphere, scientifically considered, was no better than a villainous miasma. (James 1995, 81)

Byron and Shelley visited the Colosseum at some point in their lives as well. Byron's spirit is once again present in the amphitheatre as Winterbourne recites Byron's well-known lines from act 3, scene 4, lines 10-24 of *Manfred* (1817):

> I stood within the Coliseum's wall,
> 'Midst the chief relics of almighty Rome;
> The trees which grew along the broken arches
> Waves in the dark blue midnight, and the stars
> Shone through the rents of ruins… (Byron 1867, 200)

Like the Château de Chillon, the Colosseum was for Shelley also a "giant emblem of cruelty" (quoted in Meyers 2007, 98) and death. For a hundred days, the gigantic amphitheatre hosted an inaugural festival in 80 CE where countless gladiators and wild beasts were killed, "while the sandy floor absorbed their blood" (Meyers 2007, 98). Christian martyrs were also slaughtered on the very same arena of the Colosseum. It is in this setting that Winterbourne sees Daisy on a walk with his rival Giovanelli, who is eager to please and escort her on such a nocturnal visit to the impressive monument, in the hope that she "might, in that delightful spot, agree to marry him and share her fortune" (Meyers 2007, 98). Oblivious to the "villainous miasma" (James 1995, 81) and the danger it poses to her health, the native to Rome satisfies thus her desire to see the place by moonlight.

In approaching Daisy and her companion "viewing the Colosseum by moonlight," Winterbourne, half in love with her, "leaps to the conclusion that she is a disreputable woman" (West 1916, 45). He experiences a moment of revelation in relation to her true self: "It was as if a sudden illumination had been flashed upon the ambiguity of Daisy's behaviour, and the riddle had become easy to read. She was a young lady whom a gentleman need no longer be at pains to respect" (James 1995, 82), he concludes with mixed feelings of "horror" and "relief." Now that he has deciphered the puzzle and found the right words to categorise Daisy, he experiences a moment of utter relief. However,

he completely "misjudges Daisy's character and callously rejects her" (Meyers 2007, 99). Thinking of "the craziness, from a sanitary point of view, of a delicate young girl lounging away the evening in this nest of malaria" (James 1995, 83), Winterbourne rebukes Giovanelli, a native Roman, for "such a terrible indiscretion" (83), for consenting to show Daisy around in the middle of the night just because she wished to see the Colosseum by moonlight. There is a very real danger that she might catch the Roman fever. Mr. Winterbourne is afraid of the hostile side to nature as represented by the "nest of malaria" of the Colosseum that ultimately brings about Daisy's unexpected and untimely death. Incidentally, he is also afraid of "Daisy's sexual attractiveness," which might be said to be "at the root of his desire to reduce her to an intellectual concept" (Bell 1991, 59). By contrast, Daisy, "lovely in the flattering moonlight" (James 1995, 83) and enthralled by the beauty of the Roman monument at night, is delighted to have seen such a romantic place by moonlight. Once again, Daisy is not afraid. "I don't care (…) whether I have Roman fever or not!" (James 1995, 85), she exclaims with exhilaration. Sadly, those are the last words Winterbourne and Daisy exchange. The next thing Winterbourne hears about the young lady is that she has died of Roman fever.

As Horne has persuasively argued in "Henry James among the Poets," James embraced "the traditional dignity and imaginative intensity of the poet" (2005, 68). He conceived of poets as being seers "speaking under the inspiration of a god who descends on them" (Horne 2005, 69). If the form through which an author captures the image of life is "worthy" – that is, if it "projects the image of life with a sufficient intensity or complexity" and "if its language attains a 'poetic' weight or power" (Horne 2005, 69) – then the author deserves to be called a poet. Therefore, the fact that James wrote in prose was to him "no disqualification for the noble title of poet" (Horne 2005, 69). On a surface level, James belonged "among the poets" in the twofold sense that he "moved socially in circles that included many of the most notable poets of his time" (Horne 2005, 69) and he alludes to poetry in ways that were "standard practice for the Victorian novel" (Horne 2005, 75), that is, characters overtly mention poets or poems, as is the case with Winterbourne murmuring lines from Byron's *Manfred* in the Colosseum, or "think of them as they reflect on their experience" (75). In a more subtle manner, James has Winterbourne tell the sad story of Bonnivard to Daisy on their visit to the Château de Chillon, indirectly evoking Byron's "Prisoner of Chillon."

However, on a deeper level, James was "extremely receptive to the language of poetry" (Horne 2005, 72) and so the "practice of poetic allusion" (77) is a remarkable characteristic of his fiction. Such sensitivity is discernible in the words of specific poems or passages incorporated into the very texture of his own writing. Poets' words were lifted from somewhere in his subconscious when he was composing his novels and short stories (Horne 2005, 75). In this regard, Horne highlights one passage from *Daisy Miller* that shows James's memory saturated with the poets' words: the climax of the novella at the Colosseum where the heroine looks at "the harshly judging hero Winterbourne" (Horne 2005, 75). In the revised New York edition, the sentence reads thus: "He felt her lighted eyes fairly penetrate the thick gloom of the vaulted passage – as if to seek some access to him she hadn't yet compassed" (James 1909, 89). In light of James's lexical choice, an abyss opens up in the text, offering us "a glimpse into James's imaginative workshop" (Horne 2005, 76), as the author tessellates a constellation of words (*thick*, *passage* and *access*) lifted from a speech in *Macbeth* (1.5.39-46)[6] to evoke the "hardening of heart" (Horne 2005, 76) that Daisy experiences when trying to interpret Winterbourne's inscrutable face. Winterbourne's rejection of "a human appeal by the heroine" (Horne 2005, 76) is enhanced at this crucial point in the story by James's conscious or unconscious use of suggestive, densely poetic language lifted from Shakespeare's tragedy. This is, however, not the only locus in the novella where James's verbal memory shows itself as being protean and inspired by the poets' words.

The fourth and last scene where Daisy is seen in close communion with nature takes place in the Protestant Cemetery. By the end of the novella, she is shown at home, back in the green world where she belongs: "Daisy's grave was in the little Protestant cemetery, in an angle of the wall of imperial Rome, beneath the cypresses and the thick spring flowers" (James 1995, 86-87). She is now a "raw protuberance among the April daisies" (James 1995, 87), in a place where Keats and Shelley are also buried, turning to the rhythm of the seasons alongside the grass and stones of the place. After all, she might be interpreted as being "a child of nature and freedom," in literally Emersonian terms. She is not afraid; she is a wild and free spirit that finds Nature to be her home. Even in this moment of transmutation, James's literary imagination is deeply saturated with the ideas and words of great poets. Shelley and Keats preside over the Protestant cemetery in Rome in much the same way Byron presides over the Château de Chillon and the Colosseum. *How* James says is fundamental to *what* he says. Thus, in his succinct description of Daisy's grave, Meyers (2007, 94-95) has identified a clear allusion to Shelley's description of Keats's grave in the preface to his elegy "Adonais" (1821):

> [Keats] was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the protestants in that city, under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and flowers, now mouldering and desolate… (…) The cemetery is an open space among the ruins covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place. (Shelley 1901, 307-308)

[6] "Come, you spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here, / And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full / Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood, / Stop us th'access and passage to remorse, / That no compunctious visitings of nature / Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between / Th'effect and it" (Shakespeare 1994, 242).

In this passage, Shelley explicitly mentions daisies, the flower after which James's heroine is named. In addition, in the very text of "Adonais" the poet addresses four themes that emphasise the similarities between Daisy and Keats further developed by James in his novella: "their youth, their beauty, the envy of their enemies, and their burial in Rome" (Meyers 2007, 95). Both Keats and Daisy are emblems of extreme vulnerability and untimely death: Keats died of a consumption at the age of 24 in 1821; Daisy died of a fever at an even younger age. In 1822, Shelley drowned aged 29 and was buried in the same cemetery. All three rest on the same ground.

Upon closer inspection, there is no reason for Daisy to be afraid. As pointed out above, Emerson wrote in "Self-Reliance": "Their mind being whole, their eye is as yet unconquered, and when we look in their faces we are disconcerted" (2003b, 177). These are words which can be aptly said of Daisy, even after she has left this world. The word *unconquered* as used by Emerson is charged with poetical associations in ways not dissimilar from James's own practice of poetic allusion.[7] In fact, in an 1875 review of a book by Reverend Stopford A. Brooke entitled *Theology in the English Poets*, James (1984a, 773) quotes the closing lines of a Wordsworthian sonnet titled "To Touissant L'Ouverture," where the Romantic poet writes lines of magnificent beauty:

> Thou hast left behind
> Powers that will work for thee, —air, earth, and skies;
> There's not a breathing of the common wind
> That will forget thee; thou hast great allies:
> Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
> And love, and man's *unconquerable* mind. (Wordsworth 1878, 69; our emphasis)

As Horne (2005, 77) notes, the phrase "man's unconquerable mind" is in itself a poetic allusion to Thomas Gray's ode "The Progress of Poesy," where the poet sings of "The *unconquerable* Mind and Freedom's holy flame" (Gray 1969, 170; our emphasis). In a letter addressed to his friend Edmund Gosse, dated 17 December 1914, James revisits Wordsworth's words once again in the face of the horror of World War I: "I only feel, & feel, & toujours feel about them unspeakably, & about nothing else whatever – feeling so in Wordsworth's terms of exaltations, agonies & loves, & (our) *unconquerable* mind" (James 1999, 546; our emphasis). As Horne notes, poetic language of such intensity reveals itself to be "a dazzlingly economical medium" (2005, 77) to "communicate and preserve complex feelings and ideas" (77). It is thus most curious to see how Gray's, Wordsworth's, Emerson's and James's texts are linked by a subtle poetic thread over time. Whether Wordsworth was aware of Gray's echo in his sonnet, whether Emerson was aware of Wordsworth's trace in "Self-Reliance," and whether James was aware of the presence of Gray, Wordsworth and Emerson in two of his texts thirty-nine years apart remains a mystery. The practice of poetic allusion suggests "how intimately and powerfully the great old medium of poetry mattered to James" (Horne 2005, 80). In his New York edition preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*, James characterises the "house of fiction" as having "not one window but a million" (1984c, 1075). By analogy, James's language is deeply saturated by the greatest poets' words in evocative ways that suggest the uninterrupted continuity of the literary imagination.

4. Conclusion

An attentive reading of *Daisy Miller* reveals that Emersonian thought as expressed in such seminal essays as "Nature" and "Self-Reliance" is discernible in James's novella. James spent time with the Concord sage in Paris and Rome, two of the most important European cities of the time, in 1872 and 1873 respectively. Despite the brevity of their meetings, Emerson's presence and thinking must have left an indelible mark on James's literary imagination, evidence of which is to be found in the protagonist of *Daisy Miller*. Named after a flower, Daisy is the embodiment of a self-reliant, fearless, wild being whose behaviour is aligned with Emerson's conceptions of freedom, innocence and spontaneity. In fact, at the core of Jamesian fiction is an encounter between the innocence of Americans abroad and the Janus-faced sophistication and hypocrisy of Europeans. *Daisy Miller* is no exception to the rule and fits in within this pattern, which underwent a number of variations throughout James's literary career.

On a deeper level, James's novella concerns epistemology and explores how Mr. Winterbourne seeks hard to understand Daisy by reducing her to a deadening category. Blinded by prejudice instigated by the American matriarchs in Rome, Winterbourne is puzzled by Daisy's unstudied naturalness and nonconformity in the face of accepted norms of propriety and decorum. The whole novella is thus a journey towards an epiphany that comes too late for both Winterbourne and Daisy. It is only after her unexpected death of Roman fever that Winterbourne realizes he has completed misinterpreted her. Whereas society imposes conformity and heteronomy, Daisy embraces self-sufficiency

[7] In dealing with the intersections between poetry and philosophy – and the possibility of philosophical poetry – Emerson thinks of how the philosopher, seeking to impart abstract knowledge, "avails himself of the drama, the epic, the novel, & becomes a poet; for these complex forms allow of the utterance of his knowledge of life by *indirections*" in ways in which "the thesis or dissertation could never give" (Emerson 1982, 217; emphasis in the original). Like James, Emerson conceives of the poet as a seer – someone who sees into what-is and imparts precious insights to others.

and freedom instead. Critical moments in the novella such as Winterbourne and Daisy's excursion to the Château de Chillon, Daisy's walk in the Palace of the Caesars, Giovanelli and Daisy's nocturnal visit to the Colosseum, and Daisy's burial in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome all suggest that the heroine, oblivious to social constraints, is her truest self and at home in the green world.

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