Traditions Of American Realism In Daisy Miller

The present excerpt is taken from Henry James' famous work "Daisy Miller"; a novella that belongs to the Genteel Traditions of American Realism and published in 1878. It tells the story of the American young man Winterbourne, brought up in Europe, who is interested in the innocent, pretty, flirtatious and mysterious Daisy Miller. They met in Switzerland where he first became into her and attracted by her beauty and charming personage, but still confused whether she is innocent or not, interested in him or not, and in love we the handsome Italian Giovanelli or not. Winterbourne is still standing by her side, advising her, and showing a great sense of importance towards her, but she doesn't ever care and she is always trying to break the norms until she got died of the "Roman fever" as a result of her carelessness and audacity. The present passage is about the meeting at the Colosseum, where Daisy was sitting there alone with Giovanelli and Winterbourne beheld them, went towards them, and advised them to leave the place as soon as possible because of its dangerous atmosphere.

It was winter, the events in this passage took place in Rome, at the Colosseum; the place that impressed Miss Daisy and made her so excited to visit it by moonlight. In ancient Rome, the Colosseum represented horror for Early Christians and slaves who were sacrificed there, in addition to the countless bloody battles happening there. Symbolically, the Colosseum represents death and sacrificed innocence in Daisy Miller; it was the place where Daisy, the sacrificial victim, got the Malaria that brought her to death. Furthermore, the author used the word "Daisy" as an additional name to Miss Annie Miller; her real name, to show us how similar is the case of Daisy Miller to the Daisy flower that blossoms in summer and dies or becomes dormant in winter, and thus winter symbolizes also death in this novella (winter usually symbolizes hard times).

Winterbourne, being the central consciousness, is the major (round) character and the protagonist in this excerpt and the whole novella as well. As he used always to advise Daisy, give her too much importance, and love her; he this time felt like she is never going to care neither about him nor about his cautions. But even with that, he keeps giving her importance and advising her about the danger she is in. As usual, she answered like nothing is going to happen. Daisy Miller is another major (round) character, used to exemplify the American girls and the cultural differences between the new American culture and the old European one. Daisy with complete innocence was like a stranger in a strange land; she is very common and uncultivated in the eyes of the Europeans, but she has not ever cared, she was behaving spontaneously and carelessly as it can be clearly noticed in this excerpt when Mr. Winterbourne was trying to convince her that what she is doing is improper and dangerous for her but she answered as follows: "I don't look like much, but I'm healthy! I was bound to see the Colosseum by moonlight; I shouldn't have wanted to go home without that; and we have had the most beautiful time, haven't we, Mr. Giovanelli? If there has been any danger, Eugenio can give me some pills. He has got some splendid pills.' And this is a clear example of her audacity. The last character in this excerpt is Mr. Giovanelli (flat), the handsome Italian, the intimate friend of Daisy sometimes and with whom she is engaged other times as she was mentioning. He is polite, lovely, and elegant, but he doesn't show much interest and sense of carefulness towards Daisy though she does as it can be seen in this passage when noticing such expressions: 'for myself I am not afraid.' The events in this passage are narrated from the third unintrusive point of view.

The narrator is describing, showing, and giving a clear image about the behavior of each character in the events without being interfered or imposing his own comments and opinions; he lets the reader enjoying and impressing freely his own thoughts and reactions about the characters' doings, moves, and behaviors. The author shows a sense of sadness and disappointment about what happened to winterbourne once he saw Daisy and the handsome native together at the Colosseum by moonlight, he described him as being shocked and feeling like it is the time to wash his hands of her because she is no more worth caring about as it is shown in a positive light when he mentioned: "She was a young lady whom a gentleman need no longer be at pains to respect." He reflected also with some anger concerning Daisy's behaviors and audacious answers such as when she said: "All the evening', "I never was sick, and I don't mean to be!" It is noticed a mysterious atmosphere and confusion in this passage though there was some humor when Daisy and Giovanelli were talking about Winterbourne's way of looking at them.

The major themes shown in the present excerpt are innocence, audacity, and injustice. On one hand, the innocent Daisy represents the sacrificial victim, though she seems careless and answering Winterbourne with audaciousness but this does not mean she is bad; she had a big interest to see the Colosseum by moonlight with Giovanelli and she felt comfortable when getting her desire, she likes to enjoy the moments she lives and experiencing the ways of life she wants. Daisy has not been brought up in a family that might teach her how to be cautious and aware of life's dangers as well as to take advises into consideration but rather she mirrored her life style and the Miller's way of living and thinking. She spontaneously doesn't care about neither the European severe cultural rules nor her friends' advises. On the other hand, Winterbourne did her injustice when he thought he should never care about her anymore because he felt she is never going to learn from his advises and to appreciate his love and interest in her but still confused, and this leads to the idea that the conflict is indeed between Winterbourne (protagonist) and his confusion (antagonist) about Daisy Miller's real personality (is she innocent or not??).

In order to take the readers into a journey through the story's events, the author uses several figures of speech. In such expression: "he looks at us as one of the old lions or tigers may have looked at the Christian martyrs!" there are two similes; the first one is when he compares Winterbourne to lions and tigers (used in ancient times to attack and kill the Christian martyrs) in terms of his way of looking at them with anger and disappointment as if he is hungry as those animals and wants to attack them, the second one is comparing Daisy and Giovanelli to the Christian martyrs as if they are the victims and preys of Winterbourne. The author also uses a personification when he says: "…and how smartly she played at injured innocence!" here he personifies innocence which cannot literary be injured, but the author wanted to illuminate the idea that when Daisy saw winterbourne she acted like scary and fearful when she said: "he saw me, and he cuts me!" In addition, there is a clear use of a metaphor in the following expression: "…in this nest of Malaria." He compares the Colosseum (tenor), the place of the Roman fever, with a nest (vehicle) of Malaria. Because of the huge number of dangerous mosquitoes, he compared that place to a nest. Finally, the author added some references such as: The Colosseum. The writing style is characterized by the use of a formal language and the inclusion of some foreign words such as: Perniciosa in Spanish language.

In conclusion, through Daisy Miller's story, we are able to realize that realism did not really mirror real life that is what people really wanted not what society wanted from people, but rather reflected the voice of the main stream culture that is the western culture. Henry James is one of

the major writers that criticized this latter. Culture was like a set of rules have been decided by a number of people and everyone should submit to theme where freedom was limited, exactly what happened to Daisy, though she seemed uncultivated, but the author gave us a key aspect that he did not accept European severe cultural rules through daisy’s character, who indeed was not at all following and respecting the norms so that she got rejected by society and the present excerpt represents the way she got her punishment. So, we can say that the passage given represents the climax of the novella where complications and conflicts reached their top.