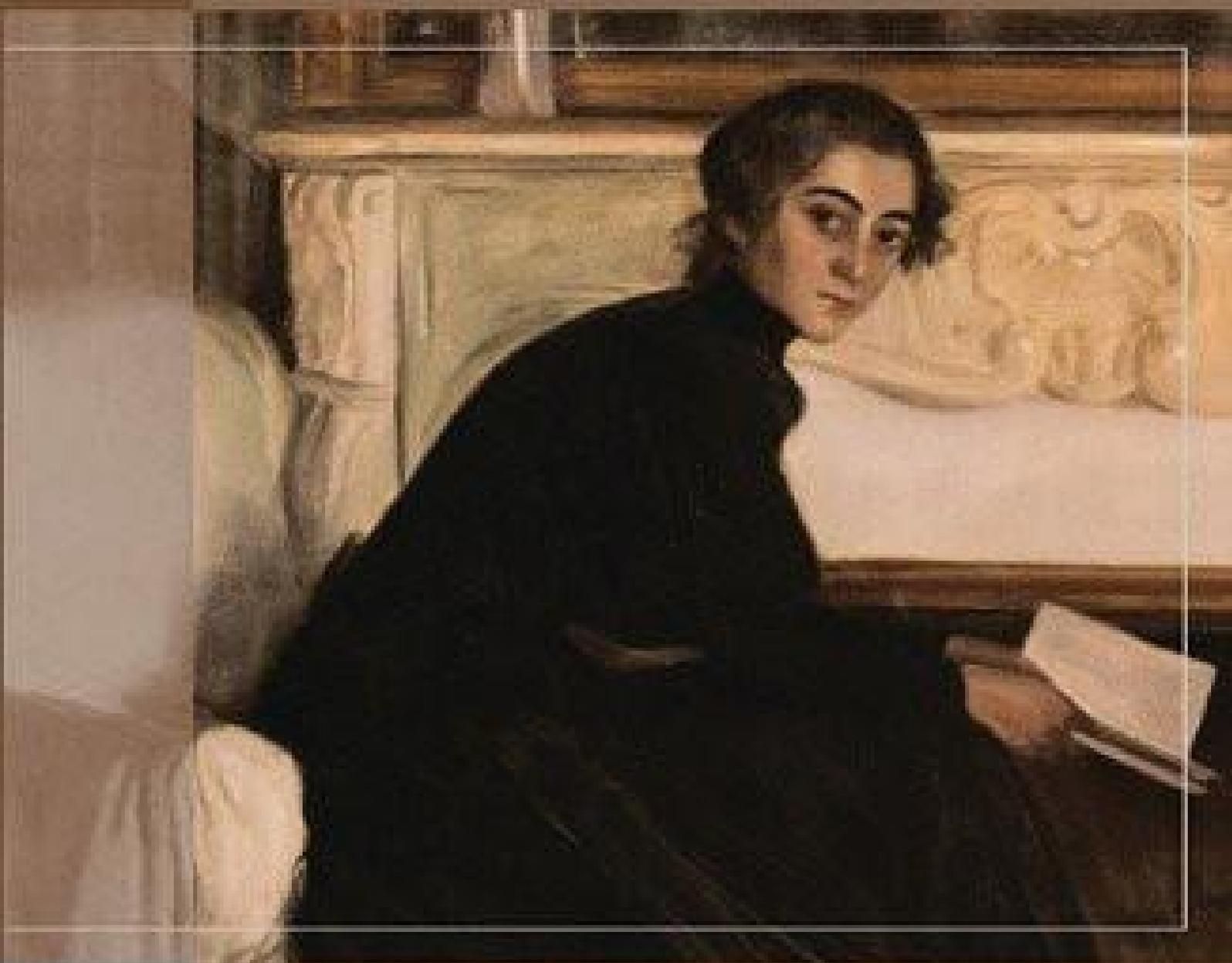


DAISY MILLER *and*  
WASHINGTON SQUARE

Henry James



  
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Introduction and Notes by Jennie A. Kassanoff



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## FROM THE PAGES OF DAISY MILLER AND WASHINGTON SQUARE

Some people had told him that, after all, American girls were exceedingly innocent; and others had told him that, after all, they were not. He was inclined to think Miss Daisy Miller was a flirt—a pretty American flirt. (from *Daisy Miller*, page 14)

“I like a lady to be exclusive; I’m dying to be exclusive myself.”

(from *Daisy Miller*, page 21 )

“Whether or no being hopelessly vulgar is being ‘bad’ is a question for the metaphysicians. They are bad enough to dislike, at any rate; and for this short life that is quite enough.”

(from *Daisy Miller*, page 33)

They desired to express to observant Europeans the great truth that, though Daisy Miller was a young American lady, her behaviour was not representative—was regarded by her compatriots as abnormal.

(from *Daisy Miller*, page 54)

“She sent me a message before her death which I didn’t understand at the time. But I have understood it since. She would have appreciated one’s esteem.” (from *Daisy Miller*, page 62)

The ideal of quiet and of genteel retirement, in 1835, was found in Washington Square, where the doctor built himself a handsome, modern, wide-fronted house, with a big balcony before the drawing-room windows, and a flight of white marble steps ascending to a portal which was also faced with white marble.

(from *Washington Square*, page 76)

There were portions left over, light remnants and snippets of irony, which she never knew what to do with, which seemed too delicate for her own use; and yet Catherine, lamenting the limitations of her understanding, felt that they were too valuable to

waste, and had a belief that if they passed over her head they yet contributed to the general sum of human wisdom.

(from *Washington Square*, page 83)

“She would be enchanted to be able to prove to herself that she is persecuted.” (from *Washington Square*, page 101 )

“There is something I should greatly like—as a moral satisfaction. I should like to hear you say—‘He is abominably selfish!’”

(from *Washington Square*, page 133)

“If you see him, you will be an ungrateful, cruel child; you will have given your old father the greatest pain of his life.”

(from *Washington Square*, page 153)

“If he marries her, and she comes into Austin’s money, they may get on. He will be an idle, amiable, selfish, and doubtless tolerably good-natured fellow. But if she doesn’t get the money and he finds himself tied to her, Heaven have mercy on her! He will have none. He will hate her for his disappointment, and take his revenge; he will be pitiless and cruel.” (from *Washington Square*, page 177)

“When persons are going to be married, they oughtn’t to think so much about business.” (from *Washington Square*, page 204)

Catherine, meanwhile, in the parlour, picking up her morsel of fancy-work, had seated herself with it again-for life, as it were.

(from *Washington Square*, page 240)



DAISY MILLER  
*and*  
WASHINGTON SQUARE

*Henry James*

*With an Introduction*

*by Jennie A. Kassanoff*

George Stade  
Consulting Editorial Director



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Introduction, Notes, and For Further Reading

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## HENRY JAMES

The writer Henry James was born into a wealthy family in New York City in 1843. His father, Henry, Sr., was a religious freethinker and follower of the philosopher Swedenborg, and associated with many of the literary men of his day, including Nathaniel Hawthorne and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Young Henry was educated privately in New York, Geneva, Paris, and London; the family lived alternately in Europe and the United States for much of his childhood.

He began his literary career writing for magazines. Having dropped out of Harvard Law School to pursue writing, he associated with the literary set in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and was a good friend of budding novelist and critic William Dean Howells. In 1864 James's first published piece of fiction, the story "A Tragedy of Error," appeared in the *Continental Monthly*. He also wrote reviews and articles for the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Nation*. He frequently traveled to Europe and in 1876 settled permanently in London.

James is often cited as one of literature's great stylists; it has been said that his writing surrounds a subject and illuminates it with a flickering light, rather than pinning it down; according to Virginia Woolf in her diaries, he spoke in the same way. His style became more and more indirect as he moved from his early period, when he produced novels that considered the differences between American and European culture and character—*Roderick Hudson* (1876), *The American* (1877), *The Europeans* (1878), *Daisy Miller* (1879), *Washington Square* (1881), and *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881)—to his middle period, when he wrote two novels about social reformers and revolutionaries, *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima*, both in 1886, as well as the novellas *The Aspern Papers* (1888) and *The Turn of the Screw* (1898).

In 1898 James retreated to Lamb House, a mansion he had purchased in Rye, England. There he produced the great works of his final period, in which in complex prose he subtly portrayed his characters' inner lives: *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904). He returned to the United States for the last time to supervise production of a twenty-six-volume edition of his most important fictional works that was published between 1907 and 1917. *The American Scene* (1907), an account of his last journey to America, is highly critical of his native land. He became a British citizen in 1915. Shortly after receiving the Order of Merit, Henry James died, on February 28, 1916, leaving behind a prodigious body of work: twenty novels, 112 stories, and twelve plays, as well as voluminous travel writing and literary journalism and criticism.

**THE WORLD OF HENRY JAMES AND DAISY MILLER AND  
WASHINGTON SQUARE**

- 1789 William James, Henry's grandfather, emigrates to the United States from Ireland.
- 1811 Henry James, Sr., the author's father, is born.
- 1826 Washington Square is dedicated as a public place and military parade ground. Originally a marsh, then a graveyard, it served as a spot for duels and executions prior to this transformation.
- 1828 Construction begins on the first house on the north side of Washington Square; over the next thirty years Washington Square North will become the most expensive and fashionable street bordering Washington Square.
- 1832 William James dies, leaving a \$3 million estate to his twelve children.
- 1835 Henry James's maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Walsh, moves into a townhouse at 18 Washington Square North (now part of 2 Fifth Avenue), occupying it until 1847. James visits her often as an infant and toddler.
- 1836 Ralph Waldo Emerson publishes his essay "Nature," setting forth the main principles of Transcendentalism.
- 1837 William Dean Howells is born; he will be James's colleague, an important editor, and a founder of American "realism."
- 1842 Henry's brother William is born.
- 1843 On April 15, Henry James, Jr., is born at 21 Washington Place, in New York City, around the corner from his grandmother. In October the James family relocates to Europe.
- 1844 The family returns to New York City.
- 1849 Henry, Sr.'s social circle comprises philosophers and writers, including Nathaniel Hawthorne and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Henry, Jr., is educated privately in the United States and Europe. His exposure to the Old World during his formative years establishes in him a lifelong preference for Europe over America.
- 1853 The New York City Commission pays \$5,000,000 for land that will become Central Park, a vast public recreation space in the European style. The first

portion of the park will open in 1858; it will be complete some sixteen years hence.

- 1857 *The Atlantic Monthly* is founded by Moses Dresser Phillips and Francis H. Underwood. Early contributors include Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell (the magazine's first editor), and Oliver Wendell Holmes. In coming years James will be a frequent contributor.
- 1859 In October Henry, Sr., takes his family to Geneva.
- 1860 The family returns to America in September and settles in Newport, Rhode Island.
- 1861 The American Civil War begins.
- 1862 James enrolls at Harvard Law School but drops out after a year to pursue a writing career. He becomes friendly with William Dean Howells.
- 1864 In February James publishes his first piece of fiction, the story "A Tragedy of Error," in the *Continental Monthly*. Nathaniel Hawthorne dies.
- 1865 James begins to write reviews for the *Nation*, a new liberal weekly. The American Civil War ends.
- 1866 The first permanent transatlantic telegraph cable links Europe and America, vastly increasing the speed of information transmission.
- 1869 In England James meets George Eliot and writes reviews of her works, including *Romola*, *Middlemarch*, and *Daniel Deronda*, which are published in the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Galaxy*, a literary journal. Mark Twain publishes the best-selling travel book *The Innocents Abroad*, based on letters he had written while journeying by steamship to Europe and the Holy Land; it treats hallowed Old World landmarks with irreverence and parodies the manners and mores of Europeans and Americans.
- 1870 James's cousin Mary ("Minnie") Temple dies in March, and the author, devastated, moves back to New York. His social opportunities are abundant; he spends time at Emerson's house in Concord, Massachusetts, and meets Henry Adams, who has just been appointed editor of the *North American Review*. The Metropolitan Museum opens in New York City.
- 1871 James publishes his first novel, *Watch and Ward*, in installments in the *Atlantic*; it introduces what will be a prominent Jamesian theme: the development of a young girl into womanhood.

- 1872 Assigned to write a travel series for the *Nation*, James sails to Liverpool and spends time in Europe. Susan B. Anthony casts a vote in the presidential election in Rochester, New York, and is arrested.
- 1873 Financial panic grips New York with the failure of Jay Cooke and Company, the nation's preeminent investment bank. After a ten-year economic boom, the United States enters its worst depression to date, although New York continues its prodigious growth.
- 1875 James publishes in the *Atlantic Monthly* the novel *Roderick Hudson*, about an American sculptor in Rome and his struggle to reconcile art and passion. During his early period (also called his international period), he compares the people and cultures of the United States and Europe, focusing especially on the differences. While living in Paris, James associates with the writers Gustave Flaubert and Emile Zola, as well as Russian expatriate authors, including the novelist Ivan Turgenev. He works on his novel *The American*, about a self-made American millionaire who tries to marry the daughter of French aristocrats.
- 1876 *Roderick Hudson* is published in book form. Impatient with America's foreign policy and disaffected with the United States in general, James joins other expatriates in London and settles permanently there. Throughout the rest of the 1870s, he associates with many leading English writers and thinkers and becomes an important presence on the Anglo American literary scene.
- 1877 *The American* is published in book form. James is friendly with Alfred Tennyson, William Gladstone, and Robert Browning. While in Rome, James hears about an American "child of nature and of freedom" who consorted with a "good-looking Roman, of vague identity." James is immediately inspired to turn this story into a novel, *Daisy Miller*.
- 1878 James publishes the short novel *The Europeans*. The Macmillan Publishing Company of London asks him to write a biography of either Washington Irving or Nathaniel Hawthorne.
- 1879 James publishes *Daisy Miller*, about a young American woman in Rome, in book form. He signs a contract for the British copyright on *Hawthorne*, which is published in the English Men of Letters series in London.
- 1880 The focus of James's writing shifts to social and psychological drama.
- 1881 *Washington Square* is serialized in *Cornhill Magazine* and *Harper's* (1880) and released in book form (1881); the novel concerns a young American woman whose father rejects the man she wants to marry. *The Portrait of a Lady* is serialized in Macmillan's *Magazine* and the

Atlantic Monthly ( 1880-1881 ), and in book form (1881); this brilliant novel depicts a young American woman who out of a kind of generosity marries the wrong man. James vows “never again to return” to New York, in a fit of disdain over the way the city’s “oppressive” economic growth has lowered the quality of life.

- 1882 James travels to Washington, D.C., where he briefly meets Oscar Wilde.
- 1886 James publishes the first novels of his middle period: *The Bostonians*, the story of a struggle between a southern conservative and an embittered suffragist, and *The Princess Casamassima*, an exploration of the personal dangers involved in taking up anarchism and revolution.
- 1888 James publishes the short novel *The Aspens Papers*, about a man who woos the custodian of letters by a poet he idolizes.
- 1889 Psychologically and financially depressed by the failure of *The Bostonians*, James shifts his focus to playwriting for the next six years.
- 1890 He publishes *The Tragic Muse*, about art and theater in London and Paris. His brother William publishes his ground breaking and influential *Principles of Psychology*, in which pragmatism and “radical empiricism” are key elements.
- 1891 James’s dramatization of *The American* fares moderately well.
- 1895 James’s first dramatic work written as such, *Guy Domville*, is booed by the opening-night audience and receives mostly negative reviews, though George Bernard Shaw praises it.
- After little success with playwriting, James returns to writing fiction. The United States increases its involvement in a conflict between Spain and Cuba, which wants independence from Spanish rule. James opposes this involvement, calling it “none of our business.”
- 1897 He publishes *What Maisie Knew*, the story of a preadolescent girl who must choose between her parents and a governess.
- 1898 James publishes the ghost story *The Turn of the Screw*. He purchases Lamb House, in Rye, England, where he will write his last novels and letters. The Spanish-American War takes place.
- 1900 During the final stage of his writing career, James’s style becomes increasingly complex and convoluted. Over the next few years, he produces what are often considered his greatest works.

- 1902 He publishes *The Wings of the Dove*, about a group of people who scheme to inherit a dying woman's fortune.
- 1903 *The Ambassadors*, about an American suspicious of European ways who is won over by life in Paris, is published, as is "The Beast in the Jungle," a story of a man who believes he is intended for something remarkable. In London, James meets Edith Wharton.
- 1904 His novel of adultery *The Golden Bowl* is published. He travels to the United States to oversee the production of a revised collection of his most important works of fiction.
- 1907 James publishes *The American Scene*, his observations on what America has become. Publication of the twenty-six volumes of the revised fiction collection, *The Novels and Tales of Henry James*, begins; it will continue until 1917.
- 1908 James publishes the story "The Jolly Corner," an oblique commentary on the America he has left behind.
- 1910 In January James becomes very ill. He is nursed by his siblings Alice and William, with whom he returns to Cambridge. He visits New York, where he receives psychiatric care.
- 1911 In August he returns to England.
- 1914 James begins work on two novels, *The Ivory Tower* and *The Sense of the Past*, which he will not complete before his death.
- 1915 James's health deteriorates. He becomes a British subject.
- 1916 On New Year's Day he receives the Order of Merit. On February 28 Henry James dies. His ashes are taken to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to be buried in American soil.
- 1917 *The Ivory Tower* and *The Sense of the Past* are published in their unfinished state.

## INTRODUCTION

“It is, I think, an indisputable fact,” Henry James remarked in 1879, “that Americans are, as Americans, the most self-conscious people in the world.” This striking claim was delivered the year his first success, *Daisy Miller: A Study*, was published in book form, and a year prior to the serial publication of his quintessentially New York novel, *Washington Square* (published in book form in 1881); it highlights James’s fascination with his native land and equally reveals his own share in its self-consciousness. As James remarked in *Hawthorne* (1879), his extended study of the writer, the “experimental element” had not “as yet entirely dropped out of the great political undertaking” of the United States, and as a result, Americans were singularly “conscious of being the youngest of the great nations, of not being of the European family.” Like adolescents exiled to the children’s table at some big family celebration, Americans felt themselves the victims of an international “conspiracy to undervalue them.” As James noted, they had been “placed on the circumference of the circle of civilization rather than at the centre,” a geometric and constellational vantage point that offered few consolations. In orbit around the cultures of Britain and France, America was troubled by a lurking “sense of relativity.” While Europe’s ancient monarchies luxuriated in a “quiet and comfortable sense of the absolute, as regards [their] own position[s] in the world,” the United States was forced to renegotiate its national contract with every election, submitting to vote decisions that, in Europe, were the divine right of kings.

Like many of his contemporaries, James saw democracy as an ongoing challenge not only to traditional politics and aesthetics, but equally to America’s national identity. In the decade following the Civil War, as the country’s centennial loomed on the horizon, Americans found themselves deliberating anew on the core possibilities of democracy. As James himself admitted in *Hawthorne*, the postwar world was “a more complicated place than it had hitherto seemed, the future more treacherous, success more difficult.” Within this increasingly pluralist context, democracy seemed less an abstract aspiration than a hardscrabble process. As Dana D. Nelson has observed, citizens had to “develop their social and political subjectivities in relation to multiple, local, and nonidealized relationships with others,” rather than in accordance with a single, stylized, aristocratic model (“Representative/Democracy,” p. 220; see “For Further Reading”). In coming to terms with the postwar period’s unwieldy new “sense of proportion and relation,” James found himself faced with two competing models of democratic practice: an “abstract universality” associated with antebellum democracy, and the “embodied particularity” of direct, postwar political engagement (Berlant, “Uncle Sam Needs a Wife,” p. 144). Drawing on the curiously relevant debates circulating around late-nineteenth-century mathematics, James offered a critique of America’s “great political undertaking” in both *Daisy Miller: A Study* and *Washington Square*.

James described *Daisy Miller* as the “little tragedy ... of a light, thin, natural, unsuspecting creature being sacrificed as it were to a social rumpus that went on quite over her head and to which she stood *in no measurable relation*” (quoted in Edel, *The*

*Life of Henry James*, p. 520; emphasis added). The story is indeed a meditation on measurability. When the American expatriate Frederick Winterbourne first encounters the “strikingly, admirably pretty” Daisy Miller, he straightaway sets out to quantify and categorize her. From the outset, she is not singular, but plural—an aggregated type rather than a distinctive individual: “How pretty they are!” he thinks (p. 8). In his quest for “the formula that applied to Miss Daisy Miller” (p. 14), Winterbourne is not alone. The majority of his American colony similarly seeks to account for Daisy’s particularity in mathematically generic terms. Like Mrs. Walker, the American hostess who collects “specimens of her diversely-born fellow-mortals to serve, as it were, as text-books” (p. 46), and Mrs. Costello, who can barely distinguish Miss Miller from her nearly identical cohorts (“that young lady’s—Miss Baker’s, Miss Chandler’s—what’s her name?” [p. 51]), so Winterbourne himself struggles to identify “how far [Daisy’s] eccentricities were generic, national, and how far they were personal” (p. 55). “Were they all like that, the pretty girls who had a good deal of gentlemen’s society?” (p. 14). When the members of his expatriate circle in Rome accuse “poor little” Miss Miller of “going really ‘too far,’” Winterbourne’s regret takes a predictably fixed form: “It was painful to hear so much that was pretty and undefended and natural assigned to a vulgar place among the categories of disorder” (p. 53). Like his itemizing compatriots, Winterbourne cannot imagine disorder beyond its paradoxical categorization.

Winterbourne judges Daisy according to a set of conventional norms rather than a cluster of metaphysical truths. For all his inner debates, he ultimately agrees with the verdict of those who “intimated that they desired to express to observant Europeans the great truth that, though Miss Daisy Miller was a young American lady, her behaviour was not representative—was regarded by her compatriots as abnormal” (p. 54). In the normative world of *Daisy Miller*, there can be no decree more damning. Daisy’s behavior is not so much wicked as it is atypical. As Winterbourne’s aunt Mrs. Costello blandly observes, “Whether or no being hopelessly vulgar is being ‘bad’ is a question for the metaphysicians. They are bad enough to dislike, at any rate; and for this short life that is quite enough” (p. 33).

Like Winterbourne and his cohort of reproving Americans, early critics of *Daisy Miller* took pains to classify and typologize James’s heroine. The *Nation*, marveling that “no American book of its size has been so much read and so much discussed,” saw the story as a cautionary tale. “It is a perfect study of a type not, alas! uncommon.” Daisy was the garish American tourist par excellence. The journal could only hope that *Daisy Miller* would find its way aboard “all the ocean steamers” that set sail across the Atlantic, and thereby “be so presented to the ‘moral consciousness’ of the American people that they, being quickwitted, may see themselves here truthfully portrayed, and may say, ‘Not so, but otherwise will we be’” (*James’s “Daisy Miller,”* p. 106). The critic for the *North American Review*, Richard Grant White, agreed that “in *Daisy Miller* Mr. James has undertaken to give a characteristic portrait of a certain sort of American young woman, who is unfortunately too common.” The text, he hoped, would have a “corrective effect” on American travelers: “It is perhaps well that [James] has made this study, ... which should show European critics of American manners and customs the light in which the Daisy Millers are regarded by Americans

themselves” (James’s “*Daisy Miller*,” p. 107).

Other readers, however, were not so sanguine. Daisy Miller was “an outrage on American girlhood,” they declared (James, *Daisy Miller; Pandora; The Patagonia; and Other Tales*, p. v). Indeed, her story was so scandalous as to cast doubt on James’s patriotism. The *New York Times*, for one, took this charge seriously enough to mount a spirited rebuttal. Mr. James, the *Times* insisted, was obviously “possessed by a sincere patriotism”: Only someone truly committed to his country could “[consecrate] his talents to the enlightening of his countrywomen in the view which cynical Europe takes of the performance of the American girl abroad” (James’s “*Daisy Miller*,” p. 103).

For his own part, James grew weary of the debate and eventually tried to put the matter to rest. In the twenty-four-volume *New York Edition* (1909), he summarily dropped the story’s subtitle, “A Study,” and insisted that the tale had neither prescriptive nor descriptive designs on American womanhood. “My little exhibition is made to no degree whatever in critical but, quite inordinately and extravagantly, in poetical terms,” James explained (*Daisy Miller*, p. vi). His readers were not to confuse art with life: “My supposedly typical little figure was of course pure poetry, and had never been anything else” (p. viii). This effort to contain Daisy’s multiple meanings, however, seems nothing if not a self-conscious parody of Winterbourne’s own effete aestheticism. As Winterbourne strolls into the malarial Roman arena, blithely quoting Byron, he belatedly recalls that “if nocturnal meditations in the Colosseum are recommended by the poets, they are deprecated by the doctors” (p. 57). As a fictional character himself, Winterbourne’s insistence on the difference between art (the poets) and life (the doctors) is an awkward one. An aesthetic taxonomist of the worst kind, his empirical observations are too little and too late.

In probing such distinctions between art and life, and the generic and the specific, *Daisy Miller* exposes the tension between what Russ Castronovo has called the conservative “true democrat” and the more revolutionary “radical democrat.” According to Castronovo, the true democrat is the citizen who imagines freedom as a freedom from society. His activist counterpart, the radical democrat, however, sees freedom as the “freedom to participate in the daily forms and activities that constitute community” (*Necro Citizenship*, p. 142). Winterbourne is, in this respect, the cautious “true democrat.” Because he worships conformity, stasis, and polite restraint, he relies on the bland certitude of standard categories. Faced with Daisy’s “extraordinary mixture of innocence and crudity,” Winterbourne can only accuse her of “a want of finish” (p. 10). Displaying the true democrat’s antipathy toward inconclusiveness and disorder, he rejects her unfinished appearance—an appearance that threatens democratic consensus and closure (see Nelson, p. 240).

Unlike Winterbourne, who begins and concludes *Daisy Miller* in the same place—“‘studying’ hard” in Geneva and rumored to be “much interested in a very clever foreign lady” (p. 62)—Daisy herself charts a dynamic path through the text. Resisting the docent culture of museums where “dreadful old men ... explain about the pictures and things” (p. 38), she insists instead upon unscripted, unmediated encounters with the real. She rejects tour guides of all sorts, balking at the repeated interference of the