THE CULT OF THE NEW WOMAN REFLECTED
IN HENRY JAMES’S DAISY MILLER

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Abstract

This paper undertakes to explore the manifestation of the new feminist ideal in British society towards the end of the nineteenth century, the New Woman, in Henry James’s novella Daisy Miller. The aim of this study is to ascertain that the author faithfully reflects some of the current social circumstances with reference to women’s rights and their position in British, as well as other European societies. Thus, it is expected to contribute to our realistic understanding of gender roles in the late nineteenth century, which can later be used for picturing the historical dimension of women’s discrimination. As far as literary contribution is concerned, this study is expected to contribute to the overall theoretical and critical analysis of the novella in question. The main research methods employed in this paper are textual analysis and compilation. A couple of literary concepts and theories interpreted from a feminist perspective are used as main methodological tools for conducting the analysis of the novella. Among them are: the angel in the house, the theory of the abject, the theory of marginalization, and androcentrism.

Key words: New Woman, nineteenth century, feminism, Victorian society

INTRODUCTION

The end of the nineteenth century in Great Britain announced the end of the Victorian Period and witnessed radical changes in almost all human spheres.

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The emergence of new theories and questioning of traditional values brought about political, scientific and artistic revolution. However, of all the changes that define this era, many have agreed that the most radical and far-reaching one was the change in women’s role in society along with the possibilities that opened for her in a male-dominated world. The stereotype of the quiet and submissive Victorian woman was gradually becoming unacceptable and intolerable. A growing number of educated women were slowly beginning to express their alternative views of education, marriage, and politics, thus laying down the foundations of the feminist movement, which inspired a series of positive changes in women’s position. In the first place, the feminist activities and endeavours resulted in a considerable advancement of women’s legal rights. In addition, many new education and career opportunities for women were beginning to reduce the significance attributed to marriage as the only way for women to achieve financial stability and self-realization. In short, the 1880s and 1890s witnessed general instability of traditional gender roles, which greatly challenged the established norms. The figure of the New Woman as a new cultural icon is, in fact, the major product of this gender anarchy that characterizes the end of the nineteenth century.

Independent, free-spirited, educated and uninterested in marriage and children, the figure of the New Woman threatened the conventional ideals of the Victorian woman and exerted a powerful influence upon feminism in the twentieth century. The term itself was first used by Sarah Grand in her article “The New Aspect of the Woman Question”, published in March, 1894. Ever since its conception, this term has been used to denote the women who exert full control over their own lives regardless if it is the social, economic, or personal sphere of their life in question. Although the New Woman in reality was becoming a more active participant in the social processes and labour force, in literature she was usually presented as gaining autonomy solely in her private life. The New Woman could not possibly be strictly defined as a category since she assumes a multiple identity. In other words, there are numerous variations of this phenomenon. Therefore, in given cases she can be identified as a representative of the feminist movement, i.e. a fervent social activist who opposes the established norms. In other cases, she can be recognized as a popular novelist, poetess, or playwright writing in favour of the advancement of women’s rights. Furthermore, she can sometimes be identified as a sexually liberated woman entirely freed of the Victorian moral shackles. Even authors who portrayed her in their fiction did not manage to agree on a universal and
generally accepted definition of this phenomenon. However, what all literary versions of the New Woman have in common is that they reject the gender stereotypes and question the conventionality which had previously defined women.

Henry James adopts the term “New Woman” from his British contemporaries and celebrates her cult in his fiction. Daisy Miller from the eponymous novella and Isabel Archer from *The Portrait of a Lady* are only part of the examples that confirm James’s fascination with this phenomenon. Through James’s perspective, the figure of the New Woman can be recognized among the educated, independent and wealthy American girls whose financial situation allows them to visit Europe, most often Great Britain, where they freely display their intellect and independence. However, James also depicts the strong influence that the British societal norms exert upon the conduct of his unconventional heroines. Apart from presenting the influence of the new culture upon their original system of values, he also draws a parallel between both societies in terms of women’s position. The analysis of Daisy Miller as a New Woman begins with questioning her naivety, a characteristic that the chauvinistic Winterbourne continually ascribes to her, thus applying the concept of androcentrism. The continuation of the analysis looks into Daisy’s unconventional rebelliousness, thus employing the abject as a methodological tool. The discussion of her aversion towards the socially prescribed rules of femininity is followed by the discussion of the patriarchal behaviour exhibited by two other female characters in the novel, who judge her even more harshly than men themselves. Finally, the attention is directed at the tragic end of the novella, which speaks of the punishment her disobedience begets, thus ascertaining her marginalization.

**METHODOLOGY**

The two main research methods used for carrying out this research are textual analysis and compilation. As for methodological tools, this research paper applies several literary concepts and theories interpreted through the prism of feminist literary criticism. Among them are the theory of the abject, the theory of marginalization, the Victorian concept of “the angel in the house”, and the concept of androcentrism.

The Victorian concept of “the angel in the house” originates from the eponymous poem written by Coventry Patmore in 1854. In this work, the author
powerfully depicts the role of the woman in the Victorian Period and the behaviour that was expected of her, highlighting the virtues that the Victorian society ascribed to the ideal woman. She needs to be a meek and submissive wife who glorifies her husband, as well as a caring mother who entirely devotes herself to her children. The public sphere is not considered as suitable for the angel woman, so she persists solely in the sphere of domesticity. This paper analyses the ways in which Daisy undermines this ideal on account of adopting the new feminist ideal at the turn of the century, the ideal of the New Woman.

The abject as a term was first introduced by Julia Kristeva in context of psychoanalysis, signifying that which refuses to be demystified, clarified, and classified, as well as that which breaks the established rules and thus causes violation of the order. In context of feminist literary criticism, critics deal with the ways in which femininity is perceived as the abject, causing fear and repulsiveness. In other words, feminist criticism studies the representation of the woman as the abject, or the negative referent set against the man as the norm (Koshka Hot, Srbinsvka, Bojadzievska, 2010:11/12). The application of the abject in this literary analysis is closely associated to the unconventional behaviour of the heroine, particularly her refusal to accept the socially imposed identity and fit into the rigorous patriarchal society.

The concept of marginalization is related to the discrimination of certain groups of people considered to be inferior and subjugated compared to other groups, who established their superiority upon various premises. Feminist literary criticism brings gender marginalization into focus, whereby the man occupies the central position in society and the woman is pushed to the margins of that society. According to the feminist literary theory, the female character is able to leave the margins and start moving towards the center, where the male character is normally placed, attempting to decentralize him. However, upon the mere arrival at the central position, the woman becomes a dead center, which goes on to confirm that every attempt on her part to abandon her secondary position in society is to be punished (Koshka Hot, Srbinsvka, Bojadzievska, 2010:6). Despite her progressiveness and demonstrated independence, Daisy is still destined to an unfortunate end. In other words, society forces her back to the margins despite her attempts to leave that position.

The concept of androcentrism is related to favouring the male perspective and placing it at the center of one society or culture. The term was introduced by Charlotte Perkins Gilman as an analytical concept in the scientific debate. According to androcentrism, the man is considered as “the norm”,

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whereas the woman as “the Other”. In other words, the male mindset and masculinity in general are regarded as universal, whereas femininity as deviant. An androcentric society is one where everything revolves around men. This paper employs the concept of androcentrism in order to emphasize the hardships that the unconventional heroine is continually facing by living in a highly patriarchal society, which strictly abides by the norms established by men.

**QUESTIONING DAISY’S NAIVETY – ANDROCENTRISM**

The story of Daisy Miller is narrated through Winterbourne’s perspective, who, although does not coincide with the narrator, provides the reader with significant information about the heroine through his observations and interpretations of the young American girl’s behaviour. On her part, Daisy does not grant readers the privilege to peek into her thoughts and inner dialogues in relation to her unconventional, even scandalous behaviour. Daisy is a mysterious text who Winterbourne, just like readers themselves, continually try to decipher and demystify. However, what the reader can clearly ascertain is the fact that far from being a helpless female gothic character, Daisy is a fervent and independent freedom lover.

At the opening of the novella, even before the reader comes to know Daisy, James highlights the differences between the American and European societies via the description of the atmosphere in Vevey in June. It is that time of the year when this Swiss town is regularly visited by American tourists. While the Americans are pictured as noisy and carefree, the Europeans are formal, reserved, and disciplined. In parallel with this wider representation of cultural disparities, in Winterbourne’s small world Daisy’s striving for independence and freedom seems incomprehensible as he himself lost his American ideals long time ago on account of accepting the European ones: “He felt that he had lived at Geneva so long that he had lost a good deal; he had become dishabituated to the American tone.” (James, 1994:14) His character is a truthful reflection of his cultural confusion; he is neither an American nor a European, since he gradually abandoned the American values, similar to the American ladies in Europe who use chariots and luxurious wagons for transport, which symbolize their limited freedom of movement. Soon after he meets Daisy, Winterbourne launches into search for reasonable explanation of Daisy’s conduct and her refusal to integrate the local rules. The reader discovers through Winterbourne's perspective that
Daisy is naive, inexperienced, unprotected and "completely uneducated". However, the reader can not readily and indisputably accept his opinions and conclusions. In the first place, one should take into consideration the fact that Winterbourne is a representative of a patriarchal culture and hence it is probable that he deeply desires Daisy's need for his direction and protection. Therefore, he convinces himself that Daisy is "the unprotected daughter of Mrs Miller" who needs to be protected and instructed. Confident that Daisy's moral shortcomings are simply the result of her ignorance in European norms instead of her conscious denial, Winterbourne voluntarily assumes the responsibility to become her moral guide and teacher. According to Lynn Wardley and his article "Reassembling Daisy Miller," which dwells on the analogy between Daisy and the New Woman, "Winterbourne was delighted that Daisy came to Europe, that is, to him, as if coming to finish school" (Wardley, 1991). Much to his surprise, however, Daisy in many situations does not blend in the image of a naïve and unguided tourist that he creates of her. For example, upon his arrival in Rome and facing the real Daisy Miller, who consciously and freely enjoys the company of Italian gentlemen, the narrator reveals:

He had perhaps not definitely flattered himself that he had made an ineffaceable impression upon her heart, but he was annoyed at hearing of a state of affairs so little in harmony with an image that had lately flitted in and out of his own meditations; the image of a very pretty girl looking out of an old Roman window and asking herself urgently when Mr. Winterbourne would arrive. (James, 1994:31)

At times, therefore, Winterbourne wonders if the young beautiful American girl is genuinely naïve and uninformed of the European code for unmarried girls, as he himself wants to believe, or deliberately decides to defy the social rules:

Was she simply a pretty girl from New York State – were they all like that, the pretty girls who had a good deal of gentlemen’s society? Or was she also a designig, an audicious, an unscrupulous young person? Miss Daisy Miller looked extremely innocent. 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. He had never, as yet, had any relations with young ladies of this category. (James, 1994:15)
When he warns her about the obscenity of her public appearance with Giovanelli, she fervently opposes him, emphasizing that she is supposed to decide for herself and her conduct. Daisy is offended by the dominant attitude Winterburn demonstrates in front of her and openly exhibits her feelings. From this and similar examples in the novella, one can draw the conclusion that Daisy's reputation as a naive and uninformed girl who is unaware of her behaviour flaws should be re-examined. On the contrary, numerous examples in the novella only go to confirm that she demonstrates awareness of her actions and does not allow any other person to decide on her fate until the very end of her life. At her burial, Giovanelli eventually acknowledges: "She ... she did what she wanted" (James, 1994:56).


A large number of readers of the period when the novella first came out despised Daisy Miller's courage and unconventionality as a female character that undermines the codes of female behaviour in European societies. However, the feminist interpretation of the novella highlights Daisy as a real heroine that is part of the first generation of New Women, whose femininity does not fit into the prescribed social norms. She achieves her freedom in a world ruled by men through her disobedience and refusal to live by the norms that are continually imposed on her. As Laurie Leach points out, “Henry James’s Daisy Miller invites a discussion of sexual double standards and the harsh penalties exacted for transgressing the gender norms.” (Leach, 2003) The eponymous female character, the "young American coquette", earns scorn and condemnation by a group of Europeanized Americans for her public exposal and visiting parties with men unchaperoned. Extremely delicate to deal with business, politics or other intellectual activities, the women of the middle and upper middle class in Europe and America in the nineteenth century were focused on marriage for gaining security and social status. In Europe, unmarried women are obligatorily chaperoned in public, but, according to Leach, "only a few hundreds of families in America had accepted the European theory of the necessity of surveillance for young ladies." Daisy is not only accustomed to the American standard, but she also refuses to listen to those who force her to merge into the European moral system in order to save her reputation.
The novella abounds in examples that confirm Leach’s statement that James calls for a discussion of the double moral standards applied to gender roles. For example, while young women’s behaviour is observed under scrutiny in Geneva and Rome, men enjoy incomparably greater freedom. Hence, Daisy's public flirtation with Giovanelli, though innocent and harmless, leads to social shame, while Winterbourne's relationship with an elderly woman in Geneva is completely justified and occasionally circumvented by negligible gossip. Furthermore, Winterbourne remains on Mrs Walker's guest list and retains Mrs Costello's respect despite his association with Daisy, while both women at the same time feel the need to remove Daisy from their social circles so as to reaffirm their standards of dignity. The contrast between Daisy and the other women's characters in the novella, as well as the contrast between the degrees of freedom enjoyed by Daisy and Winterbourne, most clearly depict James's indications of social restrictions upon women and the double moral standards. Through a series of symbolic locations, starting from the Castle of Chillon to the Protestant cemetery, but also through a wide variety of characters, *Daisy Miller* investigates the options available to women in a European society at the end of the nineteenth century. Daisy's odyssey reveals to the reader the efforts of a patriarchal society to restrict women into a narrow and strictly defined sphere. However, despite all social restrictions and accusations, Daisy refuses to integrate the European norms of female behaviour.

Michel Foucault explains interpellation as a process in which we first get to know the cultural values of our society and then we integrate them, or more precisely, we attach them to our personal system of values. We are susceptible to this process from the day of our birth by taking on certain roles that society has prepared for us (Foucault, 1997). Thus, among the numerous socially created roles stands the role of the woman. Society has constructed a role of fragility and obedience, reserved for the female sex and the role of endurance and domination, reserved for the male sex. Foucault clarifies that power comes through knowledge, and men, knowing they dominate in all public spheres, have managed to create a reality that suits them and which women have begun to accept as natural law. That is mainly why most of the nineteenth-century women submissively and readily accept the imposed social role and fit into the image that men created for them, whereas the tiny percent of women who deny the social pattern that is supposed to shape their behaviour are considered "rebellious".
Daisy Miller powerfully illustrates the second type of women, those who demonstrate resentment towards the artificial social rules. The heroine of the eponymous novel is rather inclined to create her own conventions rather than become a subordinate to those dictated by society, that is, the male sex. Throughout the story, the reader continually witnesses the sight of Daisy causing social disapproval with her stubborn and unconventional conduct. In her world, patriarchal norms lose any trace of significance, and this can be easily concluded from her actions that are in stark contrast to the European concept of the ideal woman. The way in which she emancipates herself is through the continuous rejection of the norms, which everyone around her adheres to and, consequently, attempts to teach Daisy the necessity of doing so. All these attempts to correct her behaviour and direct her towards the seemingly right path prove futile since Daisy’s determination surpasses their interventions.

Winterbourne instantly realizes that Daisy substantially differs from the ladies he has come to know; he is perplexed by her loquacity as soon as they first meet. As the narrator reveals, “It was many years since he had heard a young girl talk so much. It might have been said of this unknown young lady, who had come and sat down beside him upon a bench, that she chattered.” (James, 1994: 13) This excerpt is indicative of one of the leading social norms of the late nineteenth century regarding women’s etiquette, which holds that a lady is not expected to talk much; instead, she is supposed to silently meet the criteria of decency in the masculine world. In one of the upcoming conversations with Winterborne, she declares: "I have never allowed a gentleman to dictate to me, or interfere with anything I do." (James, 1994: 37) Her actions fully confirm this statement; she freely goes on a city tour with Winterbourne even though she meets him only half an hour before that, freely meets and flirts with men on the city streets, causing scandalous gossip, and freely appears at all public events with Mr Giovanelli. Instead of adapting her behaviour to the local customs for the sake of preserving her reputation, she refuses to change it in order to satisfy society. Daisy rejects European norms of ladylike behaviour; as expressive of her freedom, we continually find her wandering about, which, according to her compatriots in Europe, is utterly obscene. Her poor reputation culminates when she is noticed with Giovanelli at the Roman Colosseum in the late evening hours.

As already pointed out, the reader forms the image of Daisy through Winterbourne’s impressions and narrations. Ever since he first meets Daisy, Winterbourne continuously attempts to classify her into an appropriate social
category, but the stereotypes he uses for her, such as "a beautiful American coquette" or "a young girl undeserving of a gentleman’s respect " always prove inadequate. Uncertain in which category Daisy belongs because "the poor Winterbourne had never yet heard a young girl express herself in such a fashion" (James, 1994: 14); he is not sure how to treat her. Daisy rejects his classification and exceeds his perceptions. As Virginia Fowler observes, women have always been categorized by men, and by the end of the nineteenth century they belong to one of the two main categories: angels or monsters (Fowler, 1984). The first category includes women who fulfill domestic obligations and submit to patriarchal demands, while the second one encompasses those who do not succumb to social pressures and continue to lead a life according to their radical views and actions. As Toril Moi further explains in her famous work "Sexual / Textual Politics", "the woman-monster is a woman who refuses to be selfless, acts on her own initiative and rejects the subordinate role that patriarchy has predetermined for her." (Moi, 2002) Similarly, the angelic category neither poses any challenge nor generates any interest for Daisy, who rather decides to die as a "monster" along with her freedom and disobedience.

James captures Daisy as a girl on the streets, unlike the traditional lady, who is expected to stay at home in the name of social decency. Louise Barnett believes that Daisy uses her body as an emblem of women's freedom, moving in places reserved for the male world and thus destabilizing the homogeneous male structure (Barnett, 2002). James himself points out that there are socially established boundaries between gender areas that women are not supposed to cross in order to avoid being labeled as "immoral". However, Daisy insists on her right to move wherever she wants, regardless of the many warnings: “If, therefore, Miss Daisy Miller exceeded the liberal license allowed to these young ladies, it was probable that anything might be expected of her” (James, 1994:20). Winterbourne is trying to correct Daisy’s behavior:

When you deal with natives you must go by the custom of the place. Flirting is a purely American custom; it doesn’t exist here. So when you show yourself in public with Mr Giovanelli, and without your mother – (James, 1994:45)

Daisy, of course, ignores his advice since to her understanding the word "society" is synonymous with socialization and communication with people, something she has become accustomed to in New York, and not the isolation and withdrawal that other characters are trying to impose on her under the mask of a decent lifestyle that suits a real lady.
Hélène Cixous draws an interesting parallel between Daisy and the mythological Medusa in her essay "The Laugh of the Medusa". Medusa, a famous figure from Greek mythology whose angry snakes possess the power to turn men into stones, is nowadays interpreted as a symbol of the monster-woman, posing a serious threat to patriarchy. Daisy's independent and non-conformist character signifies a similar threat to a society dominated by men (Cixous, 1976).

Another interesting parallel is the one drawn by the critic Ian Bell, who compares the two panoramic views that open in Vevey at the beginning of the novella with the two main representatives of the opposing values: European society and Daisy Miller. Namely, he identifies the view of natural beauty with the character of Daisy, which symbolizes liveliness and spontaneity, while the view towards the towers of the Chillon Castle metaphorically depicts the social repression that is most vigorously depicted by the other women in the novella (Bell, 1997). Following Vevey's social rigor and limitations, Daisy becomes aware of the massive disapproval of her behaviour through Mrs Walker's criticism in Rome and her insistence on closing Daisy in the chariot, and hence symbolically within the social code. However, Daisy takes up a brave position from which she refuses to retreat until the end of her life and expresses a desire to change the society rather than allow to be changed herself.

**THE PARADOX OF THE OTHER FEMALE CHARACTERS – ANDROCENTRISM**

With Winterbourne as an observer and mediator, the novella can also be considered as a series of confrontations between Daisy and women who live in accordance with the traditional gender norms. Paradoxically enough, the American expatriate women, who are equally familiar with the European and the American world, are actually those who judge Daisy most harshly, following conventional European patterns without ever questioning them. For this group of people, it is most appropriate that the American girls in Europe do not stand out with their radically different behaviour and manners, but rather blend in the local conventions. Laurie Leach points out that the American immigrants in Europe blame their compatriots who dare to challenge the established gender norms with the sole purpose of securing their own position in European society in situations where their own social reputation is threatened (Leach, 2003).
As a result of the fear of losing their social status, the Americans in Rome are making an obvious effort to prove to Europeans their disapproval of Daisy: "They ceased to invite her, and they 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." (James, 1994:49) Although people tend to think of Daisy as an unsophisticated and indecent girl, her most striking and typically American feature, which draws the contempt of her compatriots in Europe, is her plainness. Thus, Mrs Costello advises her grandson, Winterbourne: “They are very common. They are the sort of Americans that one does one’s duty by not — not accepting them.” (James, 1994:18)

In the resort of Vevey, where Daisy and Winterbourne meet for the first time, social decency is embedded in the image of Mrs Costello. Deprived of the opportunity to pursue a more constructive career in life, Mrs Costello directs her energies towards living in social exclusion and unavailability. As a victim of the strict requirements of social reputation, she adopts all the rules and at the same time presses others around her to follow them in the name of their reputation. Rigidly adhering to the strict social standards, her free will becomes extremely inflexible. For example, she decisively rejects her nephew's proposal to introduce her to Daisy because the circulating rumors about “the young American coquette” do not fit into the image of a respectable and decent lady: “I must decline the honour of her acquaintance. I am an old woman, but I am not too old – thank Heaven – to be shocked!” (James, 1994:19) After Mrs Costello's comment on his new acquaintance from America, Winterbourne “immediately perceived, from her tone, that Miss Daisy’s Miller place in the social scale was low.” (James, 1994:18)

Many critics believe that Mrs Costello's frequent headaches and health problems are, in fact, due to the great discrepancy between her potentials and her achievements in life. In her essay "Jamesian Feminism: Women in Daisy Miller," Louise Barnett states that "Mrs Costello's condition is the result of her suppressed frustrations of the impulses that have dampened her real potentials throughout life" (Barnett, 2002). Because of her social unavailability and deliberate distance from the crowd, Mrs Costello does not undertake the task of personal censorship and correction of Daisy's behavior, but rather sticks to her indirect criticism: "I really think that you had better not meddle with little American girls that are uncultivated, as you call them.” (James, 1994:19) Mrs
Costello keeps the role of an indirect critic even in Rome, where Winterbourne comes later and faces the following report from his relative:

What has she been doing? Everything that is not done here. Flirting with any man she could pick up, sitting in corners with mysterious Italians; dancing all the evening with the same partners; receiving visits at eleven o'clock at night. Her mother goes away when visitors come.

(James, 1994:41)

It is Mrs Walker who carries out the task of direct criticism in Rome. Likewise, she is unable to accept Daisy's frequent appearance in public without a proper escort considering her status of an unmarried woman. Upon Daisy's comment that she immensely enjoys the enchanting walk along the streets of Rome, Mrs Walker remarks: “It may be enchanting, dear child, but it is not the custom here” (James, 1994:39). Therefore, she orders Daisy to enter the chariot if she cares to save her reputation. This order embodies one of the leading social rules of the late nineteenth century among members of her class, which dictates that a lady simply should not be seen pointlessly wandering on the streets alone in the evening. This would mean a potentially fatal form of public display. Daisy, of course, opposes her order and refuses to enter the chariot:

Does Mr Winterbourne think that – to save my reputation – I ought to get into the carriage? I never heard anything so stiff! If this is improper, Mrs Walker, then I am all improper, and you must give me up. Goodbye; I hope you'll have a lovely ride! (James, 1994:40)

What many consider to be praiseworthy about Daisy’s character is her instinct to refuse the rules that her compatriots have integrated, thus sacrificing their American freedom for the conscious suppression of female spontaneity. Unlike Daisy, Mrs Walker, as a married and respectable woman, enjoys more freedom to move around, as the name ‘Walker’ suggests, but only if that movement is performed exclusively by chariot or other means of transport. Hence, Ian Bell concludes that "Mrs Walker's name constitutes an ironic reflection of the prison of her spirit within socially prescribed limits." However, Mrs Walker integrates the artificial norms of society for restrained female behaviour and limited female freedom to that extent that she comes to believe that nature itself imposed these differences and it would be unreasonable to resist them: "You are old enough to be more reasonable. You are old enough, dear Miss Miler, to be talked about." (James, 1994:39)
To summarize, one can draw the conclusion that the most patriarchal figures in the novella are actually women themselves, partly with the exception of Daisy's mother. The other two ladies, Mrs Walker and Mrs Costello, without hesitation or eventual repentance, join the crowd that deplores and labels Daisy as the "fallen woman" because of her alleged moral shortcomings until the end of her life.

**DISOBEEDIENCE IS TO BE PUNISHED: THE MEANING OF THE TRAGIC ENDING: MARGINALIZATION**

Daisy's death at the end of the novella creates an aura of heroism around her, simultaneously making the reader perceive her tragic end as a punishment for her adoption of male freedom and subversion of female restrictions. Instead of bending over to social expectations, she deliberately violates and rejects them. Transcending the boundaries of prescribed womanhood in order to satisfy her own desires and interests, her liberal attitude and "unruly" behaviour invalidate any chance of her redemption. In fact, at no time before her death does Daisy express any regrets or desire to become like the rest of the ladies. This is chiefly why we can rightfully claim that Daisy Miller serves as a precursor to the first generation of feminists and New Women.

It is interesting to point out that the Roman fever, which is the cause of her death, is first mentioned in the novella when Daisy insists to go alone to Pincio, regardless of the fact that this opposes the criteria for female decency. In this way, an association between social disapproval and death fever is established; if Daisy would not have decided to break the social taboo through a late night visit to the Colosseum with Giovanelli, she would not have been exposed to the danger of the Roman fever. Thus, Laurie Leach concludes that "while women who accept the imposed social role pay the price in the form of illness, ineffectiveness or hypocrisy, the woman who ignores social regulations is punished by persecution and death." (Leach, 2003). Although the other female characters in the novella support the restraining system, we recognize the chief social judge in the image of Winterbourne. He embodies the male urge to control and dominate the life of a woman. Symbolically, he is very attached to Geneva, a city that identifies itself with Calvinism and its social reflection. In a city like Geneva, getting to know young people is strictly controlled, even discouraging: "In Geneva, a young man is not expected to take the liberty to talk to a young unmarried woman, except under exceptional circumstances." (James, 1994,
p.10) Although Winterbourne himself occasionally shows awareness of Geneva's rigour and the limiting impact on his perspectives, he is far from being ready to give up the traditional values of this city.

Readers of *Daisy Miller* in the twenty-first century may not immediately understand the scandalousness of her behaviour, but they will probably realize that her death serves as a punishment and warning to all those who dare to transgress the gender norms of her time. Daisy’s story incites empathy, although she may not be entirely agreeable as a character. The novella also emphasizes that gender standards of behaviour are tied to the culture of the place. For example, what is permitted and considered as natural in Schenectady encounters condemnation and intolerance in Rome. In spite of this, Daisy continues to see no reason to "change her habits" only to adapt to local customs, whereas those who condemn her see no reason to justify her behaviour, at least to some extent, due to her growing up in a different environment with a different gender socialization, economy class, and family background. Mrs Costello's belittling gossip, the open reprimand by Mrs Walker, as well as the final brutal refusal of Winterbourne symbolize the denial of Daisy Miller’s personal freedom. In creating a spectrum of socially acceptable but unproductive female characters, James effectively compares Daisy's desire for personal freedom with the prison of the other women in their artificial and trivial spheres.

As a literary figure, Daisy remains one of James's most uncompromising heroines whose personal freedom represents their ultimate life priority. The novella *Daisy Miller* remains one of his most remarkable works, which reflects the trend of psychological realism and realistically portrays the clash between the New World of America and the Old World of Europe. Above all, however, this novella portrays the moral, sexual and psychological challenges that American women face in Europe.

**CONCLUSION**

The analysis of Daisy Miller from the eponymous novella demonstrated that the heroine powerfully embodies the individuality and independence of the New Woman, who does not surrender her personal beliefs on account of social respectability and reputation. Daisy advocates the personal freedom of the woman that the feminists of her time are aiming to achieve: freedom of movement, expression, and above all, of making choices. Although Daisy's portrait scarcely reflects the intellectual facet of the New Woman, it nonetheless
depicts the unmarried, open-minded, and flirtatious New Woman, who is often associated with the figure of the so-called fallen woman. Furthermore, Daisy embodies the conflict between the different cultural values and shows how Europe's patriarchy is not able to devalue her personal priorities, among which freedom and independence are in the first place. Daisy's death at the end of the novella serves as a warning signal of the grave consequences of the enforcement of the conservative social norms upon women. Despite her tragic end, Daisy plays an important role in pushing and redefining the gender boundaries and contributes to the long struggle for gender equality and replacement of the Victorian stereotypes with new ideals. Her courageous attitudes frankly question the Victorian ideal of femininity. However, it is worth noting that, despite the remarkable progressiveness of the New Woman, she could still not be considered as the final product of the struggle for gender equality. As the analysis of Daisy demonstrated, although her ideals serve as a significant inspiration for twentieth-century feminists, she is still largely confined within the system of patriarchy. Therefore, in addition to demonstrating the reflection of the cultural New Woman in literature, this paper also demonstrated the lack of readiness of the current European societies to approve and integrate her ideals.

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