

Essay on the character of winterbourne

[Parts of the World](#), [Europe](#)



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The Scene:

“ Miss Miller slowly rose. “ See here Eugenio,” she said. “ I’m going to the old castle, anyway.”

“ To the Château de Chillon, mademoiselle?” the courier inquired. “

Mademoiselle has made arrangements?” he added, in a tone which struck Winterbourne as very impertinent.

Eugenio’s tone apparently threw, even to Miss Miller’s own apprehensions, a slightly ironical light upon the young girl’s situation. She turned to Winterbourne, blushing a little – a very little. “ You won’t back out?” she said.

“ I shall not be happy till we go!” he protested.

“ And you are staying in this hotel?” she went on. “ And you are really an American?”

The courier stood looking at Winterbourne, offensively. The young man, at least, thought his manner of looking an offence to Miss Miller; it conveyed an imputation that she “ picked up” acquaintances. “ I shall have the honour of presenting to you a person who will tell you all about me,” he said smiling and referring to his aunt.

“ Oh, well, we’ll go some day,” said Miss Miller. And she gave him a smile

and turned away. She put up her parasol and walked back to the inn beside Eugenio. Winterbourne stood looking after her; and as she moved away. She put up her parasol and walked back to the inn beside Eugenio. Winterbourne stood looking after looking after her; and as she moved away, drawing her muslin furbelows¹ over the gravel, said to himself that she had the tournure² of a princess.” (James, 1878, p. 2)

Winterbourne is a central character in this novel because through his eyes we understand the ‘rules’ of European at the time. To Daisy the rules seem irrelevant or perhaps she simply has not notice them. We learn a lot about Daisy through his observations but these are Winterbourne’s observations so there is an ambiguity attached to them. The reader must become acquainted with Winterbourne in order to understand how close to reality his perspective may be. The above excerpt from William James’ *Daisy Miller: A Study* gives Winterbourne two perspectives on Miss Miller: how she is treated by Eugenio, the courier, and through his own brief interaction with Daisy. The reaction of Winterbourne to Eugenio’s attitude and tone of voice show that Winterbourne is very sensitive to the European societal conventions of his time. He notices that there is a familiarity between Daisy and Eugenio that is inappropriate. The reader knows that Daisy is an American and has not been trained in the arts of aristocracy and may not judge her so harshly as others in the novel do. Knowing that Daisy is an American is not enough to inform the reader though. Winterbourne’s character is essential in showing how inappropriate her behavior looks to the people surrounding her at the hotel. This becomes more clear later in the reading when the reader ‘hears’ the conversation between Winterbourne and his aunt on the subject of Daisy.

Winterbourne shows a natural inclination to protect Daisy even though he has not been formally introduced and he knows nothing about her. Perhaps his reaction is motivated by the courier's seemingly "impertinent tone." It seems safe to assume that Daisy is an attractive person, with charm enough to draw people to her. But from what we learn about Daisy in this scene she does not seem to be someone in need of being aided. This is an example of disconnected reasoning between Winterbourne and the reader.

Winterbourne shows he considers himself to be somewhat of a White Knight. Daisy leaves Winterbourne baffled about her; this demonstrates that he is not so worldly about young women and how they flirt with young men. He has taken everything that has been said at face value, although that is not at all how Daisy communicates. The reader can recognize her flirtatiousness in first demanding he keep his promise to go to the castle and then saying it does not matter, they are not really now. Her flirtatiousness is especially seen through Winterbourne's young bachelor's eyes in the last sentence when he notices how she turns away to walk to her room with a flounce of her long skirt.

(441 words)

Works Cited

James, Henry. (1974; 1878) *Daisy Miller: A Study*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.