

American Women versus Europeans in Henry James's Works: *The Portrait of a Lady* and *Daisy Miller*

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ABSTRAKT

Tato práce zkoumá osudy hlavních hrdinek, Isabel Archerové a Daisy Millerové, v knihách Henryho Jamese: *Portrét dámy* a *Daisy Millerová*. V teoretické části je popsán vliv žen na život Henryho Jamese, jenž mohl ovlivnit osobnost postav v obou knihách. Dále práce pojednává o kosmopolitním životě Henryho Jamese jako o možné příčině pro zobrazení hlavních představitelk s typickou povahou a jednáním. V praktické části jsou analyzovány hlavní mužské i ženské postavy, – Američanky navštěvující Evropu a Američané žijící delší dobu v Evropě – jejich chování a způsoby během jejich pobytu. V praktické části jsou také rozpoznány střety obou kultur a jednotlivých postav, jež do jisté míry vedly k tragickým osudům hlavních hrdinek.

Klíčová slova: ženské postavy – Američanky, Henry James, tragické osudy, ženy, Američané žijící dlouho dobu v Evropě.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the reasons for the main female protagonists', Isabel Archer and Daisy Miller, tragic fates within Henry James's novels *The Portrait of a Lady* and *Daisy Miller*. The theoretical part of the thesis deals with Henry James's life and the feminine influence on his protagonists' nature. His cosmopolitan life is also taken into consideration as possible cause of his protagonists' typical nature and manners. The analytical part shows American female protagonists and Europeanized Americans, their behavior and manners in Europe. The clashes of both cultures and protagonists are indentified and considered as possible reasons for the female protagonists' tragic fates.

Keywords: American female protagonists, Henry James, tragic fates, women, Europeanized Americans.

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INTRODUCTION

“*Cherchez la femme*, wraps up in itself a perhaps incorrect but still interesting theory of life – that whenever anything goes wrong there is a woman at the bottom of it; find her and all will be explained.”¹

The meaning of the French phrase grasped in a slightly different way might seem to be applicable to Henry James’s protagonists in his works *The Portrait of a Lady* and *Daisy Miller*. Something went wrong in the lives of both protagonists, both of whom are women. Their characters need to be identified: what went wrong in their lives will then be explained.

American female protagonists in both James’s novels encounter difficulties in the traditional Old World², especially in connection with their relationships to European men or surprisingly more often with men born in America but raised in Europe.

But the thing that bothers me is the fact that both female protagonists have such a tragic fate in James’s novels *Portrait of a Lady* and *Daisy Miller*. The reason might be “pervasive Jamesian ambivalence towards women,”³ or it could be only the depiction of the clash of cultures, a clash which James experienced in Europe himself.

Robert E. Riegel, in *American Women: A Story of Social Change* writes that, “women were held to be instinctively more sentimental and emotional than men, with tears the outward sign of more deeply felt emotions such as loneliness, sorrow, and happiness.”⁴ This could be other possible reason for the female protagonists’ tragic fates.

The results of my research should resolve why Henry James’s American female protagonists in *The Portrait of a Lady* and *Daisy Miller* failed to adapt to a different culture and their fates were tragic in the 19th century Europe.

To determine the cause of American female protagonists’ tragic fates, I will analyze traits shared by both the male and female characters from these novels. Therefore, I will be able to ascertain general shared traits of the characters. Thus I will identify who are the

¹ H.W. Fowler and F.G. Fowler, *The King’s English* (Charleston: Forgotten Books, 1922), 35.

² see Jöel Porte, *New Essays on The Portrait of a Lady*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 1.

³ Nicola Bradbury, review of "Henry James and the 'Woman Business'," by Alfred Habegger, *Modern Language Review* 87, no.1 (January 1992): 177-179 Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&hid=15&sid=488f945c-4ed9-4622-958e-5933af576763%40sessionmgr14> (accessed October 21, 2011).

⁴ Robert E. Riegel, *American Women: A Story of a Social Change* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1970), 56.

American and European male and female protagonists in James's novels. Taking the results into consideration, I will focus on the clash of cultures and will be searching for the reasons of the female protagonists' tragic fates. I will analyze some specific situations between the European male and the American female protagonists and will be seeking for cultural misunderstandings, in order to find the reason for the female protagonists' fates.

I will consider the influence of Europe on Henry James's work and his own experience with the culture clash which he might be reflecting in his works. And certainly I will take into account James's relationship towards women which could be the cause of the female protagonists' fates.

My thesis should reveal whether the tragic fates of the American female protagonists in both James's novels were caused by both the author's ambivalent relationship towards women and by the fact that the clash between two cultures is more obvious on women.

I. THEORY

1 HENRY JAMES AND MULTINATIONALISM

It was proposed that the tragic fates of female protagonists in novels *The Portrait of a Lady* and *Daisy Miller* are caused by James's ambivalent relationship towards women and also by the fact that the clash between the American and European culture is more visible on women, thus it was depicted in the female protagonists in both novels.

In order to support this claim, it is crucial to analyze Henry James's life as an American living in Europe. The European influence on Henry James might be the cause of his depiction of the clash between the European and American culture in both novels. It is then necessary to consider Henry James and the feminine influence, to find out whether his relationship towards women was ambivalent and therefore might have caused the tragic fate of female characters in both novels. The focus will be put on specific situations where American women and European men clashed with each other in terms of cultural differences. The outcomes might show certain signs of cultural misunderstandings and therefore possible causes of female protagonists' tragic fates.

In this particular chapter will be explained Henry James and the influence of Europe and his multinational experience. The attention will be given to James's rapport towards Europe and how it influenced his works and the characters in his novels. The results are supposed to bring possible causes of the female protagonists' fates within the novels.

Henry James was a cosmopolitan author and "his whole education and upbringing were calculated to give him a multiple and international perspective on various cultures." In his early infancy he was brought to Europe, later he spent his childhood in New York, attending private schools. Afterwards, he had number of private teachers while living abroad in Geneva, London and Paris. At the age of thirty three, he was already well travelled and he had written several novels. And at this point he resolved to live in England where he stayed until his death.⁵

Tony Tanner writes in his critical essay "Henry James": "He lived among, and off, literature, museums, galleries, and the variegated impressions of the changing cultural scenes through which he passed."⁶ Based on this fact, James could be perceived as a

⁵ Tony Tanner, "Henry James," *British Writers*, Ed. Ian Scott-Kilvert, Vol. 6, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1979, *Scribner Writers Series*, <http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CH1479001534&v=2.1&u=bati&it=r&p=LitRC&sw=w> (accessed October 21, 2011).

⁶ Tanner, "Henry James."

multinational or cosmopolitan author who sees things from many cultural points of view, and depicts this experience in his works.

James' father, Henry James Sr., allowed his son an unexpected amount of freedom,⁷ which his works likewise reflect. Both American female protagonists, Daisy Miller and Isabel Archer are used to have certain amount of freedom in America and they require it also in Europe. Isabel Archer, the protagonist of *The Portrait of a Lady* desires freedom and attempts to escape all commitments, including marriage. Nonetheless, at the end of the novel she is unhappily married to Gilbert Osmond. However, when searching for the reason of this event, it does not seem to be caused by James's personal experience with culture clash and the inability to adapt in Europe. According to Tanner, James wrote in a letter to Thomas Sergeant Perry: that as Americans, "We have exquisite qualities as race, and it seems to me that we are ahead of the European races in the fact that more than either of them we can deal freely with forms of civilization not our own, can pick and choose and assimilate and in short claim our property where we find it."⁸ This implies that Henry James considered Americans as quite easily adaptable people who do not seem to have problems in settling down in a different country. Thus he might not personally experience the clash of cultures on a large scale. Hence the fates of the female protagonists in his works we may assume not to be based on his own experience.

On the other hand, Williams Dean Howells writes in an article about James and the characters in his books that: "Evidently it is the character, not the fate, of his people which occupies him; when he has fully developed their characters, he leaves them to what destiny the reader pleases."⁹ This indirectly signalizes James's ambivalent relationship towards women. James supposedly determined fates of the female protagonists by defining their nature. Therefore the reason for the tragic fate of Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* could be the fact that James intentionally defined Isabel's character and dispositions the way that she could not but fail to adapt to European culture. Her desire for freedom clashes with Victorian society and its conventional rules.

As for Daisy's fate in James's *Daisy Miller*, Carol Ohmann in her book *Daisy Miller: A Study of Changing Intentions*, approved of "a mixed interpretation of Daisy: she is

⁷ Tanner, "Henry James."

⁸ Tanner, "Henry James."

⁹ Tanner, "Henry James."

literally innocent, but she is also ignorant and incautious.”¹⁰ Similarly to the case of Isabel Archer, Daisy’s fate is probably influenced by her nature. Her carelessness, impoliteness and inability to obey certain social rules in a different society affect her fate and perhaps is a contributing factor to her ultimate death.

Nonetheless, Christof Wegelin highlighted in his review on Frederic C. Crews book, *The Tragedy of Manners: Moral Drama in the Later Novels of Henry James* that, “the action in a ‘Jamesian novel’, may be taken as a result of philosophical differences of opinion among the principal characters,” differences “explainable by reference to the characters’ differing social background.”¹¹ The action refers to the fact that Henry James is giving a picture of his own multinational experience and is depicting the European and American influence in the dispositions of its characters. Basically he could perhaps create the female characters just how he perceived American women in Europe with their distinctive features.

Ultimately, there are mainly two types of protagonists in James’s novels *The Portrait of a Lady* and *Daisy Miller*: the Americans and Europeanized Americans. Both types of characters have different points of view and their opinions and attitudes clash sometimes with each other. James’s multinational approach might be the reason for distinctive characters’ dispositions in his novels. He apparently portrayed the characters with regards to people he encountered both in the Europe and America.

James focused on the characters’ nature and features and not on their fate itself. It is possible that James described the American female protagonists in the way he perceived real American women from his experience. The fates of James’ female protagonists are in some sense inevitable given the encounter of their personal propensities with the Victorian setting. Consequently, it is unclear, whether James had ambivalent relationship towards women, because there is no straight evidence, as to why James would intentionally depict the characters as failing to adapt to different culture. It is more probable that he defined the female protagonists the way he actually perceived women he encountered both in Europe and America. Probably he found out that American women tend to control their lives in the Old World quite badly and he recognized that the clash of cultures is most immediately

¹⁰ Carol Ohmann, “Daisy Miller: A Study of Changing Intentions,” *American Literature*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Mar., 1964), pp. 1-11, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2923496> (accessed March 30, 2012).

¹¹ Christof Wegelin, review of *The Tragedy of Manners: Moral Drama in the Later Novels of Henry James*, by Frederic C. Crews, Vol. 74, No. 1 (Jan., 1959): pp. 87-89. *Modern Language Notes*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3040121> (accessed November 1, 2011).

visible on them than on the male characters. The evidence for it might be the fact that social rules for unmarried women in the 19th century Europe varied broadly from the American ones. And the fact that women are generally more sensitive thus the clash of cultures might be more visible on them.

James often chose women to be the characters that came to Europe with their American values and manners, and he defined their fates to some extent based on his experience. David Bruce McWhirter wrote in his book *Henry James in Context*, that “James’s ‘international young ladies’ are emblematic of general sociological phenomenon of his time.” McWhirter claims that, “the trip to Europe became a token of bourgeois respectability and a claim to social superiority,” for American women. He asserted that, “the frequent difficulties,” American women, “meet in negotiating European society are the result of wide divergence between the United States and Europe in almost every gender norm that directly affects them.”¹² These facts about American women concerned James and thus he wrote about it. Moreover, James’s essays, ‘*The Speech of American Women*’ and ‘*The Manners of American Women*’¹³, to which McWhirter refers, show even more plainly James’s interest in issues concerning American women.

However, McWhirter claims that James “ironically deplores, that behavioral codes and norms regulating courtship – such as flirting, the free expression of one’s feelings or frankness in conversation, changed from one side of Atlantic to the other.”¹⁴ This implies that James is concerned not only with issues regarding women, but also with cultural differences themselves and wants to express his feelings about these in his works.

James’s ambivalence towards women appears to be vague, which signalizes that it is not clear whether James might have some intentions to influence fates of female protagonists. And thus James’s ambivalence might not be the reason for the female protagonist’s tragic fates in *The Portrait of a Lady* and *Daisy Miller*. James depicted American female protagonists in both novels as he experienced real American women and their manners in Europe from his cosmopolitan point of view. However, there still remains the question, why the cultural clash and its consequences are expressed on female protagonists in *The Portrait of a Lady* and *Daisy Miller*. The potential cause could be the

¹² David B. McWhirter, *Henry James in Context*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 381-382.

¹³ McWhirter, “Henry James in Context“, 382.

¹⁴ McWhirter, “Henry James in Context“, 382.

fact that culture clash is more obvious from the female point of view. Therefore, James more often depicted the culture clash on female protagonists. The idea that cultural clash is more obvious on females is explored in the upcoming chapter.

2 FEMALE INFLUENCE ON HENRY JAMES

M. E. Greanader quotes writes in her review of the E. Wagenknecht's *Eve and Henry James: Portraits of Women and Girls in His Fiction*: about the "gallery of females" in James's novels and that "the human being who created them *was* real and that when we make discoveries about them we are discovering him also."¹⁵ It could be also the other way round, to proceed closer to the grounds of female tragic fates in both novels, it is necessary to explicate James's life and women. This will be done so in this chapter.

Donatella Izzo writes in one particular chapter of Greg W. Zacharias's book: *A Companion to Henry James* that, "few male writers have devoted to women the sustained and coherent attention that Henry James displayed throughout his career. Most of James's novels have women protagonists, and even the few that do not, such as *The Ambassadors*, feature prominent women characters."¹⁶ It seems that Henry James was captivated by women. He was excellent at depicting feminine concerns. Often his portrayals of female characters and his detailing of their appearance particularly suggest keen observation. Note for instance this complex description of the American Eugenia from *The Europeans*: "Her complexion was fatigued, as the French say; her mouth was large, her lips too full, her teeth uneven, her chin rather commonly modelled; she had a thick nose, and when she smiled - she was constantly smiling - the lines beside it rose too high, toward her eyes."¹⁷ Other case when James shows his craft for complex female characters' description is presented in his book *The American*, where he illustrates Madame de Bellegarde, mother of Claire de Cintré who is one of the protagonists: "Her mother's white, intense, respectable countenance, with its formal gaze, and its circumscribed smile, suggested a document signed and sealed; a thing of parchment, ink, and ruled lines"¹⁸. Certainly, James appeared to have a sense for such descriptions of females.

Jonathan Freedman writes in *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James*, that "James automatically placed himself within the "feminine" sphere; in the eyes of True American

¹⁵ M.E. Grenader, review of *The Crystal Cage: Adventures of the Imagination in the Fiction of Henry James/Eve and Henry James: Portraits of Women and Girls in His Fiction* (Book), by Daniel J. Schneider and Edward Wagenknecht, *American Literature* 51, no.1:122. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 21, 2011).

¹⁶ Greg W. Zacharias, *A Companion to Henry James*, (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 343.

¹⁷ Henry James, *The Europeans*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995), 7.

¹⁸ Henry James, *The American*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995), 117.

Male he was neither recognizably masculine nor American.” Nonetheless, “James never identified himself fully with what it means to be a woman. He always held himself to be male as biological fact and a man as social entity, however much he recognized the feminine sensibilities that governed his inner life, his creative impulses and his slant on the wide world of cultural affairs.”¹⁹ This statement signifies that he, as a sensitive person, might be able to recognize the vulnerable feminine soul and he perhaps found that the female perspective offers a more fertile point of entry into a depiction of clashing cultures.

Even though there was a female influence on James’s life and works, it appears that the major influence originated within himself rather than from the outside impact of the real women in his life. There were two noticeable women in James’s life, Mary “Minnie” Temple and Constance Fenimore Woolson, a novelist. Moreover, James corresponded with several other women.²⁰ Generally, his relationship towards women seems to be unclear and big issue to resolve even for the scholars I would say. And this might prove vagueness of the affect of his ambivalent relationship towards women as a cause of the female characters tragic fates within the novels. Although he might have felt, as certain sources claim, ambivalence towards women, it does not need to be the reason for the female protagonists’ fates in both novels.

On the other hand, the fact that James “recognized the feminine sensibilities that governed his inner life,”²¹ possibly verifies the fact that he depicted the clash of cultures and its consequences on female protagonists. The reason for it could be the fact that he himself experienced the clash of cultures from his sensitive point of view while living in Europe. And thus he may have recognized that the clash of cultures could be more fruitfully depicted from the female point of view.

¹⁹ Jonathan Freedman, *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 23.

²⁰ Alfred Habegger, *Henry James and the 'Woman Business'*, (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 126.

²¹ Freedman, *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James*, 23.

II. ANALYSIS

3 EUROPEANIZED AMERICANS

In order to proceed closer to the answer to what is the source of tragic fates of the female protagonists in both James's novels, it is essential to analyze male protagonists and the cultural clashes between them and American female protagonists within the novels.

Isabel Archer is protagonist of *The Portrait of a Lady*. She is married to Gilbert Osmond, an American who has spent his whole life in Italy. Judging from the nickname of his mother, "American Corinne"²², we may assume that Mr. Gilbert Osmond was growing up in an American environment.

However, later in the novel we can observe that Mr. Osmond's behavior is European rather than American. Europe in 19th century was considered as the traditional 'Old World', on the other hand, America was rather a 'modern country'. In a certain part of the story Isabel Archer recalls a moment when Gilbert Osmond told her that "he loved the conventional."²³ This could possibly be a statement of an American living for a long time in Europe, rather than a real American. The term conventional is considered to be a more common term for the Old World at that time.

Similar case occurs later when Isabel Osmond, wife of Gilbert Osmond, is having doubts about her husband's real expectations of her. He tells her once that "she had too many ideas, and that she must get rid of them." And he did not tell her just once, initially she pays no attention to this but later, when Isabel is married for some time, the words seem to be more serious for her."He really means it – he would have liked her to have nothing of her own but her pretty appearance."²⁴ The fact that Mr. Osmond wants his wife to be more like a decoration than a woman with her own opinions and attitudes, doesn't make him American. The evidence for this is connected with another important man and suitor in Isabel Archer's life – Mr. Goodwood, a man who seems to be more of a real American than Mr. Osmond.

Mr. Goodwood loves Isabel very much and his great wish is to marry her one day. However, he is pushing too hard. Isabel Archer considers herself an independent woman and she does not approve of marriage at all at the time of his proposal in the novel. Nonetheless, there is one dialogue between Isabel Archer and Mr. Goodwood in which -

²² James and Stafford, *Novels, 1881-188*, 479.

²³ Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1997), 395.

²⁴ James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 395.

while having an argument with each other over marriage, he agrees with her at some point. He approves of her independence and her desire to travel. He claims that he would be waiting for her until she is ready to marry him.²⁵ Goodwood is much more generous and liberal than Mr. Osmond.

It is important to point out that male characters in both James's novels are Americans living extendedly in Europe. In the case of *The Portrait of a Lady*, Gilbert Osmond, actually behaves more like a European man. In *Daisy Miller*, the protagonist Daisy Miller is courted by a real Italian, Mr. Giovanelli. However, a more important male character in the novel seems to be Mr. Winterbourne, again an American living in Europe for extended period of time.

Mr. Winterbourne in fact indirectly admits himself to be more of an European than an American in a dialogue with his friend and compatriot, Mrs. Walker. They are talking about Ms. Miller and her inappropriate behavior in public: "What has she been doing?" Mr. Winterbourne asks Mrs. Walker. "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."²⁶ Mrs. Walker replies. Considering the fact that they both disagree with her behavior, Mr. Winterbourne claimed that he and Mrs. Walker have resided in Geneva and therefore also Europe for too long.²⁷ It implies that Mr. Winterbourne and Mrs. Walker become Europeanized Americans and they do not approve of Daisy Miller's American manners anymore.

There is also another example when Mr. Winterbourne claims to be "dishabituated to the American tone." It is a response to Daisy Miller's behavior when she affirmed that she "have always had a great deal of gentlemen's society." Mr. Winterbourne is puzzled, having "never yet heard a young girl expresses herself in just this fashion."²⁸ It signifies that Mr. Winterbourne is shocked by Daisy's statement, because he, as Europeanized American, is not used to the fact that unmarried women have such amount of freedom in social relations with gentlemen.

²⁵ see James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 150.

²⁶ Henry James, *Daisy Miller*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995), 62.

²⁷ see James, *Daisy Miller*, 63.

²⁸ James, *Daisy Miller*, 19.

Both of these American male characters in the two novels, then, can be perceived as Europeans. Mr. Gilbert Osmond approves of ‘the conventional’, a feature more common to Europe in the 19th century than to America. Mr. Winterbourne is shocked by Daisy’s behavior, which signalizes that he is not used to American culture any more. Consequently the Americans living extendedly in Europe can be perceived as Europeans or according to Carol Ohmann, as the “Europeanized Americans.”²⁹

There are some instances of culture clashes. Isabel is obviously shocked by the fact that Mr. Osmond wants her to be just a decoration with no opinions or own attitudes. He, as the Europeanized American, wants the traditional family, obeying Victorian values.³⁰ She, as a ‘modern’ American woman, is expecting him to treat her like equal spouse with her own ideas and beliefs. The other example of culture clash is visible in Mr. Winterbourne’s puzzlement by Daisy’s behavior.³¹ He is expecting her to obey the social restrictions of 19th century Europe. And Daisy does not understand what the Europeans want from her and why she should behave differently.

²⁹ Carol Ohmann, “Daisy Miller: A Study of Changing Intentions.”

³⁰ see James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 395.

³¹ see James, *Daisy Miller*, 19.

4 AMERICAN WOMEN IN HENRY JAMES'S NOVELS – SHARED TRAITS

I intend to examine here the traits shared by Daisy Miller and Isabel Archer in order to define the cause of their tragic fates. It is possible that the cause of their fates might be influenced by the attitude of American women and behavior in the 19th century Europe. The definition of the culture clashes is going to show the situations where cultural misunderstandings appeared. And these situations as signs of cultural misunderstandings might be potential causes of Daisy's and Isabel's tragic fates.

Both protagonists have some common features, even though they are in a certain way completely different persons. These distinctive features mark them as typically American. To create a more general picture of this type, it is essential to consider not just the female protagonists, but also other female characters in the novels.

To contrast the character of Daisy Miller with Isabel Archer, I would like to point out that there are very few moments where Daisy Miller is depicted as a thoughtful person. Unlike Daisy Miller, Isabel Archer is very thoughtful and introspective and the reader may observe that often, even several pages in the novel reflect, to Isabel's thoughts and reflections.

The only facts about Daisy Miller are Mr. Winterbourne's thoughts and opinions. Basically he is having doubts whether she is just "a pretty girl from New York State", where all the girls are quite the same, "the pretty girls who had a good deal of gentlemen's society."³² On the other hand he is considering also the fact whether she is a cunning, fearless and amoral person.³³ This refers back to the fact mentioned previously, that Mr. Winterbourne "has lost his instinct in this matter."³⁴ He has been living too long in Europe. Therefore, he is not able to decide whether Miss Daisy Miller's behavior is evidence of her being just a pretty young American flirt.³⁵ It signifies that Daisy Miller might be young innocent American girl who is not aware of the fact that flirting is not acceptable in the 19th century Europe. Alternatively, Mr. Winterbourne might think she could possibly be a woman similar to those whom he had known in Europe, married

³² James, *Daisy Miller*, 19.

³³ see James, *Daisy Miller*, 19.

³⁴ James, *Daisy Miller*, 19.

³⁵ James, *Daisy Miller*, 19.

women and great flirts, thus menacing and horrible women.³⁶ These women are perfectly aware of the fact that flirting is not acceptable in 19th century Europe. Moreover, these women are married and still do not follow the social rules of the society. In other words, he does not know whether to judge Daisy from the American or the European point of view and he is obviously a confused Europeanized American.

Furthermore, from Mr. Winterbourne's point of view, Daisy Miller is very talkative and he also says, "for anything she wanted to say she was sure to find a pretext." There is a certain moment in the novel when Mr. Winterbourne is telling her a story connected with the Castle of Chillon, where she wished to go for a trip. Mr. Winterbourne remarks that the story "had evidently, as they say, gone into one ear and out of the other."³⁷ This implies that Daisy Miller rather prefers talking about herself and her personal affairs, to listening to the others. On the contrary, Isabel Archer is very perceptive and she likes to listen to the others and converse. Moreover, Daisy judges people too quickly. She repeatedly calls Mr. Winterbourne or his notions "stiff."³⁸ She is judging him so only after very short acquaintance. No wonder that Mr. Winterbourne is even thinking about her as an unmannered woman.³⁹ Nonetheless it is evident that he likes her very much and he is not convinced she is unmannered. He is just trying to explain her behavior logically.

Nevertheless, one of the most important things about Daisy Miller is that she is very determined about what she desires to do. She is very fond of society. She claims that in Europe there is no society as opposed to America: by this she means soireés, balls or other types of cultural entertainment. Later on, she adds that there has to be some society in Europe which she's not been able to see yet.⁴⁰ Eventually she finds the society that she desires in Italy.

Isabel Archer seems to be a more complex personality. The narrator of the book describes her very deep thoughts and independent opinions. For instance, at the beginning of her European journey, she is convinced that women should be able to live alone, without a husband. She claims that it is possible to be happy without a spouse.⁴¹ Her thinking is modern, she is honest and she obviously enjoys travelling in Europe, sightseeing and

³⁶ see James, *Daisy Miller*, 19.

³⁷ James, *Daisy Miller*, 42.

³⁸ James, *Daisy Miller*, 61.

³⁹ see James, *Daisy Miller*, 27.

⁴⁰ see James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 18.

⁴¹ see James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 49.

discovering new culture. Isabel stated about herself: “If there is a thing in the world that I am fond of, it is my personal independence”.⁴² Meanwhile, Daisy Miller is behaving as if she has never left America. She doesn’t seem to be interested in the culture of the old continent. She only enjoys the European ‘gentlemen’.

Nonetheless, there is something they probably share. They both are very determined about what they do and they both are very natural, honest and self confident. This might have been a result of how American women are treated. According to Mr. Touchett, Isabel’s uncle, the conversation with Isabel is very energetic, because she is simply an American. He claims that American women are more listened to than in any other country.⁴³ “Like the majority of American girls, Isabel had been encouraged to express herself; her remarks had been attended to; she had been expected to have emotions and opinions.”⁴⁴ Isabel’s conversation with Mr. Touchett is evidently very energetic, because she is used to having such conversations in America.

Though Isabel doesn’t have a specific goal to reach, except for travelling and discovering the Old World, she desires to be independent and to avoid conventions. While talking with Mrs. Touchett about the English and how they are conventional, she claims:”I am not in the least conventional. I am just the contrary.”⁴⁵ She is also not afraid to refuse a marriage proposal from the handsome, rich and smart English Lord, which seems to be inadmissible for any European lady at that time.

Both female protagonists are also very stubborn. Isabel always follows her heart and she does not care if anybody is telling her what to do. A good example is her marriage. Isabel has many suitors, for instance Lord Warburton, the noble English gentleman, or Mr. Goodwood, a rich American. However, she has chosen Mr. Gilbert Osmond, an American living his whole life in Italy with no fortune and a young daughter, Pansy. This was Isabel’s decision and neither her family nor friends could change her mind.

Similarly, Daisy is doing anything she desires, she does not worry about what society thinks about her manners. For example she is going out late in the night with strange Italians, which is not acceptable in the Old World society. Even though she receives several warnings from her companions, she eventually does whatever she desires. There is

⁴² James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 149.

⁴³ see James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 51.

⁴⁴ James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 51.

⁴⁵ James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 54.

a situation when Mr. Winterbourne does not want Daisy to be alone with Mr. Giovanelli, an Italian with a tainted reputation. Mr. Winterbourne advises Daisy to join him in a somewhat “imperious”⁴⁶ way, as she calls it. As a response Daisy states that. “I have never allowed a gentleman to dictate to me, or to interfere with anything I do.”⁴⁷

Generally we can say that both American main female characters in James’s novels are stubborn and very determined about what they desire. They also seem to be less adaptable to the new culture. Moreover both women pay very little attention to their friends’ good advice and warnings regarding their behavior and manners which are not common in 19th century Europe.

However, it is significant to provide more evidence about American women in James’s novels and their common traits. I would like to analyze also other female characters from the novels and their manners and peculiarities, to find out whether the reason for their tragic fate could be caused by their manners and behavior in European society.

Henrietta Stackpole is a good friend of Isabel Archer who visits Isabel in England. She truly is an American woman and she wants to be handled as an American woman. She is very proud to be American and she often disagrees with the opinions of fellow Americans living long time in Europe.⁴⁸ Like Isabel and Daisy, she is very determined, stubborn and honest. There is frequently a cultural misunderstanding between her and some of the characters who live for a long time in Europe. There is a conversation between Isabel and Ralph Touchett, about what Henrietta told her about him. “She told me she thinks there is something very low in the tone of Europeans towards women”. After hearing this, Ralph was surprised that she was talking about him as if he were European, as he was born in America. Isabel adds that she called him “one of the worst” and that Ralph told Henrietta “something that an American never would have said”.⁴⁹ The explanation is that Henrietta said something which Ralph Touchett understood as a marriage proposal and he jokingly accepted it. However, for an American girl, marriage is anything but a joke. Ralph Touchett has been living too long in Europe and has acquired the cynical British sense of

⁴⁶ James, *Daisy Miller*, 56.

⁴⁷ James, *Daisy Miller*, 56.

⁴⁸ see James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 89.

⁴⁹ James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 85.

humor. In spite of the fact that Henrietta is very proud to be an American and criticizes the Europeans, at the end she will be married to Mr. Bantling, an English gentleman.

Another American female character is Mrs. Touchett, Ralph's Touchett's mother and Isabel's aunt. However, I would consider her to be more of a European woman, because she has been living in Europe for a very long time. Mrs. Touchett is certainly very European. Isabel, Henrietta and Mr. Ralph Touchett once decide to go sightseeing in London. Ralph convinced Mrs. Touchett that there will be no "violation of decency" while visiting the city. Nonetheless Mrs. Touchett was not happy about it. "Like many ladies of her country who have lived a long time in Europe, she had completely lost her native tact on such a points, and in her reaction, not in itself deplorable, against the liberty allowed to young persons beyond the seas, had fallen into gratuitous and exaggerated scruples."⁵⁰ This signalizes that also Mrs. Touchett has been living in Europe so long that she acquired certain European conventional manners. Furthermore, she does not even allow Isabel to be alone with her cousin Ralph Touchett and his close friend Lord Warburton in one room without a chaperone.⁵¹ In comparison with Daisy Miller's mother, an American woman, who is very liberal in such situations, we can't say that both women are American.

Basically, Mrs. Touchett became European when it comes to her opinions and manners. The contrast between Mrs. Touchett, Isabel Archer's aunt and Mrs. Miller, mother of Daisy Miller, a striking point of difference is the obvious difference between the European and American "liberty allowed to young persons"⁵² as Mrs. Touchett called it. Mrs. Miller is very tolerant, she allows her daughter to go out late in the night with strangers, moreover, she even leaves the room when some gentleman visitor come to see Daisy.⁵³

Nevertheless, there is something about Mrs. Touchett's personality that remained American and it is important not to forget about her American origin. It is also significant not to perceive her as the European woman, while there is the evidence that she still has some of the American features. Mr. Bantling is speaks about her odd American marriage.⁵⁴ Mrs. Touchett and Mr. Touchett, her husband, basically live separately. Mrs. Touchett is frequently visiting Firenze in Italy where she owns a villa. Meanwhile, Mr. Touchett stays

⁵⁰ James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 128.

⁵¹ see James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 62-63.

⁵² James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 128.

⁵³ see James, *Daisy Miller*, 62.

⁵⁴ see James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 132.

all year in their mansion, Gardencourt in England. So in this case it is probably more accurate to perceive Mrs. Touchett as a Europeanized American, because she still in some way remained partially American.

The other women characters which I have just analyzed do not seem to have anything in common with Isabel and Daisy but the fact that they originally come from America. Nonetheless, there is a thing which must be counted with and it is the time they have spent in the Europe. Mrs. Miller is, alike Daisy and Isabel, new in Europe, travelling and sightseeing. However, she is already a mother of two children, Daisy and her brother Randolph. She has her own troubles, suffers from dyspepsia and it is not assumed that she will be anyhow influenced by Europe. She is a deeply rooted American woman. I haven't observed any sign of Daisy's stubborn nature and desire to do anything she wants to.

The analysis of the other female characters from the novels is supposed to be accurate only when considering the age of the characters and the period of time they have spent in the Europe. Mrs. Touchett and Mrs. Miller are supposed to be of the same or of a similar age. However it is not wise to contrast them because of the distinct period of the time they have spent in Europe. Henrietta Stackpole seems to be of the same age like Isabel and Daisy, probably slightly older, because she has already been working as an editor in the *Interviewer* magazine. Yet there is again slight distinction in the period of time they have spent in Europe. Nevertheless the dissimilarity is not crucial, because it is possible to observe some of the common traits of American women in her personality. She is an honest, straight-forward, confident and ambitious woman. She has evidently a lack of tact and good manners according to European standards, similarly to Daisy and Isabel. Generally the behavior of all the three American woman characters seem to be more natural and without any sign of fear for their reputation.

There is an evident pattern which has been recognized while analyzing common traits of American women in James's novels. Again it is significant to consider the age and the period of time they have spent in Europe. Crucial characters are Isabel and Daisy, because they are supposed to be in Europe for a similar time period. It is assumed that they are the same or similar age, and certainly they both are the main female characters. Henrietta matches the similar age pattern. Though the period of her stay in Europe is different, she is eventually influenced by Europe in the same way as Daisy and Isabel. As mentioned earlier, Henrietta Stackpole eventually settles down in Europe.

Even though these three American women have different personalities and also different fates within the novels, they share certain features of character. They tend to

behave naturally and have troubles adapting to European society. Their common values are independence, self-confidence and honesty. However, from the European society's point of view, their independence can be perceived as misbehavior, self-confidence as bad manners and honesty as impertinence.

5 AMERICANS IN EUROPE – CULTURE CLASH

In this part of my thesis is significant to analyze differences between American male and female protagonists' ability to adapt to European culture. It is important to do so, because the reasons why the clash of cultures is focused primarily on American female protagonists need to be discovered. The Americans who want to socially survive in European society have to become Europeanized, which means to somehow adjust their American attitude and manners, otherwise it is possible that they will suffer in the European environment.

Mrs. Merle, an American living her whole life in Europe and Isabel's friend, who significantly influences Isabel's life claims, that Americans living in Europe are miserable people. She even adds: "If we are not good Americans we are certainly poor Europeans; we have not natural place here. We are mere parasites, crawling over the surface; we haven't our feet in the soil."⁵⁵ Likewise Mrs. Merle's friend and fellow American, Gilbert Osmond, who later becomes Isabel's husband, claims that the direction in which they are going seems wrong. Mr. Osmond conveys, "We are Americans, living out of our country, surrounded by strange people and things, without any obligations and relations, without any support".⁵⁶ We are "marrying foreigners, forming artificial tastes, playing tricks with our natural mission."⁵⁷

Both Mrs. Merle and Mr. Osmond claim this to Isabel. Even though she is very perceptive and thoughtful, in this case she does not listen and she settles down in Europe, too. Nevertheless, in an important part of Mrs. Merle's utterance, she adds, that "a woman, perhaps, can get on; a woman, it seems to me, has no natural place anywhere; wherever she finds herself she has to remain on the surface and, more or less, to crawl."⁵⁸ This statement might look dispirited at the first sight. However, the meaning might essentially be that women at that time have the same life anywhere and that it does not matter where they live: once they cope well with their lives in America, they can eventually get on well also in Europe and vice versa. It might be possible that women at that time were generally more able to adapt easily to the new culture than men, because their occupation was eventually more or less the same everywhere.

⁵⁵ James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 182.

⁵⁶ James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 241.

⁵⁷ James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 241.

⁵⁸ James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 182.

In his book entitled *American Women: A Story of a Social Change*, Robert E. Riegel writes about women in the 19th century America. “Since the great majority of American men and women were conservative, they accepted current ideals as God-given and eternal. In general the women tried to live up to socially approved patterns of behavior, even though particular women from time to time reinterpreted or modified some of the ideas in accordance with their personal desires.”⁵⁹ This means that American women in 19th century were generally doing what the society dictated them, with occasional exceptions. As for European women, supposedly are in similar situation in European society. Sally Mitchell asserts in her book, *Daily Life in Victorian England*, “the decision to marry defined a woman’s entire future. Marriage established her rank, her role, duties, social status, place of residence, economic circumstances, and way of life.”⁶⁰ Evidently also the women living in the 19th century Europe were obeying certain -”socially approved patterns of behavior.”⁶¹ They had a certain set status within the society. That proves the fact that women occupation in the 19th century Europe and America was more or less the same.

Nevertheless, both these quotations refer to life after marriage. There is a difference between the life of women before marriage in 19th century America and in 19th century Europe. The evidence for it is observable in the cultural misunderstanding between Mr. Winterbourne and young Daisy Miller. Daisy behaves improperly, going out late in the night with strangers. Mr. Winterbourne, the Europeanized American, is puzzled by her behavior. He expected her to obey social rules current in Europe. Both Isabel and Daisy are not married and in this case their situation in European society differs from the American one.

As for Europeanized American male characters, they are actually doing, more or less, nothing in Europe. Mrs. Merle is telling Isabel about Mr. Ralph Touchett and that his only career is the fact that he has consumption. “You can say, ‘Oh Mr. Touchett, he takes care of his lungs, he knows a great deal about climates.’ But without that, who would he be, what would he represent? ‘Mr. Ralph Touchett, an American who lives in Europe.’ That signifies absolutely nothing – it’s impossible that anything should signify less.”⁶²

⁵⁹ Riegel, *American Women: A Story of a Social Change*, 36.

⁶⁰ Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England*, (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1996), 267.

⁶¹ Riegel, *American Women: A Story of a Social Change*, 36.

⁶² James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 182.

And according to Mrs. Merle, Gilbert Osmond is even worse. “He is Gilbert Osmond – he lives in Italy; that is all one can say about him.”⁶³ Even Mr. Winterbourne of *Daisy Miller* does not seem to be very busy in Europe. He lives in Geneva and when his friends talk about him they say he is “studying”⁶⁴ there. This signifies that even Mr. Winterbourne seems to be an American who only lives in Europe and nothing more. It is possible that the American male protagonists in both James’s novels are more “crawling over the surface”⁶⁵ than the American women, as Mrs. Merle claims. It thus seems less clear ever why the American women, Daisy and Isabel, striving for success in the unknown culture, failed in the end.

From the beginning of their travelling in Europe it looked as if their intentions were at least to explore the culture of the Old World or its society, they were somehow trying to fit in the new environment. On the other hand, the male characters have not managed to go under the surface even after years of residing in Europe. They remained on the surface, meeting only with compatriots and without any proper occupation which would help them to adapt and incorporate. They slowly become Europeanized Americans, because the influence of European society was eventually inevitable for them. The American female protagonists’ fates could be tragic, because they, as opposed to male protagonists, tried to live and integrate to the new culture from the beginning of their European journey. The process was quick and they were not used to the new European conditions, thus they experienced clash of their cultural manners and the European ones.

Throughout the thesis I have given examples of the clashes between the two cultures. Europeanized Americans are shocked by the behavior of American female protagonists and vice versa. Mr. Winterbourne, the American who has long lived time in the Europe was shocked while watching Daisy Miller walking alone with an Italian of tainted reputation.⁶⁶ Mrs. Touchett did not allow Isabel to be alone with her cousin Ralph Touchett and his friend, Lord Warburton, without a chaperone⁶⁷. The presence of the chaperone was not needed in such cases in America.

These clashes represent and reflect James’s multinational experience. He perhaps wanted to point out, that Americans will either become Europeanized Americans and will

⁶³ James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 183.

⁶⁴ James, *Daisy Miller*, 8.

⁶⁵ James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 182.

⁶⁶ James, *Daisy Miller*, 56.

⁶⁷ James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 62-63.

“crawl over the surface”⁶⁸ in Europe, or they will keep their American values and manners and will face tragic fate, even death.

Female protagonists in both James’s novels seem to be depicted according to real American women of 19th century. The traits they share and that were analyzed throughout the thesis are assumed to be characteristic of unmarried American women at that time. Thus it seems that Henry James created realistic female characters that failed to adapt and failed to become Europeanized. And as a result, their fates were tragic. Isabel got married to Gilbert Osmond who later on showed to be conventional and a real European from this point of view. He wanted Isabel to be just a decoration. Daisy, thanks to her improper behavior and because of the fact that she did not obey the rules of European society, gets Roman fever and died.

The failure of adapting to a different culture was depicted on women because they are assumed to be more emotional and sentimental, so the clash is more visible on them. The fact that James had an ambivalent relationship towards women and thus he intentionally defined female characters’ tragic fates, is vague, so it could not be considered as possible cause of the female characters fates. However, James probably perceived, and it is obvious from the novels as well, that American women at that time were stubborn and natural and were not used to follow certain strict social rules. The social rules in Victorian Europe society especially for unmarried women were severe and varied markedly from the American ones. Consequently, these women tended to fail to adjust to the new and different culture. Henry James encountered this issue while residing in Europe, and with his sensitive perception he identified the problem and depicted it in his works as a current social concern.

⁶⁸ James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 182.

CONCLUSION

In the theoretical part of my thesis it was proved that it is vague whether James had an ambivalent relationship towards women, thus it could not be taken as a possible cause of American female protagonists' tragic fates within the novels. And it seemed to be quite a rational explanation that James did not depict female protagonists' nature and dispositions the way he wanted them to fail, but he portrayed them in a way he perceived real American women in Europe as a cosmopolitan author.

Furthermore, it was revealed that James depicted the clash of cultures in female protagonists, because women are in general more sensitive and delicate. James as a cosmopolitan author, who lived in both an American and European cultural context, portrayed the clash of cultures in American female protagonists, because he experienced the clash from his point of view. The research disclosed that James was a sensitive person, his great concern were women and cultural affairs. Hence, he understood that women are more vulnerable and more likely to be victims of differences in culture and its social rules. As a result, the clash of the two cultures and its consequences were depicted in American female protagonists within the two novels.

The analytical part, where the clashes between the two cultures were identified showed specific examples of clashes between American female protagonists and Europeanized American male characters. It was uncovered that American male characters living extendedly in Europe should be perceived as Europeanized Americans, because they were influenced by 19th Europe and its social rules. Therefore, they did not accept behavior and manners of unmarried American female protagonists who came to Europe at that time. And thus, the cultural clashes appeared. Other reasons for cultural clashes and for American female protagonists' tragic fates are their shared traits which clashed with 19th century European social rules: independence, self-confidence and honesty. These were in Europe perceived rather as: misbehavior, bad manners and impertinence.

American female protagonists failed to adapt to 19th century Europe, because their behavior and manners, characteristic for unmarried American women, varied broadly from European social rules for unmarried women in Europe at that time. The tragic fates were depicted in female protagonists in *The Portrait of a Lady* and *Daisy Miller*, because women generally are more sensitive, thus clashes of cultures are more visible in them. James was a sensitive person and therefore he recognized it and reflected it in his works.

I suggest that Henry James was a great observer and he depicted in both novels what he encountered and perceived in Europe as an American and cosmopolitan author. His great concerns were women and cultural affairs and he reflected it in his works. And I agree with the statement by Thomas Hardy, published in the preface of *The Europeans*, that Henry James had “a ponderously warm manner of saying nothing in infinite sentences.”⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Henry James, preface to *The Europeans*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995).

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