

Winterbourne's Hesitation -- Daisy Miller from the Perspective of Freudian Theory

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Abstract: Henry James is a pioneer at the turn of the nineteenth century in revolutionizing the art of narration. As one of the most important works of by Henry James, *Daisy Miller* portrays the American girl Miller's travel in Europe and her relationship with the American expatriate Winterbourne. On the basis of the Personality Structure Theory founded by Freud, this thesis explores the psychological changes of Winterbourne in getting along with Daisy by analyzing Winterbourne's psychological conditions respectively in Vevey, in Rome and after Daisy's death so as to defend that Winterbourne was no scientific observer.

1. Introduction

Daisy Miller is a trailblazing work with Henry James's art of narration. It garnered critical attention at the very start and "made [Henry James] the most talked-of American writer in England"[1] in mid-1878. Daisy, the protagonist, was the once-prevalent concern and a transition of opinion has made from the accusation against her as the "principal offender against human decency" [2] to the praise of her as the pure and innocent victim. In 1974, Grant initially shifted the center of the story from "Daisy's misadventures" [3] to Winterbourne's study of her. This view was warmly embraced by many other critics, such as Scheiber who accused Winterbourne of his tendency to scientifically "read individuals as 'specimen' or 'type' of human variation" [4]. Winterbourne was attacked later by many feminist scholars by reason that he objectified Daisy with his gaze.

From the perspective of psychologic analysis with Freudian theory of the Personality Structure, this thesis is going to elaborate on the conflict of Winterbourne's id, ego and superego in different periods, proving that instead of treating Daisy as an object with his scientific observation, Winterbourne suffered dramatically from the psychological changes in his acquaintance with Daisy.

2. Meeting in Vevey

Winterbourne was an American similar to Daisy Miller and Randolph who could express themselves freely and behave regardless of the redundant rules and customs. However, he was being brought up and educated in Europe since he was as little as Randolph, fully immersed in the European customs which impose on him moral constraints. To keep the balance of his personality structure in American circle of Europe which characterizes its proper etiquette and hierarchy, some of his natural instincts gave way to the nurtured behaviors. As soon as he met Daisy, however, he breathed the fresh air of freedom. Daisy fired his secret desire to run away from the rules, and the hidden desire was anxious to unearth itself, striking the former balance of id, ego and superego.

Winterbourne's unbridled love for Daisy at the first sight of her was evident as the narrator employed "strikingly" and "admirably" [5] to portray the degree of Daisy's beauty in his eyes. He could not wait to be introduced to Daisy and found every opportunity to be involved in Daisy and Randolph's conversation though Daisy was not so hospitable to him. Daisy's detailed action of

caring the frills, ribbon and flounces which radiate the feminine beauty and attraction was repeatedly described, betraying Winterbourne's imperceptible but special attention paid to it. The id attempted to control the ego in courting the charming girl.

However, the superego arose instantly to dictate him to judge Daisy rationally as a coquette. Later, after minutes' conversation, Daisy's "decidedly sociable"[5] tone and complacency in talking about gentlemen's society induced him to label her as a "pretty American flirt" [5]. Moreover, his aunt Mrs. Castello, as the incarnation of his superego, advised him to stay afar from the "common" girl. His love as well as the warning from his rationality and his aunt put him in a dilemma.

Nevertheless, it was evident that the id got the upper hand since he still "was impatient to see her again" [5]. Taking upon the trip to the Chateau de Chillon with Daisy as the "escapade", his love for Daisy was so strong that he would like to flee with the girl to any place where he can escape from the responsibility for his superego. Above all, "His intuition about Daisy" drove the ego to deepen his understanding of Daisy rather than evade from her.

Winterbourne's further acquaintance with Daisy proved that his rational judgement of her as a "young American flirt" was unwarranted. Instead of regarding men's attention as her wealth as a flirt, she showed her indifference to the steady gaze of the idle people assembled in the large hall. Also, contrary to being "decidedly sociable" [5], she only chatted with Winterbourne about things she had interests in, which accounts for the fact that she "cared very little for feudal antiquities"[5] but got great pleasure in getting any personal information about Winterbourne himself in the Castle of Chillon. The behaviors of Daisy detected later by the ego reveal that Daisy was hardly an American flirt that he should break up with. This fact helped reconcile his ego and superego.

The ego temporarily found the delicate balance in defining Daisy as the "extraordinary mixture of innocence and crudity" [5] before leaving Vevey. The judgement from as a flirt to a mixture was, in some extent, a recognition of Daisy's certain merits that did not run counter to the superego, easing the ego's sense of guilt in overlooking the superego's demand to defend dignity. Meanwhile, being miles away from Daisy in a few months smoldered his natural desire of looking at and chatting with her. It followed that his desire to break away from European convention which was ignited by Daisy was sunk into the unconscious.

3. Meeting Again in Rome

Daisy's neglect of him and intimacy with Giovanelli impeded him. Daisy showed no appreciation for his coming to Rome without stopping to see her, neither did she set aside time to stay alone with him. When dissuading Daisy from meeting Giovanelli and begging to spend time alone with him, Winterbourne was pitifully refused. Daisy spent much time with Giovanelli, strolling and talking. His desire to get intimacy with Daisy was hindered accordingly by Daisy's apparent alienation from him. Moreover, the stifling atmosphere in Rome kept him from behaving as freely as in Vevey. Not only his aunt, but Mrs. Walker and other distinguished Americans in Rome were detective of his behaviors. He could not be too vigilant that any of his misdeeds might incur reproach and disparagement in the small circle. The reputation of him, even of his aunt would be likely to be tarnished.

Under these conditions, the ego managed to repress the id's desire to court her as an admirer. To achieve the goal, the ego began its way to find more convincing evidence to help him to "think more lightly of her"[5], thus persuading the id to give her up. He construed Daisy's closeness with Giovanelli as the American custom of flirting. Progressively, he stands with other sophisticated American expatriates, judging her as "a very light young person" [5]lack of culture. In rationally typing her as a flirt, Winterbourne suspended his act of courting.

Eventually, the love of fire in Winterbourne's heart was extinguished when he confirmed that she was conquered by Mr. Giovanelli. They met each other and had a little conversation, where Daisy told him that she was engaged. The narrator, paradoxically, gives us little hint about Winterbourne's psychological response to this shocking news besides the concise description of his physical behavior: "He was silent a moment; and then, 'Yes, I believe it!' he said" [5]. The news confirmed

to Winterbourne that he has completely missed the muse of life. Hearing this, the id's natural desire for Daisy has been permanently repressed, which marks the triumph of the ego in this conflict. The love for Daisy has been buried for good. The judgement based on his reason that Daisy was a flirt with whom he would be dragged into the mire barely met any objection.

During the same process, the superego put its squeeze on ego lest Winterbourne would go beyond the rule of social propriety. Mrs. Walker and his aunt embodied the rules he should abide by. When his ego permitted his standing at Daisy's side or his defense for Daisy that she did mean no harm in refusing the carriage, Mrs. Walker, as the emanation of the superego, jumped out to convince Winterbourne to cease his relationship with her as he could not suffer as the subject of the scandal. With the seriousness of his superego, he denounced Daisy's behavior as a foreigner and claimed the moral high ground when he should have made a suggestion as a friend. Worse still, Winterbourne intended to put the squeeze of the custom on Daisy, sharing the dictation of his superego with Daisy. While pensively thinking about his relationship with Daisy for a few days, he was again received the order from the envoy of his superego -- Mrs. Costello, who affirmed Daisy's intimacy with "that little barber's block" [5] as well as her stupidity and vulgarity. What he learned from Mrs. Costello, Mrs. Walker and other people's criticism on Daisy consciously drove the Self away from her and compelled him to prioritize the custom rather than his love.

The ego reunited with the superego at the final sight of Daisy in the Colosseum when the love for her was put to an end. Winterbourne ran into the scene that Daisy stayed with Giovanelli in the Colosseum for a long time at the midnight. "He felt angry with himself that he had bothered so much about the right way of regarding Miss Daisy Miller" [5] regardless of the truth that she behaved as a flirt. The anxiety obsessed him was the punishment of superego for the ego's previous stubbornness in defying the superego's authority. Meanwhile, Winterbourne got a relief since the scene before him confirmed that Daisy was what the superego had judged. The ego reunited with the superego after the longstanding struggle. That's the reason why he unconsciously felt relieved and exhilarated. After few days, in an effort to clear the air, Daisy wanted him to know that she hadn't engaged with Giovanelli. But, as Winterbourne had said, it became meaningless to him. The ego repressed his love into the unconscious id and treated Daisy as the superego demanded.

4. Daisy's Death

As Freud illuminated, "the sense of guilt is based on the tension between the ego and the ego ideal and is the expression of a condemnation of the ego by its critical agency" [6]. Meanwhile, it is "a 'moral' factor", "which is finding its satisfaction in the illness and refuses to give up the punishment of suffering"[6] Two scenes after Daisy's death: talk with Mr. Giovanelli as well as his confession to Mrs. Costello reveal Winterbourne's sense of guilt since the ego had made a mistake in judging Daisy.

Giovanelli acknowledged at Daisy's funeral that "if she had lived, I should have got nothing" [5]. Well aware of the possibility of being infected in staying in the Colosseum, he still took Daisy there because of the evil notion he harbored. Daisy would never marry him if she had lived, while if she died, Giovanelli would be the only man that had ever possessed her in her life. On knowing that, Winterbourne "stood staring at the raw protuberance among the April daisies" [5]. The narrator didn't directly depict the psychological changes of him, just as the moment when Daisy told him that she was engaged. However, from his physical behavior, his sense of guilt seemed apparent. Too shocked to move or to respond to Giovanelli, he stood silently and paid full attention to the raw daisies before him which incarnated Daisy's innocent and free spirit.

The sense of guilt resulted from the domination of the superego over the ego. Due to the ego's lack of understanding of Daisy, he misjudged the girl. He treated the beautiful, innocent and mysterious girl in a harsh way. It resulted that his misdeeds enraged the superego and received the sense of guilt as a consequence of this psychological conflict. Immediately, he fled from the place where he blundered and he could hardly forgive himself for that. Winterbourne consciously admitted the mistake himself when he met us again in the follow summer with his aunt in Vevey.

Even if he had left Rome, the sense of guilt incessantly afflicted him for the whole year. The depressive feelings brought by the sense of guilt continued to affect him until he made the confession to the surrogate of the Superego, Mrs. Costello.

Conclusion

With Freudian Personality Structure Theory, this thesis analyses the battle of the id, the ego and the superego of Winterbourne after he knew Daisy. The American girl introduced to him unexpectedly fired his love in Vevey, thus breaking the balance of the id, ego and superego. However, the changing view resulted in closer observation restored the delicate balance in a short run. Months' later in Rome, the ego checked his love based on rational judgement, and satisfied the superego in judging Daisy as a flirt again and abandoned her. After Daisy's death, he came to understand that Daisy was somewhat cheated by the Italian and had expected to be respected. The superego punished the ego for his blunder in judgement and the sense of guilt tortured him long after Daisy's death. Through an analysis of Winterbourne's inner conflicts in different stages, this thesis reveals that it is not that Winterbourne scientifically studied Daisy as an object but that he suppressed emotions in the fierce competition among his natural impulses, the realistic condition and the conscience. His reticence resulted from his hesitation rather than his nonchalance.

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