

Finally, it should be said that this approach, like any other, isn't for everyone. It is useful for the teacher who structures a student-centered class, since it foregrounds what students bring to the classroom community and nurtures their respect for and trust in each member of that community.

## THEORY AND INTERTEXTUALITY

### Teaching Theory through *Daisy Miller*

*Pericles Lewis*

Readers of David Lodge's novel *Changing Places* will recall the character Morris Zapp, whose ambition was to write a series of critical commentaries on Jane Austen:

... to be utterly exhaustive, to examine the novels from every conceivable angle, historical, biographical, rhetorical, mythical, Freudian, Jungian, existentialist, Marxist, structuralist, Christian-allegorical, ethical, exponential, linguistic, phenomenological, archetypal, you name it; so that when each commentary was written there would be simply *nothing further to say* about the novel in question. (44)

At the end of each semester, I tell Zapp's story to my students in Introduction to Literary Theory, overwhelmed as they sometimes are by the array of theories, from the New Criticism through deconstruction to cultural studies, to which the course introduces them.

Students often crave demonstrations or examples of how to apply theory. Throughout the semester, I bring in short poems or prose passages for discussion, and I refer to novels that many will have read. However, I keep my main demonstration for the last day of class. Students are required to read *Daisy Miller* over spring break and encouraged to talk about it in relation to literary theory in their sections as well as to write their final paper as an application of a particular theory to the story (or to another story of their choosing). Teaching assistants (for whose excellent work in this difficult course

I am most grateful) report that the weakest and the strongest students tend to write on *Daisy Miller*, while those in the middling group are more inclined to choose a favorite text of their own. On the final day of class, I sketch a series of potential readings of *Daisy Miller*, seen from various theoretical angles.

After my students read challenging articles by Cleanth Brooks, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Stanley Fish, Roman Jakobson, Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, Barbara Johnson, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Edward Said, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Stephen Greenblatt, Catherine Gallagher, and Judith Butler, they often want to see how these theories apply to a work of literature. Drawing on philosophy, linguistics, anthropology, and other disciplines, theory does not always resemble what one typically thinks of as criticism. Yet each theoretical movement we discuss in the course has spawned its own type of literary criticism. Too often, alas, critics merely take the theory of their favorite theorist and apply it wholesale to a literary text. Offering theoretical readings of *Daisy Miller* inevitably involves a certain violence toward a rather delicate text. It also has a tendency to devolve into parody, but I hope that a little bit of parody gives the students some sense of the various schools of critics. My demonstration suggests to the students how literary theory can sometimes go over the top. It shows both the power and limitations of theory. In *S/Z*, Roland Barthes took apart a classic or "readerly" text (Balzac's "Sarrasine") to show it to be modern or "writerly" (3–28). Like "Sarrasine," *Daisy Miller* is a story about interpretation and the social codes associated with gender. Following Barthes's example (and that of Frederick Crews in *Postmodern Pooh*), I argue that the apparently straightforward text of *Daisy Miller* is susceptible of a variety of interpretations. I treat some schools in detail and others only in passing. I do not aim to give thorough readings of the text, since students are doing so, and I treat least thoroughly the theories on which they are expected to write their final papers. In my representations of various critical schools, no similarity to actual critics, living or dead, is intended.

The course begins by looking at three older types of criticism, each of which was attacked by the New Critics: the mimetic (old-historicist), the expressive (biographical), and the affective or pragmatic (moralizing). All three are described by M. H. Abrams in *The Mirror and the Lamp* (3–29). The New Critics, reacting against these types of criticism, proposed something that we could call formal criticism, or objective criticism, which is concerned with the text as object rather than with its relations to nature, an author, or an audience. The mimetic model of literature inspired older historical critics, who might look to *Daisy Miller* as a portrait or study of young American womanhood during the Gilded Age (James uses the word "study" in the subtitle of the story and the word "portrait" of course in *The Portrait of a Lady*). For mimetic critics who demand realism of a work of art, James might well score points for how he describes a young woman of middle-brow education but significant wealth on the European tour. Critics of his later work often complained that

he fell away from the standards of realism attained by such stories as *Daisy Miller*.

The expressive critic, concerned with the greatness of James's mind (T. S. Eliot called that "mind so fine that no idea could violate it" [*Selected Prose* 151]) might look to James's biography to see possible sources of inspiration for *Daisy Miller*. Here, the biographical critic would probably be interested in James's adolescent fascination with his cousin Minny Temple, who died young and who inspired such characters as Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* and Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove*. The biographical critic might also look at Winterbourne as a sort of self-portrait, a theme I delve into later in the lecture when I get to queer studies. At any rate, the expressivist is likely to praise James's fine description of a certain type of sensibility in Winterbourne.

The affective critic naturally asks, What is the moral of this story? The most obvious moral concerns Daisy's behavior: Don't go around with strange Italian men. The stern, puritanical moralist may be happy enough with Daisy's fate, but some moral critics will remind us that the code to which Daisy Miller is held is an old-fashioned one and that malaria is carried by mosquitoes, not by strange Italian men. Another, more troubling moral lies in Winterbourne's final judgment about Daisy, which I explore later in the lecture.

Against all this moralizing, biographizing, and realizing, the formalist critic or New Critic objects, asking us to return to the text itself. There are all sorts of interesting formal patterns in the text, but I examine an obvious one, the series of flower metaphors. Annie P. Miller's nickname is Daisy, and a daisy is a short-lived flower. It represents innocence. The formalist calls our attention to James's use of words associated with flowers to describe Daisy, as when Winterbourne thinks that her glance is "perfectly direct and unshrinking" (she is more a daisy than a shrinking violet) and also that her eyes are "singularly honest and fresh" (53). Daisy unfortunately meets up with Giovanelli, who has a penchant for plucking flowers and putting them in his buttonholes (108), just as he enjoys practicing his fine English on American heiresses. When Daisy dies in the spring, she winds up in the Protestant cemetery beneath the cypresses and the "thick spring flowers" (115). This tracing of metaphors is of course fairly simplistic. A New Critic would be alive to the ironies of James's text and undoubtedly notice the central tension that animates it: the tension between Winterbourne's desire for Daisy and his fear of her recklessness. The New Critic would note that Daisy displays "no irony" (53), which suggests immediately that she is innocent, and finally the New Critic would note the central irony of the story, namely, that Winterbourne in a sense makes Daisy guilty by failing to believe in her. This central irony is what I referred to earlier when I said that there were messages in this story that the moralist critic might object to; I further explore the problem of this irony below.

After an introductory unit on formalism and the New Criticism, the course turns to hermeneutics and reader-response theory. The reader-response critic

might be interested in how the narrator of *Daisy Miller*, who acts like a third-person narrator with access to Winterbourne's thoughts but nonetheless refers to himself in the first person, sets up a sort of dialogue with us, the readers, by addressing us as "you" (47). He then corrects his interpretation of events and claims to lack knowledge of Winterbourne's character, as in the expressions "I hardly know whether . . ." and "What I should say is . . ." (48). The reader-response critic might note how the narrator forces us to experience Winterbourne as a mystery: it is difficult for us to know his thoughts, just as it is difficult for him to know Daisy's.

A good portion of the course is devoted to structuralism and deconstruction. The structuralist sets up for us a neat set of oppositions that define the text:

male	female	innocent	coquette
Protestant	Catholic	Winterbourne	Eugenio
America	Europe	Winterbourne	Giovanelli
Geneva	Rome	cultivated	wild
reason	instinct	exclusive	common

In this context, we might note Winterbourne's name: his bourne or harbor is wintery Geneva; and he can be opposed to the Italian Eugenio, whose name means "well-born" and who was born in the south of Italy. The structuralist does not fail to note that all the oppositions center on the problem of sex.

There are several tacks that the deconstructive critic could take, but let us begin with the word *flirt*. The deconstructor will note that each binary opposition described by the structuralist breaks down. What is the agency of this breakdown? It is Daisy, the flirt. The deconstructionist turns to the *American Heritage Dictionary* and reads that the verb *to flirt* is defined as follows:

*intr.* 1. To make playfully romantic or sexual overtures. 2. To act so as to attract or provoke: *The bullfighter flirted with death.* 3. To move abruptly or jerkily. —*tr.* 1. To toss or flip suddenly. 2. To move quickly.

The first intransitive definition includes precisely the problem that Winterbourne faces, whether to view Daisy's overtures as romantic or sexual. He decides that Daisy is a flirt—"a pretty American flirt" (57)—but this category does not make it easy for him to place her on one side or the other of the binary oppositions offered to us by the structuralists. Rather, her tendency as a flirt is to flirt from side to side. James even uses the verb in sense 3 when he writes that Daisy "flirted back with a pretty little cry and a shudder from the edge of the *oubliettes*" (76). Whereas women are supposed to stick strictly to the private sphere, Daisy enjoys being seen in public (on the Pincian hill, in the lobby of her hotel, out on the lake, in the Château de Chillon, in the

Colosseum). As her mother says, "She goes round everywhere" (83). Daisy moves abruptly or jerkily from apparent innocence to apparent guilt.

She also moves up and down the social scale at will, as her intimacy with servants indicates. As James writes, "She seemed to [Winterbourne], in all this, an extraordinary mixture of innocence and crudity" or again "an inscrutable combination of audacity and innocence" (78, 90). The word "flirt" sets up a chain of signifiers—a daisy chain?—that can never find its transcendental signified. The other signifiers associated with it are: "wild," "respectability," "nice," "dreadful" (63); "innocent," "uncultivated," "guilty" (64); "exclusive" (66); "natural" (68); "common," "delicate," "grace" (68); "freedom" (75); "ignorant," "vulgar," "bad" (80); "indelicate" (94); "the Golden Age" (103); "pretty," "undefended" (105). The deconstructionist would note how both "delicate" and "indelicate," as well as the opposites "innocent" and "guilty," appear in this list. Flirtation is the free play of the signifier detached from the signified. The flirt seems to occupy both sides of the opposition and to be unwilling to settle into one side. In this, Daisy displays the logic of the supplement that students have encountered in Derrida's "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (Richter 878–89). She suggests to us that innocence always already contains in it the seed of its opposite, experience, and that innocence can be defined only by its opposition with experience. We see this dynamic of innocence and experience in Winterbourne himself, of whom his aunt says, "You are too innocent," then, "You are too guilty" (64).

A more de Manian mode of deconstructive inquiry might note how Winterbourne tries to read Daisy as if she were a text. This desire to read her is forever frustrated. We see an early formulation of this problem in relation to Daisy's Italian friend, Mr. Giovanelli. Winterbourne tells Daisy, "He is not a gentleman, . . . he is only a clever imitation of one," then inwardly complains about her inability to distinguish a spurious gentleman from a real one. Immediately afterward, though, he perceives that such a distinction is indeed difficult to make, for "It was true that if he was an imitation the imitation was very skilful" (89). The problem of how to read Mr. Giovanelli is small compared with the problem of how to read Daisy. A crucial moment occurs in the Colosseum when, seeing Daisy there at night with Giovanelli,

Winterbourne stopped, with a sort of horror; and, it must be added, with a sort of relief. It was as if a sudden illumination had been flashed upon the ambiguity of Daisy's behaviour and the riddle had become easy to read. She was a young lady whom a gentleman need no longer be at pains to respect. (111)

Winterbourne thus gives her up, but as he learns later on, when she sends him the message that she never was engaged to Giovanelli, he may have

misread her. The passage about reading in James continues, and it deconstructs itself: "He stood there looking at her—looking at her companion, and not reflecting that though he saw them vaguely, he himself must have been more brightly visible" (111). Remember that he thinks he sees Daisy "as if a sudden illumination had been flashed upon the ambiguity" of her behavior. In fact, as the passage tells us, Daisy and Giovanelli remain in the dark; it is Winterbourne who becomes visible. Similarly, whereas Winterbourne thinks he is seeing Daisy as she really is, we realize that we are seeing him in a new light, the light of one who no longer believes in Daisy's innocence, the light of a cynical gentleman of the world. The text that seems to tell us how easy Daisy is to read, then, really tells us about her unreadability and about its own unreadability. The text reminds us that the question of her innocence is ultimately, in a favorite expression of deconstruction, undecidable.

Closely related to this rhetorical reading would be a narratological account of Winterbourne's status as what James called a "centre" or "reflector" (*Wings* 45). Because of James's use of a sort of free indirect discourse, we see most of the story as if through Winterbourne's eyes. This device, whereby the author speaks as if from the perspective of a given character, involves a collapsing of the distinction between narrative and discourse that is central to the narratology of such theorists as Gérard Genette (Richter 844–53). Most of the observations made about Daisy seem to fall somewhere between the third-person perspective of an omniscient narrator and a first-person perspective that we might associate with Winterbourne's point of view. Winterbourne thus becomes what some narratologists have called a "focalizer" for the story (Bal 146–49). This mode of criticism—or other, ethical modes, which we do not discuss much in the theory course—might concern itself with the problem of justice in the narrative, raised on page 111, when Winterbourne denies the fear that he is doing an injustice to Daisy; then again on page 113, when the narrator speaks of doing justice to Winterbourne; and finally on page 116, when Winterbourne confesses to his aunt that he may have done Daisy an injustice.

We next turn from deconstruction to psychoanalysis. The theme of Winterbourne's decentering may tap into a Freudian reading of the story, which would return to some of the concerns of the affective or moralizing critics by way of the observation that all the flower metaphors that the New Critic identified for us are connected to the reproductive function of flowers. Winterbourne both wants to deflower Daisy and fears deflowering her. (The figure of his dominating aunt may represent a phallic mother.) A Freudian critic might make a great deal of Winterbourne's death drive (he steers toward his winter's bourne, though it is Daisy who winds up pushing up the daises). Here, like the occasionally intrusive editor of our Penguin edition, the Freudian critic would note the passages in which Daisy seems to foresee her doom. She says, "I'm not afraid!" (66). Later, she comments to Winterbourne, "You look as if you were taking me to a funeral" (75). Eventually she announces,

"We are going to stay [in Rome] all winter—if we don't die of the fever" (87). The psychoanalyst would note also how eager Winterbourne is, on page 90, to think lightly of Daisy, since that view makes his task of seducing her that much easier. The Lacanian, of course, would emphasize the radical eccentricity of Winterbourne in relation to his self, caused by his unfulfillable desire for Daisy.

Our imagined moralist drew attention to James's concern with justice. A rather less interesting form of a concern with justice might be that of a traditional Marxist, who would view Daisy's story as the result of the conflict between a rising bourgeoisie with its mores of open intercourse between the sexes and an aristocratic code of morality that is becoming outdated. Here, much would be made of the fact that Daisy's father, Ezra B. Miller, has, according to his son, "got a big business" in Schenectady (54). A more subtle Marxist interpretation might follow up on Walter Benjamin's claim that "the birthplace of the novel is the solitary individual" (87) or on Theodor W. Adorno's notion of art as "giv[ing] voice to what ideology hides" (39; students have taken me up on the second suggestion).

On the level of ideology, there are a number of interesting readings of *Daisy Miller*, most of which I touch on only briefly, since my students often write about them in their papers. What might occur last to many of them but first to many current James critics is the idea that *Daisy Miller* is a story about a closeted gay man. James had many passions for young men, and there is much debate about whether he acted on them (which demonstrates how queer studies tends to lead us back to biographical criticism). Winterbourne fears Daisy because he does not understand his own sexuality. In this regard, a particularly interesting figure is Randolph, Daisy's younger brother. In one of James's better-known memoirs he remembers himself as "a small boy" (*Small Boy*), and Randolph may be an image of James's childhood as well as Winterbourne's. When Winterbourne first encounters Randolph, James writes, "At last he finished his coffee and lit a cigarette." (Note the cigarette as a symbol and source of oral pleasure.)

Presently a small boy came walking along the path—an urchin of nine or ten. The child, who was diminutive for his years, had an aged expression of countenance, a pale complexion, and sharp little features. He was dressed in knickerbockers, with red stockings, which displayed his poor little spindleshanks; he also wore a brilliant red cravat. He carried in his hand a long alpenstock, the sharp point of which he thrust into everything that he approached—the flowerbeds, the garden-benches, the trams of the ladies' dresses. (49)

I remark to my students on the phallic nature of the alpenstock and the way that Randolph thrusts it, first to the metaphor for women's sexual organs (flowerbeds) and then to a metonymy for them (ladies' dresses). But if

Randolph is always sticking his alpenstock where it doesn't belong, his true pleasures, like Winterbourne's, are oral: when he gets three fragments of sugar from Winterbourne, he thrusts two in the pocket of his knickerbockers and one in "another place" (49), his mouth, an example of James's wonderfully periphrastic style, which recalls for the reader of Dante the prominence of the mouth in the canto of Paolo and Francesca. Note that the boy has lost several teeth (50).

Why see Randolph as an image of Winterbourne? He looks prematurely aged, and Winterbourne wonders "if he himself had been like this in his infancy, for he had been brought to Europe at about this age," as indeed James had (50). The interest aroused by the small boy is displaced onto Daisy, but Winterbourne's failure to respond actively to her can be traced to his fundamentally oral form of sexuality. The older woman in Geneva is essentially a front (no one, after all, has ever seen her). His attitude to sex with women can be compared to Randolph's attitude to the ship, *The City of Richmond*, that brought the Millers to Europe: "it was turned the wrong way" (83). In directing himself toward women, Winterbourne is pointing himself in the wrong direction. A sexual interest in Giovanelli might even be made out, on the theory of triangular desire: Winterbourne's desire for Daisy seems to grow once Winterbourne realizes that Giovanelli is courting her. He comments repeatedly (though apparently in anger) on Giovanelli's "very pretty face" (89).

The question of performativity raised by Judith Butler would be crucial for understanding the nature of the judgments Winterbourne passes on Daisy. For example, at a party, Daisy says, performatively, "If this is improper, Mrs Walker, . . . then I am all improper, and you must give me up" (93). Her declaration makes her improper. On page 109 comes a particularly important series of performative statements: from Daisy, "I am engaged"; from Winterbourne, "Yes, I believe it!"; then from Daisy again, "Oh, no, you don't, . . . Well, then—I am not!" I recommend to my students J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* as the background to Butler's article, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" (Richter 1514–25).

I conclude our tour of critical schools with a comment on new historicism. The most easily anticipated new-historicist approach would probably involve exploring the discourse of women's innocence in the late nineteenth century—perhaps finding a girl or young woman who actually died in Rome on vacation and comparing her story with Daisy Miller's and preferably associating both with the history of the Italian risorgimento or urban sanitation in papal Rome. Closely related to the new-historicist interpretation would be the possibility of a Foucauldian treatment of the problem of discipline by way of the statement that Mrs. Miller was "apparently constantly of the opinion that discretion is the better part of surveillance" (101). The story tells of the consequences of Daisy's failure to internalize the norms of young womanhood.

Another quasi new-historicist or cultural studies reading would focus on the

representation of Protestantism in the story. We might look at Winterbourne in relation to the fate of the Protestant ethic, which was most famously theorized by Max Weber but which was also studied by Henry James's brother William in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*. We might note Winterbourne's attachment to Geneva, which the narrator refers to as "the little metropolis of Calvinism" (48). Winterbourne leaves Geneva for Rome at the halfway point of the story (the beginning of chapter 3), and Daisy lies buried in the Protestant cemetery in Rome (along with the poets Keats and Shelley). He compares Randolph to the infant Hannibal, who grew up to be the Carthaginian general who invaded Italy and nearly took Rome (82). We might even think of the Christian martyrs in the Colosseum and imagine that Daisy winds up a martyr to Christian morality. We would pay particular attention to Winterbourne's observation, "I suspect, Mrs Walker, that you and I have lived too long at Geneva" (94). We would explore further the fact mentioned in endnote 11 that many early Protestant reformers were locked up in the Château de Chillon, which Winterbourne visits with Daisy. Henry James presents Winterbourne and most of the story's Protestants as behaving with what Weber would call worldly asceticism, the tendency to live in the world but deny oneself the pleasures of that world, an example of taking monastic morality out of the monasteries and applying it to the population at large. We would then see in the fate of Daisy Miller and of Winterbourne the power of the "iron cage" of modernity that the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism have created for us (123). This Protestant ethic turns out to be too inflexible to deal with the complexities of a place like Rome. It maintains the purity of Winterbourne's wintry soul only at the cost of losing the world represented by Daisy's brief flowering.

I close my lecture by suggesting that various themes reappear from one group of imagined critics to another: the psychoanalyst shares something with the moralist, the new historicist with the old historicist, the queer theorist with the old expressive critic, the deconstructor with the New Critic. When the British protagonist of Lodge's novel, Phillip Swallow, meets up with Morris Zapp again in the sequel, *Small World*, set ten years later (in 1979), Zapp has rethought his project of producing exhaustive commentary on all Jane Austen's work. As he explains in a lecture at a poorly attended conference:

Of course, I never finished [that project]. The project was not so much Utopian as self-defeating. By that I don't just mean that if successful it would have eventually put us all out of business. I mean that it couldn't succeed because it isn't possible, and it isn't possible because of the nature of language itself, in which meaning is constantly being transferred from one signifier to another and can never be absolutely possessed. To understand a message is to decode it. Language is a code. *But every decoding is another encoding.* (25)

I hope that by giving a tour of potential theoretical readings of *Daisy Miller*, I suggest to my students how much each theoretical decoding offers another possible encoding.

The students themselves find ways to read the story that I never anticipated. In their papers for the class, they have taken up some of my suggestions and found applications of their own. They have written about the text's deconstruction of its own binary oppositions, the performative definition of innocence, the Marxist categories of reification and alienation in respect to the capital off which Daisy and her family live, the construction of Daisy as an object of exchange in a homosocial paradigm, Winterbourne as psychoanalyst, and the problem of objectivity in interpretation. One student, drawing on the work of Wolfgang Iser, argued that "Daisy's charm for Winterbourne is the very fact that she eludes his understanding" (Fishbach 8). Some of the most interesting papers explore the limits of the theories that they set out to apply. At semester's end, I leave the students with a reminder of Hans-Georg Gadamer's "hermeneutic circle" (Richter 671) and the thought that any encounter with a text, especially one as rich as a James story, should not simply reinforce our existing theoretical presuppositions but should challenge them. As Gadamer writes, the challenge of interpretation is to "distinguish the true prejudices, by which we understand, from the false ones, by which we misunderstand" (683).

## Teaching *The Turn of the Screw* and/as Literary Theory

Sheila Teahan

I am sometimes asked, especially by colleagues at my institution, whether and how I attempt to teach Henry James to undergraduates. I teach at a large land-grant state university, and the students I encounter at every level, from the introduction to the major through advanced upper-division courses, vary dramatically in their academic preparedness and motivation. This mix would seem unpromising, given James's reputation for being difficult. Happily, students have few preconceptions about James. If they haven't been forewarned that he is too hard to read or that they shouldn't like him because of his alleged class or gender politics, they respond to his work in ways that are lively, intelligent, and heuristically productive. Among the many James novels I have taught with some success and considerable benefit to my students, *The Turn of the Screw* especially lends itself to multiple pedagogical agendas. Although a late James work, it does not present the formidable linguistic and epistemological barriers of the triad of novels *The Ambassadors*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl*. Its style and length make it accessible to literature students at every level. Best of all, students find it intriguing: *The Turn of the Screw* will kindle controversy and spirited debate even in the quietest and most passive group.

Although much of what follows would apply to teaching *The Turn of the Screw* in a variety of courses, I focus on the challenges and benefits of teaching it in the context of literary theory. Anyone who has taught theory to undergraduates knows that their responses to it range from exhilaration to indignation. Not without reason, they tend to perceive theory as technical, abstract, and laden with scary-sounding terminology such as "hermeneutics" and "hegemony." When teaching our semester-long course Modern Critical Theory, but even when including a modest unit of theory in a course that introduces the major, I have found that the best strategy is to teach a number of "literary works" alongside the assigned "theoretical texts." I put these terms in quotation marks to register the ultimate instability of the ontological distinction between literature and theory, since all literary works are demonstrably theoretical and theoretical texts are nothing if not narratives. Students may initially be disconcerted to hear their instructor call into question the distinction on which the conceptualization of theory seems to depend, but they find it reassuring to realize that literary theory is always an attempt to tell a story of some kind about the nature of representation, the status of beginnings and endings, the text's relation to its historical moment, and the like. (It may be less reassuring for them to realize that poems and novels are at least covertly theoretical, but I try to accentuate the positive.) Because it so insistently