

## CHAPTER V

## AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN SOCIO-CULTURAL DISTINCTIVENESS

This chapter is written as a consequence of the objective of the study and the theory applied in this thesis. As stated in Chapter two, Mimetic theory requires both intrinsic and extrinsic parts of the story which should be included in the analysis. Accordingly the extrinsic elements in *Daisy Miller*, the reality being portrayed, are briefly explored in this chapter. Here the writer would like to see the existence of both American and European socio-cultural distinctiveness and how the story of Daisy Miller represents those phenomena. The data of both cultures are taken from various sources, such as historical books written by Walter E. Houghton and journeys edited by M. Thomas Inge and the one by J.A. Leo Lemay.

## V.1. European Socio-Cultural Images

As an old aged civilization, Europe is well known for its typical aristocratic characteristics. The European social life, the aspect mainly concerned, is determined by the values of conformed aristocratic way of socialization. Being perfectly aware of this, Henry James stated at his letter to his friend Mrs. F.H. Hill (1879), as found in *Tales of Henry James*" edited by Christoff Wegelin (1984), about his impression on the English manners.

"...I meant to make a resume of my view of English manners ... The idea was fantastic! The two ladies are a picture of a special case, and they are certainly not an over-charged one. They were very determined their manners should not be nicer; it would have quite defeated the point they wished to make, which was that it didn't at all suit them that a little unknown American girl should marry their coveted kinsman. Such a consummation certainly does not suit English duchesses and countesses in general - it would be quite legitimate to draw from the story an induction as to my conviction point." (p. 386-387)

Further in order to deeply observe and to gain clearer understanding about the European culture and its typical characteristics, the following passage is quoted to describe the European socio-cultural tendencies. Their point of view about values, customs and also behavioural tendencies concerning their sexes will be revealed in this sub chapter. The most important is their point of view in socialization. This passage is taken from "The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870" written by Walter E. Houghton. It is considered appropriate for it also represents about the years *Daisy Miller* was written and as the setting of the story itself.

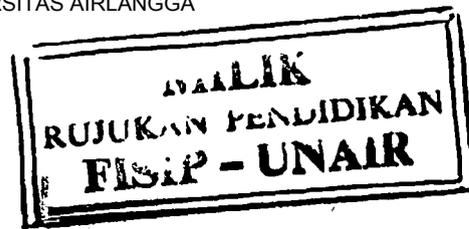
"Of all the criticisms brought against them by Lytton Strachey of the twentieth century, the Victorians would have pleaded guilty to only one. They would have defended or excused their optimism, their dogmatism, their appeal to force, their strait-laced morality, but they would have confessed to an unfortunate strain of hypocrisy. To



understand the charge, it must be broken down into three specific counts. One, they concealed or suppressed their true convictions and their natural tastes. They said the 'right' thing or did the 'right' thing: they sacrificed sincerity to propriety. Second and worse, they pretended to be better than they were. They passed themselves off as being incredibly pious and moral; they talked noble sentiments and lived - quite otherwise. Finally, they refused to look at life candidly. They shut their eyes to whatever was ugly or unpleasant and pretended it didn't exist. Conformity, moral pretension, and evasion - those the hallmarks of Victorian hypocrisy.

In any society which is ambitious and at the same time unsure of itself because it is new, conventions assume enormous force. For this part, the individual himself is only too eager to find something to rely on, and to avoid any ideas or behaviour which by distinguishing him from his class - or the class just above - might make him look like an outsider or an upstart. In Mill's analysis of *Our Times*,

the individual or the family do not ask themselves - what do I prefer? or, what would suit my character and disposition? ... They ask themselves, what is suitable to my position? what is usually done by persons of my station and pecuniary circumstances? or (worse still) what is usually done by persons of a station and circumstances superior to mine?...Even in what people do for pleasure, conformity is the first thing thought of ... peculiarity of taste, eccentricity of conduct, are shunned equally with



crimes.(395-396)

The proper thing to do is not only what the individual want to do in order to belong to good society, or what he does do out of ingrained habit; it is also what he must do if he is to avoid social stigma.

You may talk of the tyranny of Nero and Tiberius, but the real tyranny is the tyranny of your next-door neighbor ... Public opinion is a permeating influence, and it exacts obedience to itself; it requires us to think other's men thoughts, to speaks other men's words, to follow other men's habits. Of course, if we do not, no formal ban issues; no corporeal pain, no coarse penalty a barbarous society is inflicted on the offender: but we are called "eccentric"; there is a gentle murmur of "most fortunate ideas", "singular young man", "well intentioned, I must dare say; but unsafe, sir, quite unsafe" (397)

Conformity for "good" reasons or for self protection is a conscious process. But a good deal of religious hypocrisy was unconscious or half conscious. "What we have to complain of", wrote Carlyle in the Latter-Day Pamphlets, "is that ... every man lies, - with blasphemous audacity, and does not know that he is lying ... The light of our innersight is gone out ... 'Cant and even sincere Cant': O Heaven, when a man doing his sincerest is still but Canting! For this the sad condition of the insincere man." (403-404).

A religious man is afraid of looking into the state of his soul, lest at the same time he should reveal it



to Heaven; and tries to persuade himself that by shutting his eyes to his true character and feelings, they will remain a profound secret both here and hereafter. This a strong engine irresistable inducement to self-deception. (413)

For the Victorians, the disagreeable facts were primarily those of sex, and the terrifying truth the state of religion. But there were other facts, which may first be noticed, like the suffering of the poor and the ugliness of human nature, which called for veils and decorative lies, not so much from fear - though that enters in - as from a shallow and insistent optimism. (414)

One particular element in human nature that was notoriously ignored was, of course, the sexual passion, for the same, fear, and the proprieties united to draw a veil of silence or a gloss of euphemism over the facts of life. So far as the motive was not virtue but the appearance of virtue, and what was condemned was not sin but open sin, the evasion was patently hypocritical. (419)

When the beauty of romantic and connubial love is exalted, mainly to counteract the attraction of lust, its passion may be minimized or excluded, leaving only its sentiment - sentimentality - to stand for the whole truth. (421)

Finally, the exaltation of love tended to exclude violent or ugly emotions which may be aroused by sexual

attraction or repulsion: hate, jealousy, cruelty, as well as lust. They are incompatible with ideal sentiment. (421)

## V.2. American Socio-Cultural Images

This sub chapter contains the descriptions of the American socio-culture, their point of view about values of life and of socialization. This part also consists about the historical origin of the Americans, because it must have some influences to its national characteristics development. Here also occurs some comparisons between America and its origin, Europe. As stated by M. Thomas Inge in his introduction to *Geographic Expansion and National Character*,

Looking back on the experience in 1893, historian Frederick Jackson Turner concluded that it was the frontier that gave to Americans those qualities of character uniquely their own - their strength, inquisitiveness, inventive genius, ingenuity, energy and high spirits. Whether or not Turner is correct is debatable, yet it seems fair to say that the frontier movement has had a profound and stimulating impact on the American mind. (p.2,3)

The following passage is quoted from *An Early American Reader* edited by J.A. Leo Lemay and "A 19th Century American Reader" edited by Thomas Inge. Both books consist of some writings about journeys in America. These descriptions would be very helpful to understand further about American-European contrast differences.

An European writer, Crèvecoeur, wrote *What is an American* in which he describes America from the point of view of an English man.

... When he says to himself, "This the work of my countrymen, who, when convulsed by factions, afflicted by a variety of miseries and wants, restless and impatient, took refuge here. They brought along with them their national genius, to which they principally owe what liberty they enjoy and what substance they possess." Here he sees the industry of his native country displayed in a new manners and traces in their works the embryos of all the arts, sciences, and ingenuity which flourish in Europe.

It is not composed, as in Europe, of great lords who possess everything and of a herd of people who have nothing. Here are no aristocratical families, no courts, no kings, no bishops, no ecclesiastical dominion, no invisible power giving to a few a very visible one, no great manufacturers employing thousands, no great refinements of luxury. The rich and the poor are not so far removed from each other as they are in Europe.

We have no princess for whom we toil, starve and bleed; we are the most perfect society now existing in the world. Here man is free as he ought to be, nor is this pleasing equality so transitory as many others are. We are a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes. From this promiscuous breed, that race now

called Americans have arisen.

In this great American asylum, the poor of Europe have by some means met together, and in consequence various causes; to what purpose should they ask one another what countrymen they are? Alas, two thirds of them had no country... urged by a variety of motives, here they come. Everything has tended to regenerate them: new laws, a new mode of living, a new social system; here they are become men: in Europe they were as so many useless plants, wanting vegetative mould and refreshing showers; they withered, and were mowed down by want, hunger, and war; but now, by the power transplantation, like all other plants they have taken root and flourished. (*American Dream* by Crèvecoeur, 1865)

John O. Sullivan describes the Americans in his writing entitled *The Great Nation of Futurity* (1850) as quoted below.

America is destined for better deeds. It is our unparalleled glory that we have no reminiscences of battlefields, but in defense of humanity, of the oppressed of all nations, of the rights of conscience, the rights of personal enfranchisement. Our annals describe no scenes of horrid carnage, where men were led on by hundreds of thousands to slay one another, dupes and victims of emperors, Kings, nobles, demons in the human form called heroes. We have had our patriots to defend our homes, our liberties, but no aspirants to crowns or thrones; nor have

the American people ever suffered themselves to be led on by wicked ambition to depopulate the land, to spread desolation far and wide, that a human being might place on a seat of supremacy.

We are the nation of progress, of individual freedom, of universal enfranchisement. Equality of rights is cynosure of our union of states, the grand exemplar of the correlative equality of individuals. We must onward to the fulfillment of our mission - to the entire development of the principle of our organization - freedom of conscience, freedom of person, freedom of trade and bussiness pursuits, universality in freedom and equality.

In addition, the following quotations stress more on the individual freedom as the American typical characteristics. It is taken from *Individual Freedom* by Dwight D. Eisenhower.

"This nation, founded by our forefathers, was recognized, at its birth as a new startling political development. It was no monarchy or oligarchy: it conformed to no familiar pattern. Its distinctive feature was government by consent of the governed coupled with guarantees to every individual, great and small, rich and poor, of the maximum in the personal liberty.

Finally, implicit in the American system is a faith that Americans, in the discharge of natural responsibilities and functions, will co-operate to preserve

the individual freedom the so highly prize.

American democracy stands upon three main pillars, the first of which is unshakeable belief in the dignity of man; the second is a system of free enterprise, and the third is the nation wide co-operation ... "

### V.3. Daisy Miller's Inter Socio-Cultural Clash

In "Daisy Miller" Henry James obviously picks up something in the real world and portrays it into his work. His living experience in both American and European continents gave him the inspiration to be lifted into his works. It enables him to explore the existence of different socio-cultural values between America and Europe. He is perfectly aware of its existence and the possible impact when both distinct cultures are encountered.

The European society appears to be the main setting that gives a great contribution to the story development. Europe with its cultural and social typical characteristic are widely explored. European social values that tend to be aristocratic, highly respect the rules of socialization, are seemed to be contrasted with the characteristic of the Americans who'd rather be free and straight forward. The American is represented by the Millers, especially the daughter, a young energetic woman Daisy Miller whose American characteristic of actions and behaviours collide with the European society around her. It

is because she behaves with the same kind of freedom as she does at home, America, at an entirely foreign place, Europe. Daisy's manner is frequently confronted by the European society that are represented by the American "Europeanized" people. They are a group of American-born people who have spent most of their life in Europe in which has made them more European than they are Americans.

In the story we could see that the American and European different agents find many conflicts when they are encountered. It is reasonable for they belong to different socio-cultural backgrounds. Thus, both European and American representatives have their own way in judging which one is acceptable or which one is not, especially in the matter of socialization. The particular conflicts between both agents that are found in the story are already discussed thoroughly in chapter IV that covers the intrinsic elements of the story. Accordingly, this sub chapter does not contain any further discussion about specific conflicts experienced by Daisy Miller and the European representatives.

So far we can see the relation between the reality of different socio cultural backgrounds between the American and the European and the social conflicts of cultural values that Daisy experiences in the story. Considering the previous discussion, it can be concluded that the American individual freedom and the European aristocratic hypocrisy is a real distinct characteristics of

both continents that are portrayed in *Daisy Miller*.

The most significant thing is, through *Daisy Miller*, Henry James also brings the readers a reflection and information of the reality so that we can see and understand further about both cultures and their distinctive phenomena.

