2012

Living Pictures: Performances of Jewishness in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century American Novels

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**Living Pictures: Performances of Jewishness in Late Nineteenth- and
Early Twentieth-Century American Novels**

Nevena Stojanovic

**Dissertation submitted to the
Eberly College of Arts and Sciences
at West Virginia University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

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2012

Keywords: Tableaux Vivants; Jewishness; Performance; American Novels

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ABSTRACT

Living Pictures: Performances of Jewishness in Late Nineteenth- and Early

Twentieth-Century American Novels

Nevena Stojanovic

My dissertation examines the relationship between Jewish identity and performance in non-Jewish novelists' portrayals of tableaux vivants, or living pictures. As a performance genre imported from Europe, the tableau vivant was a frequent element of nineteenth-century American fiction and a popular pastime of middle- and upper-class Americans in the 1800s. Since living pictures were ideologically coded—in general, designed to motivate viewers, mostly women, to adopt the patriarchal values invoked through the performance, such as chastity, purity, and piety—scholarship on the application of tableaux vivants primarily focuses on gender and class. My dissertation contributes to these discussions by highlighting the significance of ethnicity in this performance genre. Since the 1800s were the period of increased Jewish immigration to the United States, non-Jewish authors started exploring the Jewish presence on American soil in their fiction. The novels I examine are Louisa May Alcott's *Behind a Mask*, Henry James's *The Tragic Muse* and *The Golden Bowl*, and Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*. Drawing from Michel de Certeau, I contend that the behavior of the dominant social order can be considered a series of strategies (policies and actions of the powerful) and that the behavior of Jewish women and non-Jewish women who perform Jewishness can be evaluated as a series of tactics (ruses of the powerless). These performances of Jewishness have the purpose of subverting, reshaping, and redefining the patriarchal and nationalist values of the dominant social order. I end this project with an analysis of the absence of living pictures in Jewish novelists' portrayals of Jewishness, the silent film as a genre that surpassed the tableau vivant, and the role of Jewish silent films in the creation of Jewish American culture.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am very grateful to my dedicated dissertation director, Dr. John Ernest, for his skillful guidance, sagacity, vigor, and support. I am also greatly indebted to his brilliant colleagues, Dr. John Lamb, Dr. Kathleen Ryan, Dr. Michael Germana, and Dr. Heidi Kaufman (University of Delaware). Their excellent feedback has enriched this project in numerous ways. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Dennis Allen, the Ph.D. program director, for his dedication to my academic happiness and progress towards the degree. I thank the Jackson Family Foundation and the English Department at West Virginia University for a dissertation fellowship in 2009-2010. This fellowship enabled me to devote my full attention to research and writing.

Many thanks to Irina Rodimtseva, Doina Jikich, and Sujata Sengupta, whose warmth, affection, and friendship have made me so happy while I was in the Ph.D. program. I also thank all my peers for their camaraderie, encouragement, and constructive criticism over the years.

Finally, I am especially grateful to my parents, Marica and Milan Stojanovic, my sister, Miljana Stojanovic, and my late grandparents, Milica and Zivko Ilic and Miljojka and Milivoje Stojanovic, for innumerable moments of happiness and for always having me in their hearts, thoughts, and prayers. Thank you for your endless love, devotion, understanding, and support.

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Introduction

Tableaux Vivants, Jewish Immigrants, and the Shifting Boundaries of the Margins and the Center

My dissertation examines the relationship between Jewish identity and performance in non-Jewish novelists' portrayals of tableaux vivants, or living pictures. As a performance genre imported from Europe, the tableau vivant was a frequent element of nineteenth-century American fiction and a popular pastime of middle- and upper-class Americans in the 1800s. Since living pictures were ideologically coded—in general, designed to motivate viewers, mostly women, to adopt the patriarchal values invoked through the performance, such as chastity, purity, and piety—scholarship on the application of tableaux vivants primarily focuses on gender and class. My dissertation contributes to these discussions by highlighting the significance of ethnicity, specifically Jewishness, in this performance genre. Since the 1800s were the period of increased Jewish immigration to the United States (the first immigration wave began in the 1820s and lasted through the 1840s, and the second one began in the 1880s and ended in the 1920s), non-Jewish authors started exploring the Jewish presence on American soil in their fiction, and some of them did so through scenes with tableaux vivants. Since such literary explorations began between the two waves of Jewish immigration, precisely during the Civil War, when the anti-Semitic prejudice proliferated in American society, and disappeared in the early 1900s, with the disappearance of tableaux vivants as a performance genre and before the passing of federal policies that limited Jewish immigration to the country, my dissertation examines novels by non-Jewish American authors published between 1866 and 1906.

In the nineteenth-century non-Jewish literature the figure of the Jew is a receptacle for the dominant social order's fears, anxieties, hopes, and desires. As Bryan Cheyette has convincingly argued, the Jew reflects “the possibility of a new redemptive order as well as the degeneration of

an untransfigured past” (*Constructions of the ‘Jew’* 6). Very often the Jew can simultaneously belong to “both sides of a political or social or ideological divide” (9). Therefore, the image of the Jew is fluid. As Cheyette explains, “Even within the same ‘character,’ the otherness of ‘the Jew’ was such that s/he could be simultaneously ‘male’ and ‘female’ and ‘black’ and ‘white’ and ultimately . . . both ‘philosemitic’ and ‘antisemitic’ ” (*Between ‘Race’ and Culture* 11). Drawing from Zygmunt Bauman, Cheyette underlines the importance of “the term *allo-semitism*,” which encompasses “antisemitism and philosemitism as two relatively distinct aspects of a much broader process of differentiating Jews from other human beings” (14, his italics). The figure of the Jew is simultaneously an embodiment of the dominant social order’s ideals and aspirations as well as an incarnation of that order’s anxieties and trepidations. I argue that by staging Jewishness in tableaux vivants or performing tableaux in front of Jews, non-Jewish American authors attempt to elicit perceptions of Jews as simultaneously worthy of emulation and threatening to the dominant social order. Their presentations of Jewishness are allo-Semitic, and they reflect the authors’ ambivalent feelings towards Jews.

I borrow an approach to ethnicity from Harley Erdman’s study *Staging the Jew: The Performance of an American Ethnicity, 1860-1920*. Drawing from William Boelhower and Judith Butler, Erdman views Jewishness (and ethnicity in general) as “a ‘kinesis’ which takes place in cultural encounters, a process of perceiving and being perceived” as well as a process of constant re-articulation of one’s ethnicity through numerous performances (6). Ethnicity is not an essence but an unstable cultural category. The emphasis on the spectatorship’s perception and interpretation of the staged Jewishness as well as on the performers’ perception and interpretation of the roles they play in various tableaux, offers spaces for the analysis of the roles of the Jew in the nineteenth-century American cultural imagination. Unlike Erdman, who focuses

on both non-Jewish and Jewish representations of the Jew in various plays on the American stage, I analyze non-Jewish novelists' portrayals of the Jew in living pictures only, emphasizing that the conventions of this genre of performance (especially the silence of actors and the tendency of the genre to conflate real persons with performed roles), its ideological didacticism, and its popularity, enable the authors to propose ambivalent attitudes towards Jews in American society.

Though tableaux vivants were invented at the Comedie Italienne in 1761, the French playwright Denis Diderot was the one who built a dramaturgical theory grounded in the presentation of “sequences” of living pictures (M. Elbert 236).¹ As Martin Miesel observes, “Diderot insists on the essentiality of the spectacular, pictorial dimension in drama, and he envisages pictorial action brought to such perfection as to render words unnecessary” (qtd. in M. Elbert 236). A tableau vivant thus combined a few arts: painting, theatre, and fiction, and its purpose was to silently “tell” a story. The result of the combination of pictorial arts and silence in a living picture was the conflation of characters/roles and painting accessories and stage props. As Henry James points out in his short story “Paste” (1899), in a tableau, “the real thing always falls short” (qtd. in Kassanoff, *Edith Wharton* 50). When James’s heroine Charlotte Prime questions the appropriateness of using her dead aunt’s apparently fake jewels for a tableau of Ivanhoe (i.e. paste instead of pearls), Mrs. Guy reminds her that her representation of Rowena is what matters to the spectators and that the paste will seem real to them (50). Tableaux vivants thus played on the possibility of displacing the original in order to convince the spectators that certain ideological values, virtues and life-styles can be emulated and appropriated by anyone.

Though initially performers in living pictures were mostly men who posed as ancient statues and heroes, as time passed and taste in tableaux production shifted towards presentations of literary scenes and paintings, women became leading participants in the genre. As Mary Chapman points out, in the nineteenth century, tableaux performers were mostly women, and since men who took part in the performances were cast as wanderers, “observers,” or “voyeurs” whose “gaze” towards actresses “framed” the “scenes,” tableaux vivants often served the dominant social order as tools for the reassertion of patriarchal ideology (29-30). Speechless and immobile women on the stage were validated by male gazes of both the actors (if there were male participants in the performance) and male spectators in the audience (31). By representing literary, historical, biblical, and mythological figures as well as the scenes from well-known paintings, such as Titian’s, Velasquez’s, or Degas’ portraits of women, performers aimed at motivating a spectatorship to adopt the patriarchal values invoked through a tableau (33-35). However, as Chapman notes, living pictures gradually abandoned an emphasis on female “virtues” and signaled a possibility of “social mobility”: by inspiring women to behave as stylish figures in tableaux, the authors of tableaux manuals “promised” their readership an acquisition of a sophisticated “taste” and thus social “elevation” (28-29).² Manuals on how to stage tableaux address their readership as potential social climbers, or, in other words, as subjects who can obtain a higher social rank by building their sophistication through tableaux.

As the forthcoming section points out, the long nineteenth century witnessed changes in the content, aesthetics, and ideological purposes of tableaux vivants. When living pictures reached the New Continent in 1831 with the British performance of the scenes from Scheffer’s print “The Soldier’s Widow” at the Park Theater in New York City, they started as a “mass entertainment that thrilled American audiences,” but “the melodramas and silent films” of the

1920s managed to surpass them (Chapman 25). Just like in Europe, on the New Continent, their content was primarily based on literary, historical, biblical, and mythological stories as well as outstanding paintings. Though they were money-making performances in the beginning, in the 1850s and 1860s, living pictures enriched the middle- and upper-class families' repertoires, full of pantomimes and charades (Chapman 25, Halttunen 153). These drawing room tableaux vivants emerged from the 1850s shift from "the cult of sincerity" to "a new cult of individual style," according to which clothing, make-up, and manners were important aspects of self-presentation in social life (Halttunen 159).³ Parlor tableaux vivants taught audiences how to dress and how to express or conceal certain emotions in order to achieve their goals in everyday life. In the late 1800s tableaux vivants "became fashionable in high-society ballrooms and on urban streets, as commemorations of special events, fund-raisers, and social entertainment" (Chapman 25). In order to stage scenes from outstanding paintings, female tableaux performers sometimes exposed their almost naked bodies in front of an audience, which caused controversial debates about the role of tableaux in the nineteenth-century American society and opened the space for women's usage of tableaux for progressive and subversive causes (26-27). For instance, "in 1913, members of the National American Women's Suffrage Association marched to the Treasury Building in Washington, D.C. to present a series of tableaux representing Justice, Plenty, Columbia, Peace, Charity, and Liberty to campaign for the woman's vote" (26). Evidently, the repertoire of tableaux artists ranged from the old-fashioned allegorical performances to the experimental theatrical attempts to call for an organized feminist action. This genre of performance was used to reinforce the values of the dominant social order as well as to challenge and resist them.

The popularity of living pictures in the nineteenth-century United States is mirrored in the novels of the renowned authors of the day, such as Louisa May Alcott, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James, and Edith Wharton. My dissertation focuses on the following novels: *Behind a Mask* (1866), by Louisa May Alcott, *The Tragic Muse* (1890) and *The Golden Bowl* (1904), by Henry James, and *The House of Mirth* (1905), by Edith Wharton, all of which contain significant scenes with tableaux vivants. Alcott's novel was published between the two waves of the Jewish immigration to the United States and in the aftermath of the Civil War, when American society witnessed the most notorious rise of anti-Semitism to date, while the others appeared in the prime of the second wave of Jewish immigration and before the passing of federal legislations that restricted Jewish (along with South and East European and Asian) immigration to the country. All the novels reveal non-Jewish reactions to the increasing Jewish presence and visibility in the United States. In all of the novels, participants in tableaux vivants are Jewish or non-Jewish women who perform Jewishness in front of non-Jews, or non-Jewish women who perform roles of non-Jewish aristocratic matrons in front of Jewish male spectators (among others).

In order to analyze the intervention that Jewish identities make through these performances in the predominantly Christian, patriarchal society, I combine different concepts from performance theory with Michel de Certeau's concepts of strategies and tactics. Certeau's cultural theory helps us understand the dynamic between the dominant, Christian and male, social order and the powerless, Jewish and mostly female, others. As Certeau points out, a strategy is

the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon

as a subject with will and power... can be isolated. It postulates a *place* that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an *exteriority* composed of targets or threats... can be managed. As in management, every 'strategic' rationalization seeks first of all to distinguish its 'own' place, that is, the place of its own power and will, from an 'environment.' A Cartesian attitude, if you wish: it is an effort to delimit one's own place in a world bewitched by the invisible powers of the Other. (35-36, his italics)

Christian patriarchal milieu will be considered the space of strategic operations. Ethnic, national and gender stereotyping as well as various discriminatory or pejorative actions, policies, and behavioral patterns of the dominant social order will be analyzed as strategies that underpin and rule society.

Such strategic operations of the powerful are challenged, resisted or undermined by the tactics of cultural others. In Certeau's words:

By contrast with strategy..., a tactic is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority, then, provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of the foreign power... It operates in isolated actions, blow by blow. It takes advantage of 'opportunities' and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position, and plan raids... It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse. In short, a tactic is an art of the weak. (36-37)

Various ruses that marginalized individuals invent and execute in order to delineate their own space of action will be considered tactics. As Certeau further explains: "strategies pin their hopes

on the resistance that *the establishment of a place* offers to the erosion of time; tactics on a clever *utilization of time*, of the opportunities it presents and also of the play it introduces into the foundations of power” (38-39, his italics). Careful examinations of different trajectories of tactics executed by marginalized subjects will demonstrate how their social power grows over time and how they challenge or defeat the established cultural norms.

Since the powerless use various performances on and off the stage in order to tactically subvert and reshape current social norms, combinations of concepts from performance theory and Certeau’s tactics will help us understand how certain cultural performances have the power to challenge the dominant social order. For instance, combining Daphne Brooks’s concept of “self-actualization” through “off-center performances” with Certeau’s tactics, I demonstrate how the protagonist of Louisa May Alcott’s *Behind a Mask* raises her voice against patriarchy through tableaux vivants staged in the house of her wealthy employers and through her off-the-stage performances of Jewishness in everyday situations. Similarly, linking Erving Goffman’s concept of “frame analysis” with Certeau’s tactics, I explain how the protagonist of Henry James’s *The Tragic Muse* enacts the model for the reframing and regeneration of the Anglo-American culture through her tableaux vivants and performances of Jewishness off the stage. Finally, combining Patrick E. Johnson’s concept of “appropriating” ethnicity with Certeau’s tactics, I demonstrate how one of the protagonists of Henry James’s *The Golden Bowl* benefits from her performances of Jewishness announced through her tableau vivant as well as how the protagonist of Edith Wharton’s *The House of Mirth* ends up socially ruined and eventually dies because she rejects performances of Jewishness (again, her resistance to such performances is announced through her tableau vivant). However, though these characters, through their tactical performances, introduce or reveal new options for cultural development, they are to some extent

restricted by the strategies of the dominant social order. The selected authors' allo-Semitic presentations of Jewish characters will help us understand limitations and traps of the Semitic discourse as well: despite the fact that performers of Jewishness achieve certain goals, they remain charged with negative, stereotypically Jewish features. In order to analyze the cultural significance of these literary explorations of Jewish identities, it is necessary to look into the history of tableaux vivants, the history of Jews, and the history of women's movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century American society.

The Tableaux Vivants Craze and the Public Questioning of its Morality

Tableaux vivants arrived in the United States, specifically in New York, in the theater season of 1831-32 and by mid-1840s became a most popular entertainment genre on the New York stage. According to critic George C.D. Odell, in the season of 1831-32, the Park Theater hired Ada Adams Barrymore, a British tableaux model, who had begun her theatrical career as a dancer and actress at London's Royal Circus (McCullough 11). Prior to coming to the United States, Ada and her husband, William Barrymore, a stage manager, writer, and scenic machinist, had worked in equestrian Andrew Ducrow's company at Astley's Amphitheater in London, where they mastered the art of posing (11). As A.H. Saxon observes, at the Amphitheater, Ducrow staged a series of "Grecian Statues," which later became part of his pantomime *Raphael's Dream*. In Saxon's words, the tableaux sequences consisted of "a picture frame in the center of which, on a lofty pedestal against a pictorial background, stood the motionless figure of Ducrow" (qtd. in McCullough 8). Ducrow staged various marble statues, from those of "Homeric heroes," to those of "athletes" and "gladiators" (8). The renowned British equestrian was in the prime of his career in the 1830s, when tableaux reached the New Continent (8). Though individual performers such as Mrs. Barrymore, George Wieland, Mr. Frimbley, John Fletcher, the

Swiss Brothers, and William Mitchell, established themselves on the New York stage by posing as ancient statues or enacting well-known paintings (11-15), they gradually started presenting “scenes inspired by literature, historical events, and similar sources” (16). Tableaux were sometimes included in larger theatrical productions, like the aforementioned *Raphael’s Dream*, but they were often staged as autonomous genres “under generic titles or with no general title at all” (16). With the popularization of literary, historical, mythological and biblical scenes and well-known paintings as templates for tableaux, in the mid-1840s, producers started stressing “the use of scenery, lighting, and costume” (16).⁴

This change in taste led to different production needs and styles. In the late 1840s, individual performers were surpassed by entire “companies of artists” hired to stage living pictures (19). The general preference for new topics and the involvement of a great number of artists caused public debates on decency of tableaux productions. As Jack W. McCullough notes, “Critics, both during the period and in later years, point to the manager of the first of these companies, a Dr. Collyer, as providing the turning point from moral to immoral performances, and they associate his productions with the introduction of women into tableaux, even though women had appeared earlier” (19). Apparently, Dr. Collyer emphasized “the female form divine” in his tableaux, and the women’s public exposure of their almost naked bodies was the major controversy (19). The *Herald* commented on the popular productions as follows: “These exhibitions during the past week, have been worse and worse—more nakedness and less drapery... It is really astonishing how these exhibitions are crowded; all the regular theatres are nearly deserted” (qtd. in McCullough 28). It is questionable whether tableaux vivants that exposed the “female form divine” influenced the lack of popularity of the regular theater, but it is certain that they attracted numerous audiences (28). “Indecent” presentations, however,

provoked severe reactions of city authorities, and many posers and theater owners were arrested and questioned (29-32). Even though tableaux producers insisted on the artistic and didactic aspects of the genre whenever they publicly discussed it, the growing numbers of admirers were mostly lured by the beauty of female models. In the 1850s, this division between sensational and elevated purposes of the genre was conspicuous, and genre producers were split into two opposing groups (36).⁵

The first group of producers, active in the early 1850s, consisted of Dr. Collyer's disciples, who hired tableaux performers willing to expose their bodies in public. There were even theaters whose repertoires contained tableaux vivants only. Living pictures were staged in less prominent houses, not in the mainstream theaters. Houses such as "Burton's, the Old Bowery, Brougham's (later Wallack's) Lyceum, or the like" offered very few tableaux (McCullough 37). The Wallhalla Theater at 36 Canal Street was the first tableaux house, and its repertoire was full of sensational living pictures. The theater opened in December 1848 and worked through 1850. The production of Hiram Power's "Greek Slave" was the theater's opening piece (37). The advertisement emphasized the sensational aspects of the performance, referring to the models as "French," as "the most beautiful women in the world," and as "the pretty ladies" (qtd. in McCullough 37). In the 1850s, "acrobats, minstrels, dancers, and similar attractions" regularly contributed to tableaux (37). Likewise, "songs, instrumental music, recitations, and the like" often enriched tableaux (38). Again, "indecent" performances did bother city authorities, and artists and theater proprietors were arrested and interrogated. Sensational newspaper articles about the arrested models revealed some information about the posers' professional lives and about tableaux production in general. The interviewees claimed that "they would not be allowed to appear unless clad in a suit of flesh-colored tights and a thin

gauze skirt, which they each had to pay four dollars for” (46). All the arrested models stated that they were decent women and that “they exhibited themselves merely to gain a livelihood” (46). One of them was a “tailoress,” another one a “paper-box maker,” but all of them stressed that posing in tableaux vivants helped their families survive (46).

Along with the popularity of these sensational tableaux, the 1850s witnessed the rise of aesthetically valued tableaux. The most prominent producers of “respectable” tableaux in the decade were Louis Keller and Laura Keene. Louis Keller’s production of *Phanor and Azemus; or, The Two Eras* premiered at the Broadway Theater on March 31, 1856 (McCullough 49). The *Herald* was very enthusiastic about Keller’s piece. The newspaper invited “artists, connoisseurs, and the public in general” to view Keller’s “beautiful and instructive entertainments,” and claimed that “M. Keller’s efforts to present the works of the great masters of les Beaux arts will be appreciated and rewarded” (qtd. in McCullough 52). After a few shows, the *Herald* referred to Keller’s piece as “refined and chastely artistic,” and a couple of months later noted that Keller’s spectatorship was “steadily increasing” (qtd. in McCullough 52). Simultaneously, Laura Keene became a prominent tableaux producer. She included tableaux in larger dramatic genres on stage. In February 1856, her production of *Novelty* premiered in Tripler Hall (57). *Novelty* was a “rhythmical, musical, scenic, dramatic, extravaganza,” containing ten tableaux (57). The final living picture was a “patriotic spectacle” entitled “The Apotheosis of Washington” (57). The whole piece was imagined as a birthday tribute to Washington (57). Public respect for the work of Keller and Keene elevated living pictures, but the 1860s witnessed the rise of new sensational performance genres.⁶

The dwindling number of tableaux productions in the 1860s and early 1870s can be explained by the popularity of sensational melodrama, the appearance of performance genres that included “leg art,” and the opening of concert saloons (McCullough 63). Sensational melodrama utilized the same techniques that contributed to the popularity of tableaux vivants, only intensifying the elements of the spectacular (63). The most popular sensational melodramas in the 1850s were *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, *Jessie Brown*, *The Poor of New York*, and *The Octoroon*, and in the 1860s *East Lynne*, *Under the Gaslight*, and Boucicault’s plays (63). The 1860s also witnessed the emergence of performances that emphasized “leg art.” The first “leg art” attraction was Adah Isaacs Menken’s 1861 performance in *Mazeppa* (64). In this show Menken wore “pink fleshings and white trunks” (64). The 1866 staging of *The Black Crook* contributed to the even greater popularity of “leg art” (64). One of the reviewers referred to the performance as “a medium for the presentation of several gorgeous scenes, and a large number of female legs” (qtd. in McCullough 64). Lydia Thompson and her British Blondes came to the New Continent in September 1868, bringing more allure to “leg art” (64). The group’s burlesques were full of “songs, dances, jokes, and impersonations,” but the dancers’ tiny apparels stirred up the public interest (64-65). After the closing of the Tammany tableaux house in 1870, living pictures disappeared from the New York stage until 1875 (70), when Matt Morgan, a scenic painter and tableaux producer, staged provocative tableaux with nude women at the Theater Comique (74).⁷

While in the 1880s tableaux were mostly parts of larger dramatic genres and in the early 1890s a popular charity entertainment of the upper social classes, in the late 1890s, Hungarian performer Edward Kilanyi resurrected the genre, staging it in mainstream theaters (McCullough 99). Though Kilanyi spent less than two years in New York, he managed to re-establish the public respect of tableaux (112). Odell praised Kilanyi since his “artistic tableaux... started a

new ‘craze’ in our crazy town, and before long, ‘living pictures’ breathed and had their being on many stages within parlieus of New York” (qtd. in McCullough 113). Some of Kilanyi’s disciples were outstanding managers and entertainers, such as Oscar Hammerstein (115). Kilanyi’s tableaux were famous for his invention of the “glyptorama,” a scene-changing mechanism (108-112). Tableaux with Jewish themes found their way into famous theaters. “Judith and Holofernes” was added to the repertoire of the Imperial Music Hall in June 1894 (119). F.F. Proctor added *Trilby* tableau to the repertoire of the Proctor Theater in January 1895 (125). Proctor was inspired by A.M. Palmer’s popular production of George du Maurier’s *Trilby* (125).⁸

Tableaux vivants were still under public scrutiny in the 1890s, but even though presses discussed the inappropriateness of some popular productions, there were not many legal prosecutions of producers, models, and proprietors (McCullough 133). An important fact from the decade is that Lady Somerset, a notorious opponent to the fad of “indecent” living pictures in London, landed on the New Continent in the summer of 1894 in order to support and advise Mrs. Emilie D. Martin of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, who was then the “National Superintendent of the Department for the Production of Purity in Literature and Art” (135). Mrs. Martin and her supporters launched a public crusade against the living pictures as an indecent entertainment, grounding their argument in the policy that forbade “indecent modeling” (135). However, the crusaders did not have any success. Presses regularly informed citizens that whenever the crusaders wanted to discuss “inappropriate” tableaux productions with the city authorities, the officials’ “assistants” or other “minor figures” kindly rejected them (135). The public got more accustomed and more tolerant to the radical, progressive, and provocative themes of tableaux.⁹

As the new century opened, silent film industry pushed tableaux vivants production to the margins of public entertainment. Tableaux vivants as single performances appeared on the stage from time to time, but the fascinating effects of the motion picture attracted many more viewers. Tableaux were gradually becoming auxiliary ingredients in larger performance genres. With the disappearance of provocative tableaux from theaters and streets, public crusades against tableaux producers and artists vanished, and the public turned towards the twentieth-century mass entertainment, such as the silent film. The rising silent film industry attracted a great number of talented artists, and many of them were of Jewish descent.

Jewish Immigration and Adaptation to the United States

The first wave of Jewish immigration to the United States began as early as the 1820s. As Hasia R. Diner points out, this is the decade when a great number of “young Jews from central Europe” came to the United States (*A New Promised Land* 22). By the beginning of the second wave of Jewish immigration to the United States in 1880, there had been 150,000 central European Jews in the country (22). Most of the Jews in central Europe were peasants and usually lacking in education and money (22-23). They had worked mostly as itinerant merchants, or they had done other kinds of low-paid jobs, but since the beginning of industrialization, these jobs could not help them survive (22-23). According to Diner, “Railroads and other improvements in communication and transportation meant that traveling peddlers were not needed to move goods from place to place” (23). Furthermore, anti-Semitism was always present in central Europe, and some Jews immigrated out of the fear of pogroms, while the others wanted to avoid recruitments in the times of political unrests in the area (23).¹⁰

Upon arrival to the United States, Jews continued to cherish their views of communal life. As Diner points out, “Regardless of where Jews came from, they believed it was everyone’s responsibility to provide orphanages, job-information services, free coal, food for the hungry, matzo at Passover, dowries to help poor girls get married, hospitality to travelers, and support for impoverished widows” (28). In the United States, they invested time and money in the formation of organizations that would sustain these aspects of Jewish social life (27-28). However, as time passed, though Jewish immigrants cherished their communal culture, they started debating the nature and purpose of Judaism (28). Most of the immigrants did not rigorously follow Judaic rules, and the reason for this was very likely the nature of peddling jobs since travelers were not in a position to observe religion on the road (28). Therefore, many American Jews believed in secularism, or in other words, wanted to amend Judaism so that it could be more adaptable to contemporary living styles (28-29). In the early 1800s, Jewish movements in Germany and the United States argued for the reformation or modernization of Judaism in the spirit of rationalism, the school of thought that believed in “science, reason, and progress” (29). The reformers were convinced that contemporary Jews should remold Judaism according to the demands and purposes of their societies.

Though American Jews had different opinions on the matter of Reform Judaism, they always agreed upon the defense of Jews who lived far away, and they treasured their belongings to both the world’s Jewish community and to the United States. When, in 1840, Syrian Christians and Muslims labeled Jews responsible for the death of some citizens and for making “*matzo*” from the “blood” of the dead, American, British and French Jews publicly condemned such allegations (Diner 31-32, *her italics*). Similarly, American Jews were proud of their American identities and actively participated in American civic life. They “voted, served on juries, joined

volunteer fire companies, and worked in law enforcement” (32). Between the two waves of Jewish immigration, American Jews held many leading positions in urban areas. In 1850, Morris Goodman of Los Angeles got a position in the city council, and in 1852, Elcan Heydenfeldt of San Francisco got a job in the California state assembly (32). Mark Strouse became the chief of police in Virginia City, Nevada, in 1863 (32). Between 1869 and 1871, Barnard Goldsmith was the mayor of Portland, Oregon (32). Abraham Kohn of Chicago, an outspoken opponent of slavery, was a distinguished member of the Republican Party, and the party rewarded him for his loyalty and contribution by making him a clerk in 1860 (32-33). Jewish individuals held important public positions.

Despite their successes in the public arena between the two waves of immigration, Jews often experienced discrimination. Even though laws that restricted Jews from participation in politics “because of their religion” were abolished (Maryland passed the “Jew bill” in 1826, New Hampshire in 1877, and North Carolina in 1885), Jews and the predominantly Protestant majority were not always on good terms (33). Interreligious tensions surfaced particularly during the Civil War (32-37). Conflicts occurred both in the military and in civilian sectors (32-37). All the policies and allegations against Jews revealed anti-Semitic attitudes in the time of the Civil War.

The most notorious discriminatory practices against Jews in the military were Congress’s 1861 chaplaincy program and General Grant’s 1862 expulsion of Jews from the army sectors he was in charge of (36-37). Approximately 7,000 Jews were in the Union Army, and 3,000 Southern Jews were in the Confederacy (35). In both the Union Army and the Confederacy, there were more Jews than other ethnic groups. At home, Jewish women engaged in various projects

that aimed at helping soldiers in the battlefield (36). Despite Jewish patriotism, “in 1861 Congress declared that regiments could choose the Christian clergymen of their choice as chaplain and turned the army’s chaplaincy program over to the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA)” (36). The Sixty-fifth Regiment of the Fifth Pennsylvania Cavalry, commanded by Jewish Colonel Max Friedman, consisted of Jewish and other soldiers (36). Sergeant Michael Allen, a Hebrew instructor educated in European rabbinic schools, got the position of the regiment’s chaplain (36). The YMCA was appalled by this act and claimed that it would aim at Allen’s “dishonorable discharge” in order to induce him into resignation (36). Arnold Fischel, a rabbi from New York, succeeded Allen, but the War Department did not approve of his election because he was a Jew (36). The issue caught the attention of Jews across the nation, who organized protests, and a rabbi addressed the Congress through the letter that defended Jewish combatants’ “rights to religious freedom” (36). In 1862, as a result of these public acts of resistance, the Congress changed the law, permitting rabbis to be chaplains (36). A similar ordeal for Jews in the military happened on December 17, 1862, when “General Ulysses S. Grant issued an order expelling all Jews from the military district under his command (Mississippi, Kentucky, and Tennessee)” (37). Grant was convinced that Jews profited from their allegiance with the Confederacy and that “Jews, as a class [were] violating every regulation of the trade established by the Treasury Department” (qtd. in Diner 37). Believing in the US Constitution and the US laws, Jews of Paducah, Kentucky, dispatched a messenger to Washington to discuss the matter with President Lincoln. The talks were fruitful, and the President decided to annul Grant’s policy (37).¹¹

Jews encountered discrimination in other walks of life as well. The most frequently referenced incident was the 1877 expulsion of Jewish tourists from a hotel in Saratoga Springs.

Joseph Seligman, a well-off Jewish businessman from New York City, contributed to the US budget a lot during the Civil War “by marketing Union bonds on European money markets” (Diner 38). In the summer of 1877 Seligman and “his entire household” went to Saratoga Springs, a posh tourist attraction located in upstate New York. The manager of the Grand Union Hotel, where the family spent many summers, did not want to accommodate the Seligmans, informing the financier that the hotel stopped admitting Jews. The rich Christians who stayed in the hotel did not consider Jewish presence appropriate and desirable (38). Wealthy Jews were seen as a threat to the Christian participants in the American capitalist project, and the Seligman incident confirmed the growing anti-Semitism in the upper class.

During the second immigration wave, 1880-1924, about 25 million eastern European Jews settled in the United States (Diner 42). Eastern European Jewish history had been turbulent. A great number of Jews from the region came from czarist Russia, some came from Poland, but many more arrived from Romania and the eastern part of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (42-43). Eastern European Jews barely had any rights (43). Christians constantly discriminated against Jews, and physical assaults occurred from time to time. After 1881, violence against Jews in the region happened frequently, and sometimes rulers stirred it up (43). This was a common occurrence in Russia (43). After Russia’s political and militaristic crises at home and abroad, that is, the unsuccessful national revolution in 1905 and losses in the Russo-Japanese War in 1906, organized attacks on Jews happened regularly (44). During the World War I and its aftermath as well as during the communist revolution in Russia, Jewish communities were frequently attacked (44). Approximately one third of Eastern European Jews made homes in the United States during the second immigration wave (44). The United States admitted 20,000 Jews a year between 1881 and 1892 and 37,000 a year between 1892 and 1903 (44). About 76,000 Jews made homes in the

United States from 1903 to 1914 (44). Congress passed the Johnson Act in 1924, which restricted immigration to the United States, allowing each nation a limited number of newcomers (45).¹²

Eastern European Jews tried to cherish the Jewish culture from their home countries as much as they could. They were influenced by socialism, and upon their naturalization in the United States, they supported “liberal” politicians in the elections, particularly those who argued for the state’s assistance to the impoverished citizens (Diner 51). Many Eastern European Jews were members of Zionist associations in their native lands and continued to support Zionism in the United States (62). However, a great number of the followers of the aforementioned ideologies did not consider traditional Judaism an important aspect of Jewish culture. They approved of Jewishness as a feeling of belonging to the world’s Jewish community but not of Judaism as an obligation (56). Secular Jews established schools and summer camps in which they tried to teach kids that “Jewishness as a culture could be separate from Judaism as a religious system” (57). To this end, in 1918 they even formed the Shalom Aleichem Folk Schools, all of which used Yiddish as a medium and preached the aforementioned ideology (57). Eastern Europe of the 1800s saw the blossoming of Yiddish literature, and Jewish newcomers in the United States cherished Yiddish literature and language (57). Secularism and Yiddish culture were the most recognizable labels of the Eastern European Jewish immigrants.

The most efficient public tool for the dissemination of Jewish secularism was a newspaper titled *Der Forverts* (*The Jewish Daily Forward*) (Diner 57). Abraham Cahan, a Jewish immigrant from Russia and the founder of the Jewish American novel, was the founder of the newspaper in 1897 and its editor-in-chief until 1946 (57). Cahan was famous for making

New York City “the world center of Yiddish literature, especially Yiddish theater” (57). In 1927, the newspaper sponsored the first Yiddish radio called WEVD, inviting American Jews to get involved in the creation of Yiddish culture in the New World (57). The newspaper and other Yiddish cultural formations helped Jewish immigrants become good American citizens, simultaneously encouraging them to cherish their Eastern European Jewish roots and heritage (58).

Besides Yiddish newspapers and radios, cinematography and music were fields that attracted Jewish American artists. Approximately four hundred New York’s theaters had had moving pictures on their repertoires by 1908, and Jews were screenwriters and producers of many of these early films (Diner 60). New York had been the center of cinematography until the 1920s, when the fad moved to Hollywood. Many famous film-makers of the day were Jews, and Louis B. Meyer was among the most outstanding moguls. He had managed to establish Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer by 1924, employing many Jewish artists (60). However, Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer and other film companies with Jewish proprietors rarely made films with themes from Jewish life (60). Jewish American early films, like *Abie’s Irish Rose* and *The Jazz Singer*, present matrimones between Jews and non-Jews as positive contemporary phenomena, affirming Jewish assimilation to the United States (60). Besides film-making industry, popular music production was particularly interesting to Jewish immigrants (60). The United States was in love with the music sung and produced by “Eddie Cantor, Al Jonson, Sophie Tucker, Gus Kahn, and George and Ira Gershwin” (61). The aforesaid growing artistic areas became domains of active Jewish engagement and creativity, making Jews visible in the expanding public arena.

However, similar to the first wave of Jewish immigrants, the second one encountered discrimination in many walks of life, in spite of the Jewish contribution to the national progress. A. Lawrence Lowell, the Harvard University President, introduced the policy that restricted the Jewish component to 10 percent of the total number of students (Diner 63). Many “hospitals,” “law firms,” “colleges and universities,” and “nonelite institutions like the telephone company” were not interested in Jewish candidates (63). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Southern and Midwestern sections of the Populist Party labeled Jewish financiers and magnates the most responsible for national economic degradation, which exacerbated anti-Semitic attitudes in the impoverished areas, especially the Southern ones (64). Organizations founded by Jews such as American Jewish Committee (1906) and the Anti-Defamation League (1913) tried to counteract anti-Semitic allegations, but despite their efforts, the Jew was seen as a threat to the mostly Protestant white civic body (65-66). Despite their freedom and their whiteness, in the era of anti-immigration feelings, attitudes and policies, Jews were perceived as distinct from their Christian counterparts and very often associated with crime, degeneration, and usurpation.

American Racial History and the Image of the Jew

The American racial history has always revolved around the concept of whiteness, but during the increased European immigration between the 1840s and the 1920s, it was particularly difficult to determine where the borders between different kinds of whiteness were. As Matthew Frye Jacobson explains, one could simultaneously be “white *and* racially distinct from other whites” (*Whiteness of a Different Color* 6). The initial 1790 naturalization law granted citizenship to immigrants who were considered “free white persons” (7). This law reflected the “republican convergence of race and ‘fitness for self-government’ ” (7). However, with the

increased influx of European immigrants in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, American society experienced “a fracturing of whiteness into a hierarchy of plural and scientifically determined white races” (7). Americans of the old Anglo-Saxon descent tended to distinguish themselves from the incoming non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants.¹³

Though “the myth of the Anglo-Saxons” was constantly present in the British and American cultures, it experienced certain changes between 1815 and 1850 (Horsman 62). Before the beginning of the nineteenth century, “the main use of the myth had been internal: in England to resist royal absolutism and to defend the broadening of political rights; in America to justify a revolution and the ending of a supposed royal domination” (62). Great Britain and the United States were proud of their “Anglo-Saxon institutions,” which the two nations considered “free” and “democratic,” and thus worth “modern emulation” (62). However, in the early 1800s, British and American Anglo-Saxons analyzed their national accomplishments as well as those of other nations and concluded that “blood” and not “environment or accident” was the major factor in their nations’ social progresses (62). Though Great Britain and the United States had their own institutions, both of the nations were entering the era of “unprecedented power and prosperity” (62). In Reginald Horsman’s words, “It was now argued that the explanation lay not in the institutions but in the innate characteristics of the race” (62). The two nations were convinced that they were preordained to lead and transform the world.

The noun “Anglo-Saxon” changed its meaning in the United States after 1815, when it began to denote an American person of a certain racial background (94). Prior to that, it had largely been used to refer to the English people before 1066, whom Americans considered their ancestors and of whose cultural production they spoke with awe (94).¹⁴ Furthermore, political

tensions between Great Britain and the United States in the years following the Revolution as well as during the second war made the usage of the term “Anglo-Saxon,” denoting the common origin of the English and Americans, very rare (94). As Horsman explains, “To think of belonging to one of the ‘two great families of the Anglo-Saxon race’ was a commonplace among American politicians by 1850; it was, however, still rare in 1815” (95). The improvement of the diplomatic relationship between the two countries instigated a new wave of popularity of the term “Anglo-Saxon,” and the old “pride” of the English roots was accompanied with the belief in the Anglo-Saxon mission to enhance other societies (95). In the 1850s, the ideology of the Anglo-Saxon supremacy was challenged by various “dissenters,” many of whom argued against “the pervasive nature of American Anglo-Saxonism” (249). However, even though American Anglo-Saxon expansionists believed in the superiority of their race and their mission to civilize other races, some of them opposed the argument that American Anglo-Saxons were a “transplanted” group from England (249). American Anglo-Saxonists were convinced that they were “a special, progressive branch” of the great transatlantic race, and a number of expansionists proposed the concept of Americans as “a separate, superior, unique race” (249).¹⁵

Although many Americans did not approve of “the English aristocratic government,” and although they considered Britain their major economic rival, they were not keen on embracing the incoming European immigrants of non-Anglo-Saxon descent (302). A great number of Americans cherished the idea of the uniqueness and superiority of the American Anglo-Saxon branch, but they were simultaneously opposed to the “mongrelization” of the national civic body, which, they believed, threatened the country in this era of the increased immigration (302). However, most of the Americans hoped that the new immigrants could adjust to the Anglo-Saxon mainstream by acquiring its “language and culture” although they could not annul their

“racial” ancestry (Horsman 302). As Horsman points out, towards the end of the nineteenth century, in the prime of the European immigration to the United states, “many argued that the entrance of the new stocks should be checked before the American Anglo-Saxon race was polluted by the presence of inferior strains” (302). The last decades of the nineteenth century witnessed both the escalation of internal racism and the popularity of expansionism, based on the belief in the predestination of the Anglo-Saxon race to civilize and rule the other world’s races (303).

In the late 1800s, racial “hierarchy” was the crucial element in studies of the world’s nations, and evolutionism and counter-evolutionism were the most influential branches of such studies. As Jacobson points out, evolutionism was a school of thought inspired by Charles Darwin’s theory of the origin of species (*Barbarian Virtues* 140). The European colonization and exploration of distant regions boosted the Western interest in the natives, and evolutionism influenced the new scientific explanations of national and racial differences. In his book *Ancient Society*, drawing from Darwin’s theory of evolution, Henry Lewis Morgan claimed that “The history of human race is one in source, one in experience, and one in progress” (qtd. in Jacobson 140). Trying to distinguish “savages” from “civilized people,” in his essays entitled “Primitive Man—Emotional” and “Primitive Man—Intellectual” (1876), social evolutionist Herbert Spencer argued that “the savage” had “the mind of a child and the passions of a man” (qtd. in Jacobson 142). As Jacobson points out, according to the prevailing logic of the day, “Differences in color, stature, physiognomy, and custom could all be explained by the diverse evolutionary paths followed by various peoples in their wanderings from the original site of creation” (143). However, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the “counter-evolutionist” school of thought appeared. In his 1887 essay, Franz Boas, an anthropologist, challenged the European

interpretations of “primitive” languages spoken by the natives of the colonized regions. Boas argued against the evolutionist claim that the natives’ behavioral patterns were “imperfect approximations of the presumed European pinnacle,” asserting that the native and European cultures had “unrelated developments” and that native cultures were not related to “the Eurocentric evolutionary standard” (149). In his essays “Human Faculty as Determined by Race” (1894) and “The Limitations of the Comparative Method of Anthropology” (1896), Boas set the foundations of cultural relativism (149). Just like evolutionism, counter-evolutionism was very popular in the United States in the late 1800s.¹⁶

Following the evolutionist school of thought, at the turn of the twentieth century the eugenics movement appeared, and its crucial concern was the perpetuation of the white Anglo-Saxon supremacy through “proper selection” (153). Charles Darwin’s cousin and famous “naturalist and statistician” Francis Galton was the “founder” of the eugenics movement and its most influential scholar (154). Galton started his exploration of “heredity, race and character” during the Victorian sensational decade, when he engaged in a “purely ethnological inquiry into the mental peculiarities of different races” (154). Galton’s 1865 essay entitled “Hereditary Talent and Character” was “a treatise purporting to demonstrate that ‘human mental qualities’ could be manipulated or cultivated in precisely the way that breeders controlled the qualities of domesticated animals through selection” (154). Afterwards he published *Hereditary Genius* in 1869 and *Natural Inheritance* in 1889 (154). Galton’s theory quickly found its way to the New Continent. At the Race Betterment Congress at the Panama-California Exhibition, a member of the eugenics movement argued that society “will not prosper without proper selection any more than vegetables would if indiscriminately planted” (qtd. in Jacobson 153). The speaker identified two crucial ways of enhancing the quality of race: “One is by favorable environment; and the

other, ten thousand times more important, is by selection of the best individuals through a series of generations” (qtd. in Jacobson 153). The most “biologically minded” eugenicists considered “heredity” the primary factor in various cultural phenomena (153). Both in Great Britain and the United States, the eugenicists argued for the “breeding” of desirable specimens, which directly led to the distinction between “superior and inferior races” (154).

The eugenics movement had a twofold impact on American society in the era of the Anglo-Saxonist expansionism and increased European immigration to the country. As Jacobson explains, “On the one hand, like anthropology, eugenics was a genre of representation, which served up the world’s peoples and made them ‘known’ according to an established body of scientific principles—the Serb is savage, the Gypsy is lawless, the Italian is excitable, the Bulgarian is stolid, the Slav is careless and given to fits of cruelty” (155). On the other hand, Anglo-Saxons believed that these groups were more fecund than they were and threatened to overpower them. Thus the eugenics movement was a social reaction to the influx of new immigrants and what they could do to society (155). The eugenicists argued for white Anglo-Saxon supremacy, arduously trying to establish borders between Anglo-Saxons and other, especially incoming, races.

Charles Davenport and Madison Grant were the most prominent eugenicist writers on the question of new immigration. Charles Davenport, “a pioneer in biometry at the University of Chicago and an avid admirer of Francis Galton,” asked the American Breeders’ Association (ABA) in 1906 to form a Eugenics Section “to investigate and report on heredity in the human race” and to “emphasize the value of superior blood and the menace to society of inferior blood” (qtd. in Jacobson 157). Davenport’s *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* (1911) evaluated “unit

characters” of the new immigrants and speculated on how the new immigration could affect the Anglo-Saxon civic body (158). For instance, Davenport argued that Jewish blood, loaded with individualism and materialism, marked the whole race as “the opposite extreme from the early English and more recent Scandinavian immigration with their ideals of community life in the open country, advancement by the sweat of their brow, and the uprearing of their families in the fear of God and the love of country” (qtd. in Jacobson 159). Furthermore, Davenport asserted that owing to interethnic marriages between Anglo-Saxons and new immigrants, the future American offspring would be “darker in pigmentation, [and] smaller in stature” as well as “more given to crimes of larceny, kidnapping, assault, murder, rape, and sex-immorality” (qtd. in Jacobson 159). *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916) by Madison Grant, “a New York eugenicist and officer of the American Museum of Natural History,” was one of the most influential eugenicist studies of the effects of immigration (160). The book argued against American conviction that new immigrants could adapt to American society by acquiring American values (160). Apparently, genes did not really explain the course of “human development” in eugenicist writings; instead, genes helped interpret racial hierarchy and warn against the menaces of “mongrelization” (162-163).

Similar to the eugenicist school of thought, scientists of mind and mental capability were particularly interested in the immigration question. Though sciences of mind and mental capability originated in the 1830s with the appearance of Samuel Morton’s classification of the world’s races according to their “cranial” and “mental” abilities, the most prominent scholar in the field was Henry Herbert Goddard, the turn-of-the-century explorer of “feeble-mindedness” (163, 166). Goddard introduced the group of “morons” to the “two-tiered scheme” of human intelligence consisting of “idiots” and “imbeciles,” and he was very interested in the intelligence

of the new immigrants (166). The United States Public Health Service summoned Goddard “to administer the Binet tests to incoming immigrants at Ellis Island” in 1912 (166). Goddard published his findings in *The Journal of Delinquency*, claiming that “One can hardly escape the conviction that the intelligence of the average ‘third class’ [steerage] immigrant is low, perhaps of moron grade” (qtd. in Jacobson 166). Goddard observed various immigrant groups consisting of 16 to 39 individuals, and speaking of Jewish immigrants, he concluded that “83 percent of Jews disembarking at Ellis Island were feeble-minded” (166). Following Goddard, Robert Yerkes, president of the American Psychological Association’s Committee on Inheritance of Mental Traits, decided “to measure the intelligence of the nation’s two million draftees” in the World War I (168). In the chapter from his 1921 report, entitled “Relation of Intelligence Ratings to Nativity,” Yerkes argued that the lowest ethnic groups in his hierarchy, such as “Poles, Italians, Russians, Greeks, and Turks,” earned many more D’s and fewer A’s and B’s than the English or the Dutch (168-169). Building on Yerkes, Carl Brigham, “an assistant professor of psychology at Princeton,” continued the racial assessment of the European immigrants in *A Study of American Intelligence* (1923) (169). Brigham did not see any “reason why legal steps should not be taken which would ensure a continuously progressive upward evolution” (qtd. in Jacobson 170). The 1924 Johnson-Reed Immigration Act that Congress passed in order to limit the number of “undesirable racial types from Southern and Eastern Europe and Asia” echoed Brigham’s conviction (170).

Since Jews were among the most numerous ethnic groups that immigrated to the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they provoked the interest of racial scientists, who arduously tried to detect, describe, and define Jewishness as distinct from Anglo-Saxon whiteness. As Jacobson explains, physiognomic features such as “skin color, nose shape,

hair color and texture, and the like,” or in Blumenbach’s terms, “the fundamental configuration of face,” were “visible markers” of Jewishness and were considered recognizable “signs” of “an essential, immutable, inner moral-intellectual character” (*Whiteness of a Different Color* 174). Such a “character” was regularly considered the explanation for the “social value” attributed to Jewish immigrants (174). In Jacobson’s words, “Race is social value become perception; Jewishness seen is social value naturalized and so enforced. This is not to say that people all ‘really’ look alike; rather, it is to argue that those physical differences which register in the consciousness as ‘*difference*’ are keyed to particular social and historical circumstances” (174, *his italics*). In other words, the American “history of racial Jewishness” cannot be reduced to the “history of anti-Semitism”; instead, the “history of racial Jewishness” consists of “the ways in which both Jews and non-Jews have construed Jewishness” as well as the alterations in the social perceptions of Jewishness (175).¹⁷ By the Civil War, Jewish immigrants had been considered distinct based on their faith, and not on their “blood” (177). The Civil War and its aftermath witnessed the rise of anti-Semitism in the United States.

In this period, the racial prejudice against Jews was boosted by the appearance of racial science, common perceptions of Jews as a distinct race, and discriminatory policies against Jews. The American anti-Semitism was a blending of “an international phenomenon of Jew-hatred” and “the mutability of American whiteness” (179). After the Civil War, Jewish physical features did not just help Christians recognize Jews “in their greed (or their Jacobinism or their infidelism or their treachery),” but the features themselves became associated with Jewish “essential unassimilability to the republic” (178). The Jewish nose denoted “something in and of itself”—the Jewish “difference” (178). The dark Jewish complexion was automatically associated with

“mongrelization,” the word that referred to one’s “‘unfitness’ in American political culture” (178). This unique Jewish appearance marked the group as internal others.¹⁸

In the second half of the 1800s, Jews attracted racial scientists, not only because of various possibilities for “scientific and religious” interpretations of Genesis, but because of Jews’ devotion to the issues of “consanguinity and race,” which inspired European nationalist movements (179). As Jacobson notes, “Just as the plunder of exploration and slavery formed the context within which Africans became ‘known’ to Western science, so Jewish emancipation, debates over citizenship, and the emergence of modern nationalism formed the context within which science comprehended ‘the Jewish race’ ” (179). In the 1850s, the “presumed immutability” of the Jewish other was an integral part of studies on race (180). In *Types of Mankind* (1855) Josiah Nott noted that the “well-marked Israelitish features are never beheld out of that race” and that “The complexion may be bleached or tanned...but the Jewish features stand unalterably through all climates” (qtd. in Jacobson 180). In *Natural History of the Human Races* (1869) John Jeffries contended that “the Jews have preserved their family type unimpaired; and though they number over five million souls, each individual retains the full impress of his primitive typical ancestors” (qtd. in Jacobson 180). The American vernacular and visual culture quickly appropriated racialized descriptions of Jews in ethnographic studies. Racialized portrayals of Jews were not exclusively anti-Semitic; philo-Semitic presentations were often present in the public arena. William Cullen Bryant criticized Edwin Booth’s performance of Shylock because it did not veraciously portray “the grandeurs of the Jewish race” (qtd. in Jacobson 181). He even glorified “the wonderful working of the soul of the Hebrew” in his songs (qtd. in Jacobson 181).

The nineteenth-century Christian presentations of Jews were not grounded in the common belief in Jewish “theological and doctrinal deficiencies” only (Dobkowski 41). In the Gilded Age, stereotyped presentations of Jewish immigrants reflected Christian assumptions about Jewish “social traits” as well (41). Since Jews concentrated mostly in the urban North-East, they were often associated with the growing crimes in the area. Christians believed that Jewish inclination to crime originated in the Talmudic Judaism, which managed to blend “celestial spiritualism” with “a crass, aggressive, and dishonest business ethic” (41). The trope of the criminal Jew appears in the novels by George Lippard, Charles F. Briggs, J. Ross Browne, A. H. Frankel, F. Scott Fitzgerald, etc.; in the plays by Tom Taylor, Dion Boucicault, John Brougham, Steele Mackaye, Max Marcin, Bartlett Cormack, etc.; in popular dime-novels by Horatio Alger, Albert Aiken, Gilbert Jerome, etc. *Life* and other weekly newspapers vilified Jews as an undesirable group inclined to perpetrations, and “the criminal Jew” appeared on both the stage and the screen at the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁹

The crucial characteristic ascribed to the Jew as a perpetrator was his involvement mostly in dubious business deals, and rarely in physical assaults. As John Higham explains, “by the 1840’s the verb ‘to Jew,’ meaning to cheat by sharp practice, was becoming a more or less common ingredient of American slang” (*Send These to Me* 101). The anti-Semitic climate during the Civil War contributed even more to the perpetuation of the stereotype of the exploiting Jew, since this was the time when Jews were accused of profiting from the war and worrying just about their materialistic progress, and not the future of the nation. William Shakespeare’s Shylock of *The Merchant of Venice* was the predecessor of all the other Jewish literary characters cast as cheaters and usurers (Dobkowski 78-79). As Dobkowski argues, the “exploiting Jew” appears in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American literature,

particularly in the works of by Henry James, James Russell Lowell, Henry Adams, Edith Wharton, and John Jay Chapman.²⁰

While some Americans were critical of Jewish behavior but believed that it could be corrected, the others, especially members of patrician classes, were not hopeful at all. For patrician classes, Jewish social successes were the proof for the contemporary “social degeneration” (Dobkowski 113). Patrician classes were frightened by the rapid class mobility and the emergence of the wealthy and unrefined social climbers, and they located the source of cultural deterioration in the Jew (113). The Jew as a social climber and symbol of cultural degradation appears in the works by James K. Hosmer, Edith Wharton, Henry James, Barrett Wendell, Lafcadio Hearn, Henry and Brooks Adams, and James Russell Lowell. The aforesaid authors were annoyed by the increasing Jewish presence in the public arena (134). American patricians believed that their predominantly Christian society was greatly impaired by the Jewish immigration and participation in the national economy (134).²¹

Since the Jew was commonly perceived as a menace, he was often stereotyped as a social, cultural and national outcast or pariah (Dobkowski 143). As Dobkowski points out, in addition to this common perception of the Jew as an outsider, this particular stereotype often implied the Jew’s inability to fight for the greater national good, which meant that the Jew was not capable of being a good citizen (158-160). This stereotype of the Jew was particularly popular in the prime of nativism.²² Works by Gino Speranza and Madison Grant demonstrate a most severe nativist stereotyping of Jews.²³ Though Jews were always considered distinct, at the turn of the twentieth century, Jewish “alienism” was their most conspicuous feature in public discussions of the group.

American Women and Their Campaigns

The aforementioned massive Jewish immigration and the introduction and adaptation of tableaux vivants to the United States coincided with the rise of the American feminist movement. The movement passed through the three different stages during its fight for women's social and political rights, especially the right to vote, which was granted to American women in 1920. As Suzanne M. Marilley points out, these different phases of the movement's development and engagement are the feminism of equal rights, the feminism of fear, and the feminism of personal development (2-3). In each of these phases, American feminists' primary objective was an increase in women's "personal freedoms" (3). In each of these phases, American feminists made their agendas known to masses, becoming conspicuous agents of cultural changes.

The feminism of equal rights, which started in the Jacksonian era and ended in the mid-1870s, was inspired by the 1848 Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments (Marilley 6). This document was "a feminist version of the 1776 Declaration of Independence," and it was grounded in the premise that women's rights were equally important as men's (6). The widespread popularity of this premise started in the 1830s, during the Garrisonian antislavery movement, when Maria Stewart and Angelina and Sarah Grimke "practiced an inclusive equality that was derived as much from the Scriptures as from the 1776 Declaration" (6). Two decades later, feminists of equal rights insisted on "radical structural changes in marriage, the political system, and society" (6-7). In the mid-nineteenth century, Elizabeth Cady Stanton was the most active feminist of equal rights, famous for her insistence on equality in all spheres of women's lives and for her support of women's divorce rights and birth control (7). After challenging the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments because they did not guarantee women the rights that they

did to African American men, Stanton became marked as a white-mainstream feminist (7). The feminism of equal rights continued to exist after the Civil War, though with weaker influence and popularity (7).²⁴

The feminism of fear appeared in the mid-1870s, when temperance proponent Frances Willard argued for “secure conditions for women’s freedom,” downplaying the importance of equal rights (Marilley 7). Willard began her public feminist career by supporting housewives who protested domestic violence committed by their alcoholic husbands in the early 1870s (7). Her feminist arguments dealt with “male physical abuse” of women, especially under the influence of alcohol (7). She became well-known for making women’s “home protection” the major goal of the suffrage movement (7). During her presidency over the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the organization attracted over 200,000 members (8). Although Willard’s arguments were “ecumenical” and friendly towards African American women, her presidency over the Christian organization and her anti-immigrant statements marked her as a biased activist with nativist sentiments (8).²⁵

The feminism of personal development arose from the 1840s campaigns for married women’s property rights, when “educated,” “white,” “middle-class women” fought for their own inheritance and allowances as well as opportunities for investments of their money (Marilley 8). Thus, the feminism of personal development particularly valued individual rights and freedoms over trust in the state and its fight for people’s interests (8). In the 1890s, educated, white, middle-class city women passionately fought for women’s personal freedoms (8). Carrie Chapman Catt and Anna Howard Shaw publicly discussed women’s “personal losses” because they did not have the right to vote (8). Catt, who was at first a member of the WCTU, decided to

abandon this organization because she was against Prohibitionists and to vehemently support the suffrage movement (8). In the 1880s and early 1890s, she was very influenced by Stanton's nativism (8). Throughout the 1890s Catt's chauvinism surpassed that of Willard's, and Catt's ideological views were influenced by Darwinism and other racist doctrines of the day (8). At a National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) convention in 1906, "social reformers" Florence Kelley and Jane Addams claimed that nativism and racism of the suffrage activists were the reasons why immigrant men did not want to support the suffrage movement (9). Kelley and Addams managed to convince the second generation of suffragists that personal development must be based on political equality of all American citizens (9).²⁶

This school of feminism catalyzed the appearance of the New Woman, a cultural construct that prevailed on both sides of the Atlantic from 1890 to 1920 (Rich 1). The New Woman was envisioned as a challenge to the ideals of Victorian womanhood (1). As Charlotte J. Rich points out, the American New Woman was cast as a college-educated lady, keen on entering public occupations traditionally "reserved" for the opposite sex, especially occupations that could potentially enhance society (1). In Rich's words, "Assertive and outspoken, the New Woman championed women's right to political selfhood through the vote, to economic autonomy, and to prioritize intellectual or artistic aspirations over domestic concerns—which earned her both scorn and praise in the popular press" (1). Besides, the New Woman was not fond of matrimony, but in case she married, she argued for a "companionate" union, in which partners admired and helped each other (1). In the early 1900s, a period of increasing sexual liberties, the New Woman was popularly cast as an experimenter with her sexuality (1).

Such a conspicuous fighter for women's freedoms, the American New Woman, though catalyzed by the feminism of personal development, was a result of various social movements and changes. The second half of the nineteenth century saw the appearance of different approaches to traditional gender roles. This phenomenon was primarily a result of the growing industrialization and urbanization and their effects on society, particularly the need for higher female education. However, besides these socio-economic factors, progressive intellectuals whose anti-patriarchal agendas were popular on both sides of the Atlantic significantly influenced the rise of the American New Woman. Various American social movements, such as female suffrage, Social Purity, women's clubs, and settlement houses contributed immensely to the appearance of this cultural construct as well.

The most outstanding intellectual fighter for women's rights was British reformer John Stuart Mill, whose study *The Subjection of Women* (1869), based on Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of Rights of Woman* (1792), chastised patriarchal subordination of women (Rich 8). Mill contended that women should have rights to proper education and professional development, and as a Member of Parliament, he launched a political debate on women's suffrage in Britain (8). Mill and his disciples' progressive ideas helped British women's fight for their rights, particularly their right to vote, and inspired the rise of the American feminist movement (8-9). Mill's ideas shaped American feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman's critique of American male-dominated society (8). Although British women were granted the right to vote in 1918, during their fifty-year suffrage campaign, they managed to influence the Parliament to pass important legislations, some of which echoed the work of American feminists (8-9). The Married Women's Property Acts, passed by the Parliament in 1870 and 1882, mirrored similar policies passed in American states: these acts allowed wives "to own their incomes and inherit

property, and later protected their right to buy, sell, or own such property” (9). In 1883, the Parliament suspended the Contagious Diseases Acts, and in 1886, encouraged by the work of the American Social Purity movement, British feminists repealed, challenging the patriarchal premise that men’s role in prostitution is negligible (9).²⁷

Inspired by the work of intellectuals, various social movements appeared in the United States, fighting for women’s freedoms and giving rise to the New Woman. The most influential movement was female suffrage, which achieved its goal in 1920, when American women were officially granted the right to vote. Female suffragists faced severe opposition on their journey to victory. Before the 1890s, Wyoming was the only state that approved of women’s right to vote, but at the turn of the twentieth century many other states acknowledged the importance of this right (Rich 11-12). Just as female suffrage, Social Purity made a great impact on American social development (12). The primary concern of the movement was the prohibition of prostitution (12). The movement developed in the 1830s, and throughout the nineteenth century it fought against the sexual double-standards for women and men (12-13). In the 1890s the movement influenced the passing of state legislations that increased the age of consent for girls from ten, which was the official consent age in most of the states, to fourteen to eighteen (13). Women’s clubs were also popular and influential at the turn of the century (13). The General Federation of Women’s Clubs (GFWC) was founded by American women in 1890 (13). The association attracted hundreds of local clubs that started appearing in the aftermath of the Civil War, and the association had a million members in the Progressive Era (13). Women’s clubs offered both “social diversion” and “intellectual development” to their members (13). Similar to women’s clubs, settlement houses offered women an opportunity to expand their domestic activities to the public sphere. Settlement houses appeared in poor quarters of American cities in 1889, and they

were reminiscent of such institutions in “London slums” (13). The most outstanding settlement house was Jane Addams’s Hull-House in Chicago (13). College-educated women regularly managed and worked in such houses, helping impoverished people, usually immigrants (13-14).

However, despite the progressive causes that the American New Woman promoted, there were serious flaws in public presentations of this cultural construct. Since the New Woman was always presented in the press and at conventions as a white, middle- or upper-class educated woman, immigrant and minority women as well as working white women often felt neglected (Rich 22-23). The New Woman of *Life*, *Puck*, and *Vogue* was a white middle- or upper-class lady, sometimes presented on “a bicycle” or with “a cigarette,” and sometimes as “the statuesque, goddess-like Gibson girl” (22). In her explanation of the controversy of the American New Woman, Lois Rudnick points out that the Gibson Girl “came into prominence during the peak time of mass immigration to the United States when many Americans were particularly anxious to define an ‘all-American girl’ as a way of staving off the threatened mongrelization of the ‘pure’ Anglo-Saxon race” (qtd. in Rich 27). Grounded in the contemporary class, racist, and nationalist discourses, the American New Woman perpetuated the ideological “status quo” (27). In order to gain support for women’s vote, white suffragists regularly emphasized that immigrant and African American men who had been granted the right to vote were morally and racially inferior to white women (30-31). Immigrant and minority women were aware that their non-native and non-white descents hindered their progress in society (32). Serious divisions in women’s movements and organizations testify to non-white, non-native, and working women’s disappointment with the figure of the New Woman (21). The nativist and elitist casting of the New Woman was mostly influenced by the rise of the eugenics movement in the prime of increased immigration to the United States (25).²⁸

The best-known feminist of the day, influenced by racist and nationalist ideologies rooted in the theory of evolution, was Charlotte Perkins Gilman. According to Jean V. Matthews, Gilman was convinced that the white, Anglo-Saxon stock was superior to other “races,” that immigration could cause serious damage to the white, mostly Protestant civic body of the United States, and that African Americans were a “problem” for society (79).²⁹ However, Gilman’s major concern was the degradation and inferiority of the current American “womanhood,” which desperately needed advancement (Matthews 79). Gilman thought that the New Woman ideology could offer such advancement to American women. The American New Woman in her writings is always a white, middle-class lady (Rich 22). Gilman’s arguments used “the rhetoric of ‘social motherhood’ ” in order to convince masses in the nobility of women’s attempts to engage in public professions and enhance social life (Rich 24). Gilman contended that even though women’s subjection to the opposite sex may have been beneficial for the progress of human species, it was high time women had become financially and politically independent. She believed that women were ready to enter public professions and get involved with the web of “human work,” which, according to her, was a “specialized activity in some social function—any art, craft, trade or profession that serves society” (Matthews 83). Gilman argued for the elevation of women through education and entrance into the public arena through various professions. Since the New Woman believed in the female presence in the public sphere, public professions were the most important spaces that could ensure women’s contribution to and visibility in social affairs. The most popular careers for women in the expanding public arena after the Civil War were acting and office work.

Acting became a socially acceptable occupation for women in the late 1860s (Matthews 8). In the 1870s, theaters started offering matinee shows, and women often appeared there

without men (8-9). Since theater-going became a leisure-time habit for women, they started dictating what counted as a good performance (9). Furthermore, actresses became objects of women's admiration, and actresses' permanent presence and growing popularity in the public arena pushed actors aside (9). As Matthews points out, "The major stars were female—women like the statuesque beauty Lillian Russell and the young Ethel Barrymore" (9). The photography fad resulted in a successful dissemination of actresses' images. Everyone wanted to know about their lives off the stage as well as about their views of various cultural issues and phenomena (9). The figure of the actress stood for women's public success, independence, and high salaries (9). From the stage, actresses boosted women's confidence and self-respect, motivating them to enter the public arena, previously occupied by men.

Likewise, the increasing number of women employed in offices after the Civil War challenged male dominance in the public sphere. In the aftermath of the Civil War, with the development of "business" and "federal bureaucracy," there were plenty of positions for women who wanted to work in offices (Matthews 48). Since women were then better educated than their ancestresses, many of them chose office jobs instead of work on farms or positions in schools (48-49). Women agreed to work for lower salaries than men, and in the last quarter of the century, offices were full of young women typewriters and stenographers (48-49). As Matthews explains, "Whereas a mere 2 percent of office workers had been women in 1870, by 1920 they were 45 percent, and 92 percent of stenographers" (49). The office space was a terrain where women's presence and engagement started reshaping public geography, even though they were less paid than the opposite sex (49).³⁰

With the opening of office jobs, the assortment of candidates increased, and immigrant women or second generations of immigrant women entered offices and got involved in various progressive projects (Matthews 141). Jewish women supported the New Woman question and in 1893 founded their own organization, the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) (Diner and Benderly 251-254). According to Diner's *The Jews of the United States, 1654-200* and Diner and Benderly's *Her Works Praise Her*, Hannah Greenbaum Solomon was the leader of Chicagoan Jewish middle-class women who established the NCJW (192, 247). The agenda of the NCJW demonstrated the highly political character of the organization. The activists argued for the self-education of Jewish women so that they could become well-versed with Judaism and delineate a space for themselves in Jewish American public life (Diner and Benderly 253). Jewish women's agency and self-consciousness were visible elements of American public life in the fin-de-siecle American society. Jews in general and Jewish women in particular supported women's right to vote. As Matthews explains, when it comes to suffrage, "The Jewish communities in eastern cities, which had a strong radical complexion, tended to be favorable, as did Scandinavians and Finns" (142). Jewish votes contributed significantly to the 1917 referendum in New York (142). Jewish women in particular demonstrated their progressiveness in various situations.

Owing to their ethnic group's flexible views of proper conduct, Jewish women determined what careers to pursue and what entertainments to enjoy (Hyman 318). It was appropriate for Jewish women to appear at communal gatherings unaccompanied by men, and they regularly exercised this privilege (318). After they got married, Jewish women were in charge of their bodies, and they often applied contemporary methods of contraception (318). Paula E. Hyman asserts that radical feminists Emma Goldman's and Rose Pastor Stokes's "birth

control lectures in Yiddish” regularly attracted Jewish women, who, after attending these talks, sent notes to the feminists in order to learn more about contraception (318). On the first day of work of Margaret Sanger’s birth control clinic in Brownsville, the Jewish quarter in Brooklyn, in 1916, Jewish women gathered in front of the clinic’s entrance in spite of the fact that at the time the public spreading of information about contraception was prohibited (318). The lower nativity rate in Jewish communities in the early twentieth century testifies to Jewish women’s command of their bodies and their lives (318-319).³¹

Jewish women’s early acceptance of employment influenced their acceptance of other public duties and opportunities, especially political ones (Hyman 319). Following their male counterparts, Jewish women became successful “union activists” (320). In 1909, the Women’s Trades Union League, “an association of middle-class female reformers and working conditions for women,” wrote that “The Jewish women are quick to organize, and the League has found in several trades that the membership of the union was wholly Jewish, while the other nationalities working in the same trade were non-union” (qtd. in Hyman 319-320). An “investigator from the Russell Sage Foundation” was impressed by the “public spiritedness” of Jewish women and their “sense of relationship to a community larger than the family or the personal group of which she happens to be a member” (qtd. in Hyman 320). In matrimony, Jewish women’s spirit and communal responsibility did not vanish; instead, they found a unique space for engagement with social issues in their neighborhoods (326).

Jewish quarters in urban areas were primary sites for Jewish women’s activism. Food and rent protests and woman suffrage were crucial areas of Jewish women’s focus between 1900 and 1920 (Hyman 327). Jewish women’s communal webs greatly helped the suffrage campaigns on

the Lower East Side, the quarter that demonstrated the strongest approval of women's vote of all the ethnic ghettos in New York City in the 1915 and 1917 state elections (327). In her "pioneering study of the suffrage vote in individual election districts," Elinor Lerner demonstrated that "immigrant Jewish women did painstaking community organizing on the issue for years and were instrumental in getting out the vote" (327). In her 1911 report, Lavinia Dock, "South Manhattan organizer for the Woman Suffrage party," was impressed by "the splendid captains and workers [who] were making woman suffrage known in shops and homes and even in the political life of the district" (qtd. in Hyman 328). Jewish women of the Lower East Side visited numerous households in order to promote women's vote (328). They filled out report cards for each visited household, registering the voters' opinions about women's vote and the titles of the books given to the voters (328). According to Lavinia Dock, 75 percent of the population on the Lower East Side had a positive attitude towards women's vote in the state election in 1915 (328). Upon the passing of the nineteenth amendment, a great majority of Jewish women signed up for the election (328).

Though most of the written evidence about Jewish women's activism reveals their maximal engagement in New York City, there are data that indicate that Jewish women were active in other urban areas as well. The organizers of the first large public promotion of female suffrage in Philadelphia were largely Jewish women, and the audience consisted mostly of Jews (Hyman 328). In the years of rapid social ascent and plenty of free time, ethnic associations such as Hadassah and the NCJW, "which built on a triple legacy—the heritage of Jewish traditions of philanthropy, the nineteenth-century Ladies' Aid Society, and the American women's club movement," attracted a great number of Jewish women (329). Though these organizations did not oppose women's engagement at home, by informing women about contemporary social

issues and by educating them about public management and activism, these associations redefined what counted as desirable female conduct, blending the home with the public arena (330).

The turn of the twentieth century witnessed the brilliance of many Jewish women in the American public sphere. As Ellen M. Umansky argues, Lillian Wald (1867-1940), an outstanding social worker, vehemently argued for “child welfare, public health nursing, vocational guidance, and the establishment of scholarships for talented children” (341). Julia Richman (1855-1912), a prominent teacher keen on helping incoming Jewish immigrants in the Education Alliance in New York and “the first Jew to serve as district superintendent in the New York City school system” in 1903, preached “the obligation of Jewish women to minister to the moral and physical needs of less fortunate Jews” (341). Richman contended that Jewish women in general and Jewish mothers in particular should support religious education of their children and help them familiarize themselves with Jewish literature and Judaism (341-342).³² At the turn of the twentieth century, Jewish women’s associations were common cultural formations, founded by the US-born Jewish women. The most influential Jewish women’s organizations were “congregational sisterhoods,” which were present in most of the Reform temples by 1920 and which were philanthropic organizations (344). Though these associations started as local communities, by 1913 they were members of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (344). Jewish women’s local activism became a national force of progress.³³

From the Drawing Room to the Public Arena: Tableaux Vivants and Jewish Identity

My study gathers this history in order to establish the context for the forthcoming analyses of the relationship between the tableaux and the Jewishness staged through them in

various social spaces. My first chapter, titled “The Jewish Actress/Governess: Staging Power and Enacting Change in Louisa May Alcott’s *Behind a Mask*,” examines the messages of Jewishness in the living pictures that occur in the domestic space. I look into the period between the two waves of Jewish immigration to the United States, which coincides with the years of women’s campaigns, from those for contagious diseases acts to those for educational and employment reforms and suffrage. The literary text I analyze is Louisa May Alcott’s early sensation novel, whose plot, just as in Alcott’s other sensation fictions, takes place outside the United States but refers to the social issues of American society. Initially published in the *Flag of Our Union* in 1866, under the pseudonym of A.M. Barnard, and set in mid-nineteenth-century England, the novel depicts the relationship between Jean Muir, a Scottish governess of dubious background, and her employers, the wealthy Coventrys, whom Jean outsmarts through her deceptive stories and performances, eventually marrying the head of the Coventry family, the old Sir John. Throughout the novel, Jean is portrayed as a skillful actress (towards the end the reader realizes that she was a professional actress in France). Not only does Jean successfully stage a few tableaux vivants in the Coventry home, which I analyze in detail, but she effectively “acts” in everyday life as well. Her young master, Gerald, compares her to Elisa Rachel Felix, the nineteenth-century French Jewish actress, well-known for her artistry and fight for women’s rights. By ascribing Rachel’s determination, feminist agenda, and acting skills and roles (particularly the role of biblical Judith) to Jean, Alcott opens a path for the governess’s social mobility and calls for an organized action against patriarchy. I consider Jean’s performances in the Coventry household a tactical intervention in the society dominated by the English aristocracy. Though the novel invites respect for Jean’s resistance to patriarchy and her challenge to the higher classes, it also exposes her treachery to the scrutiny of the readership. I analyze

Alcott's allo-Semitic presentation of Jean, pointing out that through Jean Alcott propels the importance of agency and willfulness in women's struggle for emancipation but simultaneously condemns deceit and greed, the qualities associated with both Rachel and stereotyped presentations of Jews in general.

My second chapter, titled "Re-modeling the Nation: 'The English Rachel' and the Vision of Anglo-America in Henry James's *The Tragic Muse*," investigates the messages of Jewishness in tableaux vivants that occur in the public sphere. I focus on the second wave of Jewish immigration, particularly the years of the transatlantic Jack-the-Ripper sensationalism, which coincides with the rise of the New Woman movement. Commenced in October, 1888, serially published in the *Atlantic Monthly* from January 1889 to May 1890, and then appearing in a single-volume format in both Britain and the United States in June 1890, James's theatrical novel depicts the career path of Miriam Rooth, a fictional British Jewish actress. I examine the connection between James's presentation of major characters through tableaux vivants, Miriam's tableaux vivants, and the Jewishness and new womanhood that Miriam performs. I contend that Miriam's roles are to destabilize the discourse of Anglo-American nationalism with her hybridity and cosmopolitanism, to revitalize the English stage, "contaminated" by commercial drama, through her classical repertory, to recover the nineteenth-century status of the actress, very often associated with prostitution, and to succeed in the public sphere with her artistry. Tableaux vivants in the text serve to portray patriarchal values and anti-Semitism of the dominant social order as well as to stage Miriam's subversion of patriarchy, racism, and nationalism. The three series of tableaux vivants in the novel announce Miriam's success as an artist in the English public arena and her subversion of the male gaze. I consider the English social milieu that Miriam enters the space of strategies, while I analyze Miriam's actions, from learning how to act

to revitalizing the English stage through her classic repertory, as tactics. However, though James's vision of Anglo-America does integrate Miriam, she is not a fully favorable character. Even though Miriam achieves popularity, she is still cast as an allo-Semitic character. Miriam remains charged with the "Jewish baseness" and "indestructibility;" she accrues lucre and projects her fecundity onto the proliferation of her photographs.

My third chapter, titled "Matchmaking, Manners, and Jewishness in Henry James's *The Golden Bowl* and Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*," examines non-Jewish female characters' performances of Jewishness and rejection of such performances in the peak of the second wave of Jewish immigration to the United States, which coincides with the period of women's wider access to employment and changes in fashion. I put the two novels of manners in dialogue in order to demonstrate how everyday performances of stereotypically Jewish shrewdness and vitality (*The Golden Bowl*) or rejection of such performances (*The House of Mirth*) contribute to one's success or destruction in the rapidly changing society. Fanny Assingham's performances of Jewishness help her maintain economic stability. The tableau vivant that announces Fanny's behavior throughout the novel presents her as the legendary Queen of Sheba, the figure appropriated by several nations and considered a successful diplomat. Fanny is the one who plots, schemes, and brings about marriages, but who always remains socially intact owing to her shrewdness. I consider the wealthy society through which Fanny circulates the space of strategies, while I analyze Fanny's performances of the Queen of Sheba as tactics. Unlike Fanny, Lily Bart of *The House of Mirth* fails to accept performances of Jewishness that could secure her economic stability. Lily is often framed by male gazes, including those of the Jewish financier and social climber, Simon Rosedale. When Lily stages the tableau vivant of Sir Joshua Reynolds's famous painting, *Mrs. Lloyds*, which presents the

devoted aristocratic matron, she casts the painted woman as herself, almost naked and beautiful, challenging the patriarchal notions of women's obedience and subordination. This tableau announces Lily's behavior throughout the novel: she refuses Rosedale's marriage proposal and tries to develop a series of tactics (from gambling to hat-making) that could help her become independent and wealthy. However, Lily's tactics do not result in success in the social circles she moves through. The chapter points out that the authors conceive of the adoption of the "Jewish manners" as a necessary survival tool in the amalgamating society and thoroughly analyzes the authors' allo-Semitic messages.

In the epilogue, I analyze the portrayal of Jewishness in the genre that replaced the tableau vivant in the early 1900s—the silent film. I pay special attention to the rise of the Jewish silent film, analyzing its contribution to the twentieth-century Jewish American culture. I contemplate the absence of tableaux vivants from the works of one of the first Jewish American novelists, Anzia Yeziarska. Her novels were published in the 1920s. This was the decade in which the second wave of Jewish immigration ended as well as the decade in which the silent film reached its perfection, earning the title of the most popular American entertainment.

Ultimately, by looking into the relationship between the tableaux and Jewish identity in the aforesaid novels, my study highlights the power, subversion, and vitality associated with Jewishness in the imaginations of the major turn-of-the-twentieth-century non-Jewish authors as well as these authors' conviction that Jewishness should be exposed and perceived as a quality that leads to one's success. The Jewishness staged through tableaux and enacted in everyday life is a tool for the major characters' social ascent, and as I will demonstrate, a model of behavior which, if adopted by non-Jews, could result in a larger, social progress. By casting Jewishness as

a recommendable quality through the silent and didactic performance genre, Alcott, James, and Wharton load Jewishness with their own visions of society and the figure of the Jew with their own hopes, desires, and anxieties. Offering the guidelines for an individual and social progress through performances of Jewishness, these authors' novels are ideological handbooks on how to succeed in various social spaces and how to enact change in and from them. However, by manipulating their views of Jewishness to their own ideological ends, Alcott, James, and Wharton reveal their fascination by the Jewish cultural power as well as their fear of such power. With the appearance of the silent film and the immigrant novel in the early 1900s, Jewish artists found sites for their own aesthetic expression and contribution to American culture. Through these genres, Jewish immigrants exercised the cultural agency which non-Jewish authors were latently afraid of.

Notes

1. For a discussion of the popularity of tableaux vivants in New England and the genre's role in the formation of women's self-presentations in everyday life, see Elbert's essay.

2. Chapman's article investigates tableaux's ideological messages regarding gender and class. Her article is based on her dissertation (Cornell University, 1992), which is a new historicist examination of the role tableaux vivants played in the nineteenth-century American fiction and culture in relation to women's place in family and society.

3. For a discussion of how various parlor theatricals reflected the deterioration of sentimental culture in the mid-nineteenth century, see Halttunen's sixth chapter and Elbert's article.

4. McCullough's second chapter analyzes the beginnings of the genre on the New York stage.

5. McCullough's third chapter mentions the moral issues related to the public tableaux production.

6. McCullough's fourth chapter examines the low- and high-taste tableaux.

7. McCullough's fifth chapter investigates the decline in tableaux popularity.

8. McCullough's sixth and seventh chapters analyze the revival of tableaux popularity and Kilanyi's contribution to tableaux production.

9. McCullough's ninth chapter discusses the 1890s morality debate on tableaux vivants.

10. For a discussion of the first wave of Jewish immigration and adaptation to the United States, see Diner's first and second chapters in *A New Promised Land: A History of Jews in America*.

11. For a thorough discussion of American anti-Semitism, see Higham's fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters in *Send These to Me: Immigrants in Urban America*.

12. For a discussion of the second wave of Jewish immigration and adaptation to the United States, see Diner's third chapter in *A New Promised Land: A History of Jews in America*.

13. Jacobson's first chapter delineates the history of whiteness in the United States.

14. Horsman's fourth chapter analyzes the development of racial Anglo-Saxonism in England.

15. Horsman's fifth chapter discusses American Anglo-Saxonist mission.

16. For detailed discussions of various schools of racial science and the US policies regarding immigration and expansion, see Jacobson's third and fourth chapters.

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17. For an introduction to Jewish-Christian relations in American historiography and past, see Gerber's introduction to *Anti-Semitism in American History*.
18. Jacobson's fourth and fifth chapters examine the instability of the definitions of Jewishness and various perceptions of Jewishness in American history.
19. Dobkowski's second chapter thoroughly explores "the criminal Jew" in the American culture of the day.
20. Dobkowski's third chapter concentrates on "the resurrected Shylock" in the American culture of the day.
21. For a discussion of patrician perceptions of the Jew in American culture of the day, see Dobkowski's fourth chapter.
22. For a thorough discussion of American nativism and how it affected new immigrants, see Higham's study *Strangers: American Nativism (1860-1925)*.
23. For a detailed discussion of "the unassimilable Jew," see Dobkowski's fifth chapter.
24. Marilley's first chapter focuses on the feminism of equal rights.
25. Marilley's fourth chapter examines the feminism of fear.
26. Marilley's seventh chapter investigates the feminism of personal development.
27. For a discussion of the factors that contributed to the rise of the American New Woman, see Rich's introduction, pages 1-17.
28. For a discussion of racial issues associated with the American New Woman, see Rich's introduction, pages 21-36.
29. Matthews's third chapter discusses evolutionist influences on the construct of the American New Woman.

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30. Matthews's second chapter examines the New Woman's education and employment.
 31. Hyman's article analyzes Jewish women's involvement in national gender issues.
 32. Umansky's article introduces the most influential turn-of-the-twentieth-century Jewish women.
 33. For a thorough discussion of Jewish women's civic engagement and life-style, see Benderly and Diner's second and third chapters.

Chapter 1

The Jewish Actress: Staging Power and Enacting Change in**Louisa May Alcott's *Behind a Mask***

A great success at the time of publication, Louisa May Alcott's *Behind a Mask* received renewed interest after Madeleine Stern's recovery of it in the 1970s. Initially published in the *Flag of Our Union* in 1866, under the pseudonym of A.M. Barnard, and set in mid-nineteenth-century England, the novel depicts the relationship between Jean Muir, a Scottish governess of dubious background, and her employers, the wealthy Coventrys. Although economically and socially inferior to her hosts and employers, Jean manages to outsmart them through her shrewd and deceptive stories and performances, eventually securing her financial stability by marrying the head of the Coventry family, the old Sir John. Literary scholars have mostly analyzed sensational elements in the novel (Sara Hackenberg and Christine Butterworth-McDermott), class conflicts in the Coventry household and society (Elizabeth Schewe and Judith Fetterley), and women's participation in the nineteenth-century parlor theatricals (Mary Chapman and Melanie Dawson). What remains unexplored, however, is the connection between Jean's tableaux vivants and her broader cultural mission as well as the connection between Alcott's model for the protagonist and the protagonist herself.

Throughout the novel, Jean is portrayed as a skillful actress: not only does she successfully stage a few tableaux vivants in order to entertain her employers, but she effectively "acts" in everyday life as well. Towards the end of the novel the reader realizes that she was a professional actress in France. Through her performances, Jean, a marginal figure, disrupts the cultural norms of the dominant social order by playing with the instability of gender, class, and ethnicity. Combining Brooks's concept of free movements through off-center performances and

Certeau's concepts of strategies (policies and actions of the powerful) and tactics (ruses of the powerless), I will consider Jean's performances in the Coventry household a tactical intervention in the cultural center dominated by the English aristocracy. The chapter demonstrates how off-center performances in the space of the domestic have the power to reshape the established familial and social hierarchies.

Alcott, Feminism, and Sensation Fiction

Alcott developed a passion for feminist causes in her family. As Madeleine Stern notes in her introduction to *The Feminist Alcott: Stories of a Woman's Power*, "Feminism was in Louisa May Alcott's genes" (vii). Her parents, Bronson and Abby May Alcott, were advocates for various progressive causes. They firmly believed that woman suffrage was the most important reform of the day since women were economically and politically subordinated to men (vii). As Stern points out, Alcott's mother concurred with the opinion of Margaret Fuller "that the rights of woman as 'wife, mother, daughter, and owner of property' must be protected, that the opening to women of 'great variety of employments' could have only salutary effects, and that 'extension to woman of all civil rights' would contribute to the 'welfare and progress of the State' " (vii).¹ Louisa's parents' dedication to feminist causes served as a stimulant in her struggle for women's rights later on.

When she was nineteen, Alcott experienced one of the crucial injustices as a woman (Stern vii-viii). In 1851, Abby May was a city missionary in Boston, where she managed "an intelligence or employment office" (vii-viii). The Honorable James Richardson, "a lawyer of Dedham, Massachusetts," was her client, and once he needed "a companion for his sister" (viii). Louisa, who was frequently employed "not only as teacher but as seamstress, laundress, and

second girl of chambermaid,” applied for the job (viii). However, Mr. Richardson was a disappointment for the Alcotts. For almost two months of dedicated work Louisa earned four dollars only (viii). Her short story “How I Went Out to Service” is a testimony to her employment by Mr. Richardson, who became a catalyst for Alcott’s future engagement with organizations that fought for women’s rights (viii).

In 1868 Alcott became a member of the New England Woman Suffrage Association, which inspired her literature on female emancipation in the 1870s (Showalter xxiii). Her dedication to feminist causes is evident in her newspaper responses, letters, and novels, particularly potboilers. As the introduction to *The Feminist Alcott* reveals, in her letter to Lucy Stone, a famous fighter for woman suffrage, Alcott asserts, “I am so busy just now proving ‘woman’s right to labor,’ that I have no time to help prove ‘woman’s right to vote’ ” (qtd. in Stern xix). Alcott’s letters to Boston’s *Woman’s Journal*, “the only woman suffrage paper published in Massachusetts” and “edited by Lucy Stone and her husband, Henry B. Blackwell,” prove her devotion to women’s rights (xix). The endings of her letters to the *Journal* such as “With firm belief in the good time coming,” “Three cheers for the girls of 1876,” “Yours for reforms of all kinds” (qtd. in Stern xix) demonstrate her conviction in feminist goals. Alcott was a participant at the Woman’s Congress held in Syracuse, New York, in October 1875, and the reporters from the *Woman’s Journal* were in charge of covering the conference (xix). Though Alcott’s letters and pamphlets testify to her feminist agenda, her most creative way of advancing feminist ideas was fiction-writing, published anonymously or pseudonymously.²

Alcott’s support for feminist ideals is evident in the majority of her fictional works. As Stern observes in the introduction to *The Feminist Alcott*, “From *Little Women*, where the

independent heroine, Jo March, has become a role model for the twentieth century, to her letters in the *Woman's Journal* supporting women in various endeavors, Alcott proved herself a staunch feminist" (viii-ix). Alcott's most effective feminist fictional pieces are her posthumously recovered thrillers. She published most of her potboilers in the 1860s, the decade of the bloom of Victorian sensation novels, whose melodramatic plots thrilled audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. Louisa May Alcott, an avid reader and a prolific author, was not indifferent towards the literary trends of the 1860s.

The 1860s was the decade of sensational social phenomena and sensational creations. As Lyn Pykett points out, "It was the age of 'sensational' advertisements, products, journals, crimes, and scandals; the age of 'sensational' poetry, art, auction sales, sport, popular science, diplomacy and preaching" (1-2). The 1860s was particularly marked by the popularity of the sensational theater, especially its "stylized dramatic tableaux, heightened emotions, and extraordinary incidents of melodrama" (2). As Michael Booth demonstrates in *Victorian Spectacular Theatre, 1850-1910*, the 1860s witnessed an expansion of special theatrical effects, including pictorial props and various machines.³ Spectacular theater and Victorian vogue for technology were crucial contributors to the new form of cultural representation. Though theater offered audiences a pleasure of viewing a spectacle, it was not the only public lab for the experimentation with the spectacular in the 1860s.

The sensational decade witnessed a new social phenomenon: the courtroom became a popular venue for the uncovering of familial intrigues, sins, and felonies. As Lyn Pykett points out, "A novel form of real life drama drew the salaciously inclined to the newly constituted divorce courts (following the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857) to hear details of marital

deception, discord, and misalliance” (2). Victorian presses particularly loved women perpetrators. In 1857, Madeline Smith killed her partner with arsenic, and in 1860, sixteen-year-old Constance Kent was charged with murdering her four-year-old brother.⁴ Such women were among the most popular characters in sensational presses. The “sensational reporting” was in charge of conveying all the intrigues and felonies to masses. As Pykett observes, “Sensational journalism (like sensation fiction) was seen by many as a form of creeping contagion, the means by which the world of common streets, and the violent or subversive deeds of criminals were carried across the domestic threshold to violate the sanctuary of home” (2). However, everyday sensational events were most dramatically rendered through the sensation novel, one of the major sensations of the 1860s.

Nineteenth-century commentators on literature considered the sensation novel a genre intended for audiences with no sophisticated taste in literature. Just like sensational journalism, sensation novels exposed the domestic sphere to the scrutiny of their readership. One of the contributors to *Punch* conceived of the genre as “devoted to Harrowing the Mind, making the Flesh Creep... Giving Shocks to the Nervous System, Destroying Conventional Moralities, and generally Unfitting the Public for the Prosaic Avocations of Life” (qtd. in Pykett 3). Authors of sensation literature centered their plots on crimes committed by excessively impassioned and psychologically deviant characters. As Pykett points out, the felonies depicted in sensation literature varied “from illegal incarceration (usually of a young woman), fraud, forgery (often of a will), blackmail and bigamy, to murder or attempted murder” (4). Sensational literary texts were “mixture[s] of modes and forms, combining realism and melodrama, the journalistic and the fantastic, the domestic and the romantic or exotic” (4). In his analysis of Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone*, Charles Dickens eloquently characterizes sensation novels as “wild yet domestic”

(qtd. in Pykett 4). Similar to popular stage melodramas, this genre exposed the down side of family life, challenging the common perception of home as one's haven from the outer world.

The plots of sensation novels explore the hopes and fears of the Victorian middle classes.⁵ They examine the “anxieties” of the changing Victorian society and challenge “the social and moral *status quo*” (Pykett 9-10). Sensation novels deal with the issues pertinent to Victorian family, always conveying “the fear that the respectable Victorian family had a dark secret at its core” (10). The opposite sexes' different views on marriage and family as well as Victorian gender roles are common concerns of Victorian sensation literature. As Pykett points out, “Sensation novels raise questions about gender identity and work with and rework prevailing gender stereotypes, such as the Fast Woman, the Girl of the Period, the Angel in the House, the manly man, and the feminized man who lacks a clear social role” (10). Women's social positions, rights, and emancipation are common themes in sensation novels.

Furthermore, these novels deal with legal issues pertinent to Victorian family and marriage. Their characters are involved “with wills and inheritance of property, with laws of bigamy and divorce, and with issues arising from women's lack of legal identity and rights” (10). Sensation novels explore issues related to classes and manners, social ascent, and risks and problems emerging from the blurring of class boundaries. Sensational characters are often involved in cheating, they are economically unstable, and they are victims of the circuits of Victorian capitalism. Even though sensation novels typically end with ideological closures that support official metanarratives, they do question Victorian social mores (Pykett 13). Challenging the established social boundaries and investigating the fears and problems arising from such

actions, the sensation novel exposes dark aspects of Victorian life to the scrutiny of its readership, implicitly calling for organized social actions of resistance.

Inspired by the sensation novels of her British contemporaries, Louisa May Alcott easily adopted the conventions of the genre and created a great number of potboilers, all of which are set in European countries or the Caribbean. Among her potboilers are *Pauline's Passion and Punishment*, *V.V.: or, Plots and Counterplots*, *Taming a Tartar*, *A Marble Woman*, *A Pair of Eyes*, and *The Fate of the Forrests*. Despite foreign settings, all of Alcott's thrillers deal with or allude to the issues pertinent to American society of the day. Alcott's sensation fictions, filled with female characters' explicit and implicit rebellions against their male counterparts, question the foundations of patriarchal society. As Stern claims in the preamble to *The Feminist Alcott*, "in a gallery of feminist heroines that includes Jo March and 'Rose in Bloom,' there is room for those unacknowledged heroines who assumed woman's rights, practiced egalitarianism, and engaged with varying degrees of success in the sexual power struggle" (xxi). Through the protagonists of her potboilers, Alcott raises her voice against men's dominance and calls for the organized feminist action.

Alcott and the Liminality of Ethnicity and Class

In *Behind a Mask* Alcott emphasizes the instability of ethnicity, specifically Jewishness, and class, specifically governesses, in order to challenge the established social hierarchy. Jean is the figure who through her performances of Jewishness and various social ranks destabilizes the logic of the dominant social order. Master Gerald's early remarks reveal Alcott's allusions to Jean as a performer of Jewishness and a member of the class of governesses. Though some may consider such remarks incidental, I argue that through these hints and allusions, Alcott

announces her movement towards the cultural center, which she tries to reshape through Jean's performances. Alcott's first and most important hint of this kind occurs at the beginning of the novel, when Gerald compares Jean to Rachel (Eliza Felix), the internationally known nineteenth-century French Jewish actress, famous for her ethnic pride and fight for women's rights. After one of his early arguments with Jean, Gerald notes that, while responding, Jean looked at him "with a gesture like Rachel. Her eyes were grey, but at that instant they seemed black with some strong emotion of anger, pride, or defiance" (7, my italics). Alcott was familiar with Rachel's acting. In 1855, Rachel performed in the United States, and Boston was one of the places in her tour (Booth, *Three Tragic Actresses* 70). In 1865-1866, Alcott visited Europe, where Rachel was still considered "Queen of Tragedy" (Showalter xxi). Though Rachel was famous for her acting skills and support for women's entrance into the public arena, her detractors considered her avaricious (Booth, *Three Tragic Actresses* 70). As the forthcoming analysis of the novel demonstrates, Alcott borrows a lot from Rachel in order to create Jean, and throughout the novel Jean demonstrates the shrewdness and vitality of the stereotypically Jewish person. Alcott's second important hint announces her experimentation with the figure of the governess. At the beginning of the novel, Gerald condescendingly speaks of Jean and other women of her social status even before he meets her. When his cousin, Lucia, offers to tell him about the new governess, he exclaims: " 'No, thank you. *I have an inveterate aversion to the whole tribe*' " (3, my italics). The word "tribe," though it usually has an ethnic connotation, here refers to the class of governesses, who were, just as Jews, regularly perceived as a group apart. Jean's savvy *performances* of Jewishness in a constraining cultural theater help her move from a poor governess to a rich aristocratic lady and reveal the cultural potential that the figures of the Jew

and the governess have in Alcott's vision of society: the potential to challenge and reshape the established social order through their liminality.

Behind a Mask was published between the two waves of Jewish immigration to the United States. As my introduction has pointed out, racism and anti-immigration sentiments in the rapidly-changing society contributed to the escalation of anti-Semitism in the 1860s and 1870s (Diner, *A New Promised Land* 35-37). Anti-Semitic feelings grew throughout the Civil War in both anti- and pro-slavery divisions. Non-Jewish Americans saw the increasing Jewish population as a menace to the employment of Christians. The Jew was perceived as an ambitious participant in the competitive capitalist economy, and the growth of Jewish immigrant communities was considered an organized penetration of American society. As many believed, the crucial Jewish aim was to exploit and benefit from American resources.

However, though many Jewish men and women became prosperous through the "traditional commercial businesses" that their families founded after they had immigrated to the United States, others ventured into fields of medicine, education, authorship, theater, etc. (Diner and Benderly 96-100). As my introduction has demonstrated, Jewish women were particularly engaged with the establishment of Jewish educational institutions. According to Diner's *The Jews of the United States, 1654-2000*, Jewish women founded the first Hebrew Free School in New York in 1865, where they tried "to provide the educational antidote" to the Protestant mission school in the neighborhood (144). In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Jewish female educators were the most active contributors to Jewish American "communal life" (144).⁶ Jewish women were widely-acknowledged fighters for better lives.

Besides the social significance of Jewish presence on American soil for Alcott's choice of Rachel as a model for the protagonist in *Behind a Mask*, there is an interesting biographical fact that explains Alcott's interest in Jewish women. Although Alcott's mother had "the Sewalls, Quincys, and Hancocks" among her ancestors, her father, Colonel Joseph May, "a Revolutionary veteran and a pillar of the First Unitarian Church," was of "indistinct" origin (S. Elbert xv). Madelon Bedell, the Alcotts' biographer, asserts that the Mays were the progeny of John May, who immigrated to America in 1640 and who had worked as a shopmaster in England (qtd. in S. Elbert xv). His last name had two spelling forms: "Maies" or "Mayes," and he could have been of Portuguese descent. This last name entails his Jewish ancestry as well, and Bedell speculates that among the first Mays who immigrated to America were Portuguese Jews who evaded the Inquisition (qtd. in S. Elbert xv). Louisa and her mother had "dark hair and eyes," and Louisa described her skin as "sallow" or "brown" (qtd. in S. Elbert xv). Unlike the two of them, Bronson had blond hair, blue eyes, and was of Anglo-Saxon descent. He was convinced that "Anglo-Saxon 'races' possessed more spiritually perfect natures, were generally 'harmonious,' and had more lofty intellects than darker-skinned people" (xv). Louisa and her mother were very temperamental, and Bronson once spoke of them as "two devils," asserting that "[he] is not quite divine enough to vanquish the mother fiend and her daughter" (qtd. in S. Elbert xv-xvi). Bronson depicted Louisa as "true-blue May, or rather, a brown" (qtd. in S. Elbert xvi). He was grounded in the contemporary beliefs that different groups were marked by certain hereditary features that helped them prosper or led them to disaster (xvi).⁷

Alcott's family's views of descent and belonging as well as broader social discourses on race contributed to the author's approach to the issues pertinent to ethnic identity. Louisa grew up calling herself "moody Minerva," and she compared herself to her blonde sister, an "artist

who combined work and pleasure in a more easy-going style” (S. Elbert xvi). Bronson’s associations of darker-complexioned people with unpredictable temperaments very likely influenced Louisa’s depiction of Jean Muir: Jean is blond and delicate, with grey eyes, but the expressiveness of her eyes and her performances are reminiscent of Rachel. Thus Jean Muir is a unique hybrid construction that emerged from Alcott’s experimentation with the racist discourses of the day: Alcott made Jean look like a white woman, reminiscent of what Bronson called Anglo-Saxon races, but her personality features, both positive and negative, are those of the great French Jewish actress.

Alcott’s own interpretation of Rachel through the creation of Jean Muir reveals the author’s ambivalent relationship with the figure of a Jewish person. As I have pointed out in the introduction to the dissertation, according to Cheyette, in the nineteenth-century English and American literature the figure of “the Jew” is a receptacle for the dominant social order’s inchoate fears and desires and can be simultaneously anti- and philo-Semitic, or more precisely, allo-Semitic (11). Following Cheyette’s convincing argument, we can say that Jean Muir is an allo-Semitic character. Her determination to achieve her goals in a men-dominated society reflects Alcott’s praise of Rachel’s support for feminist causes, but Jean’s extreme shrewdness and callousness demonstrate the author’s criticism of Rachel’s and stereotypically Jewish shortcomings. Jean Muir is a liminal and controversial character, and just as protagonists of other sensation novels of the day, Jean is a boundary-crosser and boundary-blurrier.

In the Coventry household Jean works as a governess, and just as the figure of the Jew often presents ethnic fluidity, the figure of the governess in the nineteenth-century transatlantic literature regularly embodies class conflict. In other words, she is a liminal character who,

according to T. J. Lustig, “epitomizes nineteenth-century anxieties concerning social and sexual borders” (149).⁸ The governess blurs class distinctions in various ways. She does not have the status of the family that employs her, but she is not a domestic either. Sometimes the governess’s parents are “merchants, civil servants... officers, and clergymen” whose social status has deteriorated, and sometimes her parents are “farmers or tradesmen” who progress in social hierarchy (Broughton and Symes 14). For families in the social ascent, governesses “served as much as status symbols for their employer as teachers of their children” (Broughton and Symes 14).⁹ They were expected to obey the rules and preach the values of the family they worked for, but they were simultaneously humiliated by their masters. The fact that the governess was located in, as Christine Doyle puts it, “some nebulous place above the level of servant but below the level of family,” was the underlying reason for the common belief that she was outside of normal social spheres (146).¹⁰ Through her employment, the governess encroached on the land of men, and through her adherence to high moral principles, she occupied the space of female chastity and docility. Thus the governess embodied the blurring, liminal ground between the upward and downward, the male and female. The governess’s class and gender liminality catalyzed the appearance of the literary tropes of the governess as an asexual, virtuous woman and as an unscrupulous sexual predator (Broughton and Symes 178-179). Furthermore, as Elizabeth Schewe points out, “Since the governess was a relative stranger accepted within the borders of the family, for Americans she likewise embodied the threat of racial and immigrant others within the borders of the nation” (579).¹¹ Thus, the governess in literature was a figure loaded with various class, ethnic, national, gender and sexual fears and desires of the dominant social order.

Though governesses were not necessarily of ethnic origins different than the dominant social order, nineteenth-century authors and people in general used words such as “race” or “tribe” as well as “class” or “caste” in order to allude to the governesses as social outcasts or pariahs. As Lecaros explains, “At the time, these terms did not primarily stand for social or ethnic origin by birth; they could also denote a particular group of people who had something in common” (240-241).¹² However, the use of such words clearly demonstrates that governesses had a status different than the ones of other middle-class women. One of the 1844 issues of *Fraser’s Magazine* analyzes “the newly risen race of governesses,” while the 1848 report of the Governess’s Benevolent Institution announces that its goal is “to raise the character of Governesses as a class” (qtd. in Lecaros 241). The author of “The Governess Question,” published in *The English Woman’s Journal* in November 1859, refers to governesses as “a race apart, pariahs” (qtd. in Lecaros 241). Governesses themselves frequently used such phrases when they spoke of their occupation. The author of “Two-Pence an Hour,” published in an 1856 issue of *Household Words*, identifies herself as “a hard-working, conscientious, well-principled, and well-educated race of young persons” (qtd. in Lecaros 241).

Although this terminology was primarily used to denote the position of the governess, it was frequent even in the nineteenth-century debate about women’s work in general. In *What to Do with Our Girls; or, Employments for Women* (1884), Arthur Talbot Vanderbilt ventured the opinion that the unpleasant living conditions of governesses and their constant anxiety of losing their jobs are closely linked (Lecaros 241). Vanderbilt even claimed that “[c]aste prejudices form another form of pauperism” (qtd. in Lecaros 241). Lecaros approves of such a claim, asserting that “Many people would have agreed with the overbearing Mrs. Peacocke in Holme Lee’s *Warp and Woof*, or, the *Reminiscences of Doris Fletcher* (1861), who informs a young governess that

‘all working women are at a discount; a woman loses caste the moment she is driven to depend on her own exertions for livelihood’ ” (241). Social critics and authors of the day apparently considered the connection between gender and class very tight.

Alcott, an active participant in the public debates of the day, was quite aware of both the discourses of anti-Semitism and social positions available to women. The fact that Alcott casts Jean as both a racially and socially liminal figure suggests her intention to experiment with both allo-Semitism and feminism. Besides her associations with Jewishness, Jean is cast as a sexual predator, who waits for an occasion and a victim that could assist her in the accomplishment of her financial ambitions. Lady Sydney’s son, Gerald and Edward Coventry, and finally Sir John Coventry have all been targets of Jean’s ambitions and shrewdness. However, Sir John is the only one who approves of Jean’s performances and secures her economic status, but he is also the only one who has the familial authority to invite the others to respect Jean as his wife and accept her as a family member. Thus Jean has not only accomplished her materialistic goals but changed the family structure as well. Her mission goes beyond personal goals; it destabilizes the system of values in an aristocratic family. Though the novel invites a critical attitude towards Jean’s deceptions, it also questions the prudery of aristocratic families.

Though Jean is perceived as an outsider in the Coventry household, she manages to outsmart them and become one of them. Gerald’s usage of the word “tribe” testifies to the fact that just as other authors of the day, Alcott appropriated “racial terminology” in order to emphasize that the hosts perceive the governess as someone different than aristocracy. However, unlike the aforementioned Mrs. Peacocke, Alcott propels the image of a woman who does not lose her caste once she has to earn for her own living. Instead, Alcott creates the protagonist who

manages to improve her social rank once she chooses to abandon her past life as a professional actress and wife of a bad actor. Since Alcott bases Jean Muir on the famous Rachel, it is necessary to briefly introduce the most significant details from Rachel's life and work.

Rachel's biography influenced her life style as well as different audiences' perceptions of her. Rachel's father was a Jewish peddler, and her childhood was difficult (Stokes 68). Her family had connections with the Jewish community in the Marais, which contributed to Rachel's sense of belonging to Jewish culture (68). Rachel's ethnic ancestry influenced contemporary responses to her as a public figure as well as her selection of roles on the stage (68). For instance, in Madame Girardin's *Judith* (1843), Rachel attempted to enrich the well-known biblical story with contemporary tragic elements, and she applied the same approach in her adaptation of Racine's play *Athalie* (1847), based on the parable from *The Old Testament* (68). Rachel emphasized ethnic issues in plays on ancient Greece and Rome as well, proudly staging the hardships and endurance of old Hebrews (68). However, in Napoleonic France, Christians were not convinced in the truthfulness of Jewish loyalty, and therefore they regularly questioned Jewish "legal rights" (68). Rachel constantly endured severe anti-Semitic offenses (68, 70). Her contemporaries labeled her as materialistic and manipulative, noting her lack of attachment to men (70). As a tragic actress, Rachel impressed and respected both Jewish and non-Jewish French admirers (68). She established the image of a public woman who is simultaneously proud of her ethnic ancestry and willing to socialize with her non-Jewish fans (68). She proved to be equally charismatic all over Europe and the United States.¹³

Rachel's most remarkable influence on contemporary French theater was her revitalization of the classical tragedy through an emphasis on the importance of women in

different nations' histories. Through her remarkable performances, Rachel reshaped the tragic stage, dominated by men, from playwrights to stage workers to tragic heroes (Stokes 66). Rachel's audacious cultural intervention marked her as unique among French tragic divas (66). As Stokes explains, "Vehement in roles that had become the repositories of pathos, Rachel seemed able to dominate the stage entirely by herself, without masculine support or masculine competition" (66). She enriched staged tragedies by giving power to female characters whose roles she performed. For instance, in Rachel's performance of Camille in *Horace*, "the political battle was counterpointed by the sexual": though delicate, Camille was the heroine in the battle owing to her manipulation of men (83). Rachel's performance of Hermione was equally significant: she effectively enacted the complex "psychological development" of the famous female character (90). Her presentation of Phèdre, especially her "ghostlike" appearance on the stage, emphasized women's irrepressible eroticism and their "disruptive power" (104). Rachel's innovations in the scripts, attitude, postures, and resolution on the stage contributed to the empowerment of female characters in classical tragedies and to her call for social elevation of women. As the forthcoming analysis of the novel demonstrates, Alcott borrowed a lot from Rachel in order to create Jean.

By portraying Jean as Rachel, Alcott assigns her character a unique mission: Jean accomplishes her goals through her conscious performances both on and off the stage, proving that woman's will and agency are reliable tools in her struggle for a place in patriarchal society. By ascribing Rachel's determination, acting skills and roles (particularly the role of biblical Judith) to Jean, Alcott opens a path for the governess's social mobility and calls for an organized feminist action against patriarchy. Jean is loaded with stereotypically Jewish features such as invincible determination, shrewdness, avarice, and vitality, all of which were ascribed to Rachel.

As much as the reader admires Jean's acting skills, s/he also notices her treachery and unscrupulous attempts to secure her economic position. Alcott's ambivalent attitude towards Jean and thus Rachel reflects her ambivalence towards the Jewish presence on American soil. Cheyette's concept of allo-Semitism is particularly useful here, since it enables me to analyze Alcott's negative and positive responses to Jewishness throughout the novel. Similar to all the protagonists of sensation novels, Jean is not a fully favorable character. If Alcott integrates Jean's/Rachel's self-consciousness and agency in her vision of progressive womanhood, she chastises avarice and deceit, stereotypically ascribed to Jews.

Behind a Mask

Prior to writing *Behind a Mask* Alcott traveled around Europe as a paid nurse and companion to her ill friend (Showalter xxi). She visited Britain and especially enjoyed the English countryside, which very likely motivated her to set the plot of the novel in an aristocratic household close to London. The Coventry home became a site for Alcott's experimentation with class, gender, and race, portrayed through the protagonist's everyday performances as well as staged tableaux vivants. The novel consists of nine chapters. The first four chapters portray Jean's everyday performances in which she tries to manipulate the Coventrys through the invented stories about her past. The fifth chapter presents the three tableaux that Jean consciously stages in order to accelerate her final success. The last four are the aftermath of Jean's tableaux, presenting the outcomes of her artistry and artfulness. The novel thus fully presents Jean's progress towards the achievement of her goals among the English aristocrats.

Jean's intervention in the Coventry household and British culture in general can be explained through a theoretical model consisting of Daphne Brooks's concept of "self-

actualization” through “off-center performances” and already introduced Certeau’s concepts of strategies and tactics. In her study of African American performances in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century transatlantic world, borrowing Carla Peterson’s concept of “empowering oddness,” Brooks examines performances of race and gender that African Americans invented in order to “move more freely” (6). Suggesting that such performances can be called “eccentric,” Brooks notes that, according to Peterson, one of the meanings of the word “eccentric” actually “extends the notion of off-centeredness to suggest *freedom of movement* stemming from the lack of central control and hence new possibilities of difference” (6, her italics). Avoiding “constrictive race and gender paradigms” prescribed by the dominant, white, social order, the characters that Brooks analyzes “rehearsed ‘off-center’ identity formations to disrupt the ways in which they were perceived by audiences and to enact their own ‘freedom dreams’ ” (6). Since these characters could not be easily detected in their “off-center” actions, Brooks calls their performances “opaque,” pointing out that such performances emphasize “the skill of the performer who, through gestures and speech as well as material props and visual technologies, is able to confound and disrupt conventional constructions of the racialized and gendered body” (8). Drawing from Brooks’s argument, I contend that through her performances of Jewishness Jean destabilizes the dominant social order. Disguising herself in the uniform of the governess off the stage and dressing herself in the clothes of Judith, a suffering damsel, and Queen Bess on the stage, Jean manipulates the Coventrys, moves freely through their aristocratic world, and accomplishes her goals.

Alcott’s representation of the dynamic interaction between the dominant social order, the English aristocracy exemplified in the Coventry family, and Jean, the Scottish governess depicted as the legendary Jewish actress reworks a number of aspects of British culture. In terms

of ethnicity, the social milieu that Jean enters exemplifies the space of the English aristocracy's social prevalence. In terms of class, the Coventrys represent the wealthy gentry, the owners of land and social privileges that Jean seeks to appropriate by marrying an affluent aristocrat. The aristocracy's derision and stereotyping of governesses are strategies that the dominant social order exercises in order to distinguish itself from the "menacing" Other. In terms of gender, the discourse that Jean eventually subverts is based on male dominance.¹⁴ Lady Coventry, Bella, and Lucia live on the money that Gerald and Edward inherited from their late father. Women's access to money is secured mostly through marriage or inheritance. Though the novel does not exhibit English stereotyping of Scots, the fact that the Scottish governess seeks to create some space for success in the predominantly English discourse, makes her an ethnic Other. Her determination to move upward in the British class hierarchy, or to change her social position from the governess to the aristocratic proprietress, makes her a threat to the current class stratification. Furthermore, Jean's performances of Jewishness make her an ethnic Other in both Britain, critical of Disraeli's access to power, and the United States, permeated by post-Civil War anti-Semitism. Finally, her defiance towards powerful men in the household makes her a courageous woman fighter against patriarchy. If despite foreign settings, Alcott's potboilers deal with American issues, Jean's struggle for women's emancipation through her performances of Rachel's roles, skills, and stereotypically Jewish characteristics, makes her the character whose actions are relevant to American society of the day. Jean's on- and off-the-stage performances help her move forward in her battle for women's rights, higher social rank, and wealth, and her performed Jewishness is the most important insignia on her fighter's body.

As the novel demonstrates, Jean accomplishes her goals despite being an ethnic Other, an economically inferior subject, and a woman. Her cultural intervention can be traced and analyzed

through the trajectory of her tactics. From Jean's initial tricks when she meets the Coventrys to her series of the three tableaux vivants to her final manipulation and union with Sir John, the protagonist challenges and subverts the power of the dominant social order. Her impersonation of Rachel and performances of Jewishness lead her to social prosperity and stability. However, these performances also cause her problems with certain family members and expose her treachery to the scrutiny of the readership.

Jean Muir's arrival is depicted as a theatrical event. Gathered in their living room, the Coventry family, consisting of Lady Coventry, her daughter Bella, sons Gerald (the master of the household) and Edward (the younger son), and niece Lucia, are awaiting the appearance of Jean Muir. Since Gerald did not arrange the transportation for the governess, she has to walk to the Coventry mansion after a long train ride. The Coventrys are reminiscent of an audience for a parlor theatrical, waiting for the curtain to lift and the show of the leading actress to begin. While Lady Coventry, Bella, Lucia, and Edward await Jean's arrival with eagerness and curiosity, Gerald does not look forward to meeting Jean at all. He is the one who condescendingly speaks of Jean and other women of her social status even before he meets her. As I have pointed out in the previous sections of the chapter, when Lucia offers to tell him about the new governess, he disapproves of the entire "tribe" (3). Gerald's remark sets the pattern for his attitude towards Jean in the first half of the novel: he distrusts Jean's charm and good manners, believing that they are common features of the whole class.

As soon as Jean arrives, the Coventrys examine her just as spectators examine an actress. In Alcott's words, "everyone looked at her then, and all felt a touch of pity at the sight of the pale-faced girl in her plain black dress, with no ornament but a little silver cross at her throat..."

But something in the lines of the mouth betrayed strength, and the clear, low voice had a curious mixture of command and entreaty in its varying tones” (5-6). Apparently, despite her modest outfit, Jean impresses the audience with her inner strength, charming voice and self-confident posture. In order to prove that she can be an excellent piano teacher, she plays old Scotch tunes but almost faints out of hunger and weakness. Even then, Gerald distrusts Jean’s sickness, alluding to the whole scene as acting. He whispers to Lucia: “ ‘Scene first: very well done’ ” (7). Gerald’s comment announces the interaction between Jean and himself: Gerald will be a keen observer and interpreter of Jean’s performances.

At this point of the novel Jean’s power as a woman and actress is revealed through her response to Gerald’s observation. Overhearing Gerald’s remark, Jean retorts with “ ‘Thanks. The last scene shall be still better’ ” (7). Despite being socially inferior to and financially dependent on her master, Jean fearlessly notes that she will achieve what she wants through her appointment as Bella’s governess. Jean’s statement suggests that her everyday performances in the Coventry home are going to be well-planned and purposeful. As I have pointed out in the previous sections, Gerald observes that, while responding to his comment, she pierced him with her eyes like the grand Rachel (7). Gerald’s association of Jean with Rachel says a lot about the protagonist’s inner strength and determination, and furthermore, it announces Alcott’s experimentation with Jewishness through the character of the Scottish governess.

As much as the first scene of *Behind the Mask* delineates the relations between the governess/actress and her employers/audience, Jean’s monologue after the meeting with the Coventrys emphasizes her self-consciousness as a performer. This monologue establishes Jean as a willful and proactive woman, who has come to the Coventry home with a goal. Jean proudly

comments on her first night performance: “ ‘Not bad! It will be a good field for me to work in, and the harder the task, the better I shall like it... Come, the curtain is down, so I may be myself for a few hours, if actresses ever are themselves’ ” (12). This excerpt demonstrates that Jean is the director of her performances, confirming Gerald’s observations. The initial artfulness sets the pattern for Jean’s acting: she conquers Edward with her music, talk, and treatment of his horse, Bella with her French lessons, Sir John with her reading sessions, Lucia with her obedience and compliments to her mother, and Gerald with her tableaux vivants.

The aforementioned off-the-stage performances, from choosing the modest outfit decorated with a silver cross, to impressing the audience with her Scottish music, to fainting out of malnutrition and weakness, are Jean’s off-center performances. Unaware of her true identity, mesmerized by her social skills, and softened by her enacted physical weakness and poverty, most of the Coventrys get attached to Jean. She successfully establishes the image of an extraordinarily skillful and gregarious governess, ready to please everyone, and not just her pupil Bella. Jean’s effective acting enables her to open the door of the aristocratic world. All of these early performances under the false identity are the protagonist’s ways of building her influence over the aristocrats, since only behind a mask of the poor and knowledgeable governess can she get the Coventrys to like and accept her. The initial off-center acts are just a threshold for Jean’s further acting enterprises, but all of them as well as her subsequent announcement that she will resolutely carry out her secret agenda reveal her shrewdness. Jean’s demonstration of her treachery at the beginning of the novel, combined with Gerald’s comparison of Jean with Rachel, establishes the protagonist as the performer of a Jewish stereotype. Driven by the cleverness, resolution, and dexterity of a Jewish person, Jean launches her important project: the creation of a new order in her employers’ domestic space, an order that will include her as an equal to the

gentry. Jean's early off-center acts are her foundational tactics in the building of such a project: through the presentation of herself as a committed governess, Jean secures a legitimate workplace in the world of the dominant social order, and manipulating the advantages of such a workplace with the shrewdness of a Jewish person, she makes a change. While the first part of the novel is charged with anti-Semitism, exposing the protagonist's unscrupulousness to the scrutiny of the audience, the central part, consisting of Jean's impeccable living pictures, offers space for philo-Semitism.

The series of three tableaux vivants, Jean's silent performances of biblical Judith, a suffering damsel, and Queen Bess, which occur in the middle of the novel, are catalysts for Jean's final success.¹⁵ By appropriating Rachel's tendency to play the roles of heroines and thus emphasize the importance of women for national progress, Jean calls for an organized feminist action against patriarchy. Jean starts with the role of the Hebrew heroine in order to stress the importance of women's agency, continues with the role of a dying girl in order to soften Gerald after the first, daunting and revolutionary tableau, and ends with the role of the beloved and highly diplomatic British queen in order to appeal to Gerald and implicitly suggest her ultimate victory. Jean's tableaux serve as stimulants for what will happen beyond the stage because they effectively conflate the counterfeit with the real, announcing Jean's agenda on class and gender in everyday life and affirming stereotypically Jewish positive characteristics, such as determination and diligence. The role of Jean's tableaux is thus twofold: they invert the traditional ideological purpose of the genre—the endorsement of patriarchy—by inviting the women in Sir John's drawing room and women readers of the novel to stand up for their rights, and they simultaneously cast Jewish women, particularly biblical Judith whom Jean stages, and Rachel, on whom Jean is based, as models for other women fighters.

The first tableau announces Jean's gender mission and Alcott's affirmation of the ancient Hebrew heroine. As Elaine Showalter argues in the introduction to *Alternative Alcott*, the author's description of Jean's performance as Judith was likely influenced by Horace Vernet's famous pictorial rendering of Judith's story titled *Judith and Holofernes* (1831), in which Judith murders Holofernes after he sexually assaults her (xxx). Jean stages the tableau in Sir John's home, the space owned and dominated by a wealthy man, and in such a space, in the role of Judith, she severely punishes the perpetrator who sexually assaulted her. The narrator's descriptions of the tableau testify to Jean's acting talent: she is not effective in real life only but on the stage as well. In Alcott's words, "She was looking over her shoulder towards the entrance of the tent, with a steady yet stealthy look, so effective that for a moment the spectators held their breath, as if they also heard a passing footstep" (52). Jean's look keeps her audience mesmerized and suspenseful. Jean impresses the audience with her posture, look, and adequate make-up as well: "She had darkened her skin, painted her eyebrows, disposed some wild black locks over her fair hair, and thrown such an intensity of expression into her eyes that they darkened and dilated till they were as fierce as any southern eyes that ever flashed" (52). Jean's darkened complexion and eyebrows as well as artificial black locks evoke an image of a Jewish person, usually portrayed as darker than Christians. The protagonist's emphasis on Judith's image and fierce look suggests that she pays special attention to the character's distinctiveness, pride, and resolution, all of which are reminiscent of Rachel's portrayal of Judith and other heroines.

Jean's appropriation of Rachel's emphasis on women's heroics frightens men in the audience, particularly Gerald. He observes that "Hatred, the deepest and bitterest, was written on her sternly beautiful face, courage glowed in her glance, power spoke in the nervous grip of the slender hand that held the weapon, and the indomitable will of the woman was expressed—even

the firm pressure of the little foot half hidden in the tiger skin” (52-53). Just as Rachel emphasized female bravery on stages all over the world, Jean emphasizes it in the drawing room of the aristocrat who initially looks down upon her because she is a governess, but who eventually falls in love with her and marries her. Unlike the popular heroines of the *tableaux vivants*, such as Beatrice Cenci, Charlotte Corday, and Fatima Bluebeard, who are sentenced to death for acts of violence against men, Jean, in the role of Judith, decapitates Holofernes without being punished for her crime (Chapman 32-38, 43). Jean’s representation of Judith totally defeats and annihilates the male gaze that is supposed to validate her and invites the female spectators to challenge the male dominance in their lives.

Through Jean’s masterful rendering of biblical Judith, Alcott praises the Hebrew heroine’s courage. By placing Judith’s story at the beginning of Jean’s series of *tableaux* and by modeling Jean’s performance of Judith on Rachel’s, the author emphasizes these Jewish women’s heroism and progressiveness. In the decade when Alcott vehemently advocates women’s rights to work and to vote, the legendary Jewish heroine and the contemporary French Jewish actress, both of whom are internationally known for their support of women’s causes, serve her as paragons for nineteenth-century women fighters for their elementary rights. Alcott’s portrayal of the first tableau is philo-Semitic, and she respectfully notes the importance of these audacious and determined Jewish women for the future female emancipation.

The tableau of Judith and Holofernes is Jean’s opening on-the-stage off-center performance. Through the living picture, she manages to do what she is not allowed to in real life—murder an abusive male leader without being punished for such a crime—which means that the living picture provides her with a space for the presentation of her feminist agenda in the

patriarchal home and society. Protected by the theatrical frame of the tableau, Jean sophisticatedly presents a radical vision of womanhood to her aristocratic audience. The tableau of biblical Judith is also Jean's first on-the-stage tactic for the destabilization of the dominant social order since her performance astounds Gerald with her resolution, revolutionary spirit, and inner strength. As an aristocratic, patriarchal master, Gerald is frightened and threatened by Jean's compelling impersonation of Judith and severe punishment of Holofernes. Thus Jean's first on-the-stage tactic for the creation of a new order in the Coventry family relays a message of women's courage and radicalism to everyone in the audience and instills apprehension in male spectators, particularly Gerald.

The second tableau announces Jean's fight for class mobility and Alcott's affirmation of Jean's Rachel-like dexterity. In this living picture the governess plays the role of a suffering damsel who dies in the arms of her Cavalier lover, played by Gerald. The damsel is murdered by the Roundhead soldiers who pursue her lover. Though this tableau casts Jean in the role of a wounded and powerless woman, it does attest the protagonist's cleverness. Aware of the fact that the progressiveness of the first tableau might have frightened Gerald, Jean plays submissiveness in the second one. Here again the real and the counterfeit are conflated: Gerald/Cavalier is not scared by the governess/damsel who dies in his arms, he is no longer interested in discovering the governess's past and origin, and by playing the role of the Cavalier he descends from the pedestal of his high social rank, which opens a possibility for his marriage proposal to the governess in real life. Gerald even confesses to himself that "Many women had smiled on him, but he had remained heart-whole, cool, and careless, quite unconscious of the power which a woman possesses and knows how to use, for the weal or woe of man" (55). Jean is also aware of her influence on the young master. She congratulates herself as soon as she notices the effects of

her tactical acting: “She felt his hands tremble, saw the color flash into his cheek, knew that she had touched him at last, and when she rose it was with a sense of triumph which she found it hard to conceal” (55). Gerald is enchanted by Jean like the Cavalier by his damsel. In this tableau as well Jean successfully defeats and subordinates the male gaze that is supposed to validate her, advocating the possibility of social ascent for governesses. The description of Jean’s defeat of Gerald’s pride and arrogance attests the author’s approval of the protagonist’s Rachel-like dexterity in her fight with the condescending aristocrat, which gives this tableau the philo-Semitic touch.

If the tableau vivant of biblical Judith tactically alarms Gerald, the tableau of the suffering damsel tactically pacifies and enchants him. Through this off-center performance Jean again does what she is not allowed to in real life—rest and die in the arms of the Cavalier played by her employer. Dressed as a damsel, Jean manipulates Gerald so that he forgets Judith’s radicalism and gets attracted to the feminine character that Jean impersonates in this scene. Tactically seducing Gerald, Jean removes a most difficult obstacle on her road to wealth and success. The second tableau furthers the protagonist’s creation of the new order in the Coventry family: Jean starts her romantic battle against Gerald, turning him from a class enemy into her devoted admirer and future puppet. This second on-the-stage tactic initiates a shift of power positions in the household: the clever governess starts gaining control over her master, which leads to her increasing influence on his future decisions and actions. By finding a key to Gerald’s heart through her successful performance of femininity, Jean opens herself a path towards access to real power in the household.

The last tableau announces Jean’s final success, simultaneously exposing her ultimate treachery to the scrutiny of the readership. The model for Jean’s last tableau, Elizabeth I of

England, or Good Queen Bess (1533-1603), was Ann Boleyn's illegitimate daughter, famous for keeping her kingdom united and immune to religious civil wars that afflicted many European kingdoms at the time, for resisting the Spanish Armada's belligerence, and for her charismatic persona (Hulse 3). As a daughter of Henry VIII, Elizabeth was noble by birth, but "she was declared illegitimate" at the age of four, after the birth of her brother Edward (16). According to Hulse, after Edward's death in 1553 and a brief period of political turmoil, Elizabeth's sister Mary managed to secure the position of the sovereign and rule for "a little over five years" (21-22). Under the pressure from her advisors, Catholic Queen Mary I even incarcerated Elizabeth, believing that she conspired against her and that she would not be respectful to the Catholic Church (26). In 1558, Elizabeth succeeded Mary (29). Good Queen Bess was a more moderate ruler than her predecessors. Her forty-four years on the throne provided stability for the kingdom and helped create a sense of national identity.¹⁶

Jean's tableau of Good Queen Bess occurs in a secluded corner of the living room, and not on the podium like the previous two living pictures. Gerald, who restlessly decides to look for tardy Jean, is the only witness and spectator of this living picture. As Gerald finds Jean alone and pensive, just as she planned, his train of thought reveals that "She was leaning wearily back in the great chair which had served for a throne... Excitement and exertion made her brilliant, the rich dress became her wonderfully, and an air of luxurious indolence changed the meek governess into a charming woman" (57). This description suggests that the real and the counterfeit harmoniously conflate in Jean: her costume and indolence make her reminiscent of upper-class women. The following quotation even more emphasizes Jean's transcendence of class boundaries through her tableau: "She leant on the velvet cushions as if she were used to such support; she played with the jewels which had crowned her as carelessly as if she were born

to wear them; her attitude was full of negligent grace, and the expression of her face half proud, half pensive, as if her thoughts were bittersweet” (57). Jean is so effective in her presentation of Good Queen Bess that she even appropriates her grace and benignity. Enchanted by Jean’s appearance, Gerald offers his help in case she is concerned about something. This is the moment when the tableau vivant ends, and Gerald and Jean’s dialogue leads the plot towards the final resolution. Jean’s answer to Gerald’s question only reaffirms her victory over the young master and stresses the convergence of performance and reality: “ ‘This dress, the borrowed splendor of these jewels, the freedom of this gay evening, the romance of the part you played, all blind you to the reality. For a moment I cease to be a servant, and for a moment you treat me as an equal’ ” (57). This passage is the testimony to Jean’s awareness of her defeat of Gerald. As soon as Jean’s brief silent performance of Good Queen Bess is over, she completely conquers Gerald’s heart, making him her blind-sighted marionette.

The tableau of Good Queen Bess is a tactical move that brings Jean close to victory. Again, through this off-center performance, Jean does what she is not allowed to in real life: she behaves as an eminent English sovereign, more powerful than Gerald himself. Clothed in a royal gown and embellished with jewelry, Jean creates an image of a real empress. Enchanted by her queenly charisma, Gerald yields himself to her. This tableau is the climax of Jean’s on-the-stage performances since the master of the Coventry household is tricked into subordination to the governess. This tactic brings the protagonist to the pedestal in Gerald’s heart, which moves her forward towards a significant change of order in the Coventry household.

Jean’s deceitful narration of her life after her presentation of Good Queen Bess emphasizes the contrast between the performed role and Jean’s treacherous character.

Acknowledging the kindness of Gerald's concern for her worries, Jean lies to him about her misery: the son of her previous employer, Lady Sydney, was madly in love with her, and since she refused to marry him, he attacked her, and she ended up hospitalized. The young Sydney now seeks revenge and says that only a marriage to an honorable man could save her. Jean does not want to be blackmailed by Sydney nor does she want to marry Gerald's brother, Edward, who is also in love with her. Instead, she accepts Gerald's offer of his friendship and services: knowing young Sydney, Gerald thinks that he can help Jean evade Sydney's revenge. By allowing Gerald to believe that she desperately needs his help, Jean misleads him into trusting and protecting her. While her tableau of Good Queen Bess entraps Gerald—Jean wants him to find her alone by chance, observe her beauty, luxurious attire, and grace, and fall in love with her—the conversation that reveals Jean's fabricated suffering motivates Gerald to help the governess.

Alcott's choice of Bess for the performed role is not incidental. The Queen's origin, ruling, and lack of attachment to men serve as an allusion to Jean's cultural intervention, but at the same time the Queen's widely-acknowledged benevolence contrasts with Jean's treachery, obvious in the scenes following the last tableau. Like Queen Bess and Rachel, Jean does not feel any attachment to men. Instead, she manipulates men in order to achieve economic stability and a comfortable future. There is a significant difference between Queen Bess (and Rachel) and Jean. While the Queen and Rachel manage to unite conflicting factions owing to their charismas, Jean does not want to keep the members of the Coventry family together. On the contrary, she shrewdly induces Gerald and Edward into a fight, which results in Edward's departure from the estate and Jean's unimpeded manipulation of Gerald. The protagonist deceives both Gerald and Sir John by claiming that she is an abandoned daughter of the late Lady Howard, inducing the

gentlemen to believe that she is a noblewoman with a miserable fate. Thus Jean's conquest of Gerald through the last tableau is followed by her final and crucial off-the-stage performances, loaded with treachery and unscrupulousness. All these final acts are Jean's tactics that, as she hopes, will help her marry an aristocrat and become wealthy and powerful.

While the first two tableaux have the philo-Semitic tone, the last one, accompanied by Jean and Gerald's conversation and Jean's "war-mongering" in the Coventry family, reveals anti-Semitic undercurrents. Juxtaposed with Good Queen Bess, shrewd and deceitful Jean is cast as a menace to the family unity and well-being of the neighborhood. Influenced by the post-Civil War anti-Semitism, Alcott projects her inchoate anxieties regarding the assimilated Jews, active participants in the national capitalist project, onto the character of Jean Muir. The governess who performs stereotyped Jewishness on and off the stage in order to accomplish her agenda relays complex messages about the author's responses to Jewish immigrants. While Alcott praises stereotypically Jewish determination, vitality, and dexterity, she simultaneously vilifies stereotypically Jewish treachery and passion for lucre. If Alcott approves of Jean's willfulness and agency in her struggle for her rights, she simultaneously condemns her deceptions and "war-mongering" in the Coventry home. Jean Muir is thus a complex allo-Semitic character.

The last chapters of the novel, full of unexpected turns, reveal the resolution of the sensational plot. Edward finds Sydney and discovers that Jean was married to a bad actor in France, that she was a professional actress, that she seduced Sydney, and that she intentionally seduced Edward and Gerald as well as their uncle, Sir John. Since the two young gentlemen do not want her after they discover the truth about her past, Jean executes the ultimate tactic: she offers herself to Sir John, who eagerly marries her. Sir John urges all the Coventrys to respect his

wife and forgive her. The novel ends with Jean's success in the Coventry household and patriarchal society. Through her careful selection and execution of tactics, Jean accomplishes her personal goals, rising from a governess to an aristocratic matron. As Sir John's wife, she ends up more powerful and wealthier than all the Coventrys around her, both male and female. Despite the fact that the Coventrys exercise strategies such as stereotyping, derision, condescension, allegations, and public expositions of her dubious past in order to keep Jean in the place that society has designed for her, through her tactics in the form of off-center performances, Jean manages to manipulate and defeat them on their own domestic terrain. A poor and marginalized woman without noble ancestry becomes the mistress of Sir John's estate, sitting on top of the familial and social hierarchical pyramids. Though she had to fight for her goals through incognito off-center performances, once she marries Sir John and wins a place in the cultural center, she starts living without a mask, even though everyone is informed about her identity and plebian background. Marrying an aristocrat is a tactic that ensures not just Jean's financial stability but also her entitlement to her past, present and future in the aristocratic world without a need for camouflage.

Like the other sensation novels of the day, *Behind a Mask* registers the current social fears, particularly anti-Semitic and patriarchal fears, and offers a sensational resolution to the depicted problems. If the governess manages to marry well and stay in the family which she has tried to divide and if she behaves honorably in the future, then the ideological closure invites forgiveness, understanding, and integration. If the protagonist accomplishes her goals and lives happily ever after even though some of her acts are treacherous, then Alcott does not punish this performer of Jewishness. Registering shortcomings in Jean and Jews, Alcott does not vilify them

like Anthony Trollope; instead, she emphasizes their virtues and skills, inviting a more comprehensive reading of Jewish characters or characters that perform Jewishness.

What then can we conclude about Alcott's presentation of Jean? She certainly accomplishes her goals, but she does that through her marriage to a wealthy man. Some critics have concluded that her marriage to Sir John reinforces the ideological *status quo*, pointing out that the only way in which poor women can ensure their economic stability is by marrying rich men. I would conclude that Rachel's features, roles, and acting style that Alcott ascribes to Jean propel the idea of a determined, new woman, who secures her social position with her own agency and will. Subtitled *A Woman's Power*, the novel emphasizes the importance of women's self-consciousness for the improvement of their living and working conditions, the quality that Rachel staged in her internationally known performances. By ascribing Jean Rachel's characteristics and roles, Alcott celebrates Jewish women's heroism and progressiveness in their struggles for liberation and emancipation, simultaneously integrating Jewish people into her vision of the nation.

Notes

1. For a thorough discussion of how Alcott's family and her childhood and youth experiences influenced her career as an activist and author, see the introductions to Stern's *The Feminist Alcott: Stories of Woman's Power* and *Louisa May Alcott Unmasked: Collected Thrillers*, as well as the introduction to Showalter's *Alternative Alcott*. For background on Alcott's life and work, see Cheever's *Louisa May Alcott: A Personal Biography*.

2. For background on Alcott's potboilers, see the introductions to Stern's *The Feminist Alcott: Stories of Woman's Power* and *Louisa May Alcott Unmasked: Collected Thrillers*, as well as the introduction to Showalter's *Alternative Alcott*.

3. Booth's study examines the rise, development, status, role, and popularity of Victorian spectacular theater as well as the public debate over its aesthetics.

4. Kallikoff's and Maunder and Moore's studies investigate the Victorian crimes, particularly murder, as a recurring theme in sensation literature.

5. Harrison and Fantina focus on the plots and themes of Victorian sensation novels.

6. For background on Jewish American educational institutions and communal life, see chapter four in Diner's *The Jews of the United States 1654-2000*.

7. Elbert's introduction to *Louisa May Alcott on Race, Sex, and Slavery* discusses Alcott's family's origins and views of race.

8. Lustig investigates the roles of the governess in Henry James's fictions.

9. For background on requirements for the position of the governess, her social status, her position and living conditions in the household, as well as her secret sexual life and fantasies, see Broughton and Symes's study. For background on the relationship between governesses and their masters, their class mobility through marriage, their image as taboo woman, and their status as employed women, see Hughes's study.

10. Doyle analyzes the transatlantic trope of the governess in the works of Alcott and Charlotte Bronte.

11. For a detailed Goffmanian analysis of performances in *Behind a Mask* as class conflicts and class games in which loyalties shift, see Schewe's essay.

12. Lecaros's study examines the Victorian governess novel as a genre and its cultural work.

13. Stokes's chapter analyzes Rachel's numerous performances in detail.

14. Elliott's article focuses on the possibilities and restrictions of Jean's (and women's) authenticity and of very few occupations for women of the day. Fetterley's article investigates the connections between Jean's art of impersonation and survival as a woman in men's world.

15. For a brief analysis of gender implications in the first two tableaux only, see Chapman's article. For an analysis of dramatic literacy as a tool for various domestic negotiations done by middle-class women (and Jean Muir in particular), see Dawson's article. For an analysis of *Behind a Mask* as a sensation novel and tableaux as one of the means that contribute to sensational transformations, see Hackenberg's article.

16. Hulse discusses Elizabeth's succession to the throne and reign on pages 48-110.

Chapter 2

Remodeling the Nation: The “English Rachel” and the Vision of Anglo-America in**Henry James’s *The Tragic Muse***

Commenced in October, 1888, serially published in *The Atlantic Monthly* from January 1889, to May 1890, and then appearing in a single volume format in both Britain and the United States in June 1890, *The Tragic Muse* is often considered one of James’s less successful novels. This unjust evaluation of *The Tragic Muse* arises mostly from the text’s length and lack of strict structure. The voluminous rendering of the career path of Miriam Rooth, an actress of Jewish ancestry, begins in France, with the incidents of Miriam’s artistic incompetence, and ends in Britain, with the moments of her successes and glory. Miriam’s career is interlaced with her encounters with four English gentlemen, traveler Gabriel Nash, diplomat Peter Sherringham, politician and painter Nick Dormer, and entrepreneur Basil Dashwood, who influence her, and whom she influences in different ways. Through the conventions of the theatrical novel— dialogues reminiscent of scripts, action motivated by dramatic scenes, characters’ emphatic movements and expressions, intense lighting and sounds —James vividly renders Miriam’s development into an acting diva.

The novel has inspired a variety of scholarly studies. Structuralist critics have mostly analyzed the theatricality of *The Tragic Muse* (Joseph Litvak); the voice of the novel’s narrator (Judith Funston); Miriam as a central character (Alan Bellringer); Miriam’s predecessors in Russian realism (Susan Elizabeth Gunter); an artist’s occupation and life as highly enjoyable and praiseworthy (Steven Jobe); different types of representation in the novel (William Goetz); or the consciousness of major characters (Dorothea Krook).¹ Departing from these structuralist approaches, in their recent studies, Sarah Blair and Jonathan Freedman analyze the discourses of

cosmopolitanism and anti-Semitism in *The Tragic Muse*. Blair interprets Miriam as the “cosmopolitan Jew,” whose hybridity James sees as an escape from the English insularity and particularism.² Freedman analyzes James’s rendering of race as a matter of “custom and attitude,” focusing on the disappearance of Miriam’s Jewishness through her marriage with an Englishman and her artistry as well as on her mother’s assumption of Jewishness through her bent posture after Miriam gets married (76-77). Freedman contends that “race here functions in such a way as to make Jewishness bear all the problems of art in order to leave the artist free to explore its possibilities” (77).³

While I do agree with Blair that Miriam’s cosmopolitan identity challenges English isolationism and particularism and with Freedman that James conceives of race as an acquirable quality, I go further in my analysis of Miriam’s mission in the novel. This chapter argues that by basing Miriam on the already introduced French Jewish actress Rachel, James uses the figure of an initially marginal, uneducated, and poor actress, who gradually grows into an acting diva, to negotiate the gap between low and high theatrical tastes, to reform the commercial Anglo-American theater following classical traditions, and to regenerate the Anglo-American culture through Miriam’s on- and off-the-stage performances. James uses tableaux vivants in this theatrical novel in order to expose public perceptions of ethnicity, nationality, and gender as fixed categories, to stage Miriam’s resistance to such perceptions, and to present the birth of the regenerated Anglo-American theater, built from classical and contemporary Anglo-Saxon and Jewish strands.

However, even though Miriam carries out a crucial cultural task in the novel, she remains slightly tainted with (stereotypically) Jewish fecundity projected onto the multiplication and dissemination of her photos. Drawing from Cheyette, I demonstrate that Miriam bears a touch of

ambivalence, but I depart from Cheyette's conclusion that in English literature Jews are presented as acceptable national subjects only when civilized by the dominant, Christian culture. In his brief mention of *The Tragic Muse*, Cheyette claims that Miriam Rooth exemplifies his conviction. Cheyette believes that Miriam becomes popular in London because her Jewishness is eradicated by the dominant English and gentile culture and that, like many other English literary constructions of various "belles juives" since the medieval and Elizabethan eras, Miriam is cast as "succumbing to the transforming power and universality of Christianity which, by the nineteenth century, was synonymous with 'culture' " (7). I, on the contrary, contend that James endows Miriam with a tremendous acting talent, which helps her transform the English theater following classical traditions and becoming the "English Rachel" (135). As my examination of Rachel's life and career in the previous chapter has shown, she was proudly Jewish and feminist, and she kept both French Jews and Christians in thrall with her artistry and charisma. Miriam's artistry and charisma help her become the celebrity admired by London's Christians and Jews and considered accomplished and refined even by Peter and Gabriel, who initially approach her with stereotyped views of Jews. Miriam is not transformed by the mainstream; instead, she is the one who transforms the English stage and public taste.

In order to vividly portray contacts and conflicts between the individuals of different national and ethnic origins as well as genders, James uses living pictures. By applying Erving Goffman's concepts of "experimental hoaxing" and "theatrical frame" as frameworks for the analysis of tableaux vivants, I will demonstrate that through living pictures James tries to expose the problems of current social practices and transform them into progressive ones. The fact that James uses a popular and ideologically-coded performance genre for such tasks testifies to his intention of calling for an acceptance of his ideological vision. As the further analysis

demonstrates, James's Anglo-America in *The Tragic Muse* is a highly refined cultural construction, enriched by Miriam's performances of Rachel's classical roles, of ethnicity and nationality as fluid categories, and of new womanhood. By making Miriam a rising hybrid actress with no pedigree, who ultimately succeeds in the public arena owing to her carefully chosen tactics, James skillfully negotiates the gaps between the margins and the center as well as the low and high cultural tastes in the Anglo-America of the day.

James and the Theater as an Agent of Cultural Change

As James's 1888 letters reveal, his late work is focused on the regeneration of what he calls Anglo-America and defines as a cultural entity consisting of England and the United States (3:244). In a letter to Robert Louis Stevenson, dated on July 31, 1888, a few months before James begins writing *The Tragic Muse*, he chastises the current literary criticism because of its "object density and puerility" and because "it writes the intellect of our race too low" (3:240). James speaks of the Anglo-Saxon race, believing that contemporary critical circles have a negative influence on the development of the Anglo-Saxon taste. In the same letter, James openly criticizes the popular press as well, particularly the *Daily News*, since it displays "the lowest levels of Philistine twaddle" (3:240). This summer diatribe against the criticism and the press grows into a fall contemplation of the overall state of the Anglo-Saxon entity as well as the author's role in the process of that entity's cultural reformation. As James sets on writing his theatrical novel in Geneva, Switzerland, in a letter to his brother William, dated on October 29, 1888, he explains that he "can't look at the English and American worlds, or feel about them, any more, save as a big Anglo-Saxon total, destined to such an amount of melting together . . . and that that melting together will come faster the more one takes it for granted and treats the life of the two countries as continuous or more or less convertible, or at any rate as simply different

chapters of the same general subject” (3:244). The author believes that “Literature, fiction in particular, affords a magnificent arm for such taking for granted, and one may so do an excellent work with it” (3:244). Through his late fiction, James hopes to render the blending of the English and American worlds into a coherent cultural union. Departing from his earlier writing agenda, focused on the issues of national descent and belonging, the author decides to write in such a style that no one would ever know whether he is “an American writing about England or an Englishman writing about America” (3:244). This late James considers such a fluid national identity “highly civilized” (3:244). James’s late fiction becomes the site for his experimentation with both Anglo-American cultural unity and elevation of Anglo-American taste.

James obviously wants to overcome national isolationism and particularism as well as what he considered to be low cultural trends by proposing permeable and fluid models of behavior and a sophisticated public taste. As Sara Blair has noted, James’s engagement with the theater, drama, and theatrical novels in the 1880s and 1890s testifies to his commitment to the regeneration of Anglo-American culture (128-129). James considers theater an important agent of cultural reformation. As one of James’s late fictional works, *The Tragic Muse* proposes such revitalization, arguing for the elevation of public taste through the contemporary theater, refreshed and enriched with classical plays and acting style. However, in order to appeal to masses and motivate them to acquire sophistication, James chooses an initially incompetent and poor actress as the executor of the intended cultural change. In this way, James artfully bridges the gap between the high and low circles and fads. In order to understand James’s vision of Anglo-America in this theatrical novel, it is necessary to examine the late nineteenth-century theatricalization of Anglo-American social life, state of Anglo-American theaters, and position of actresses.

In his essay “The London Theatres, 1879” published in his collection *The Scenic Art: Notes on Acting and the Drama, 1872-1901*, James criticizes the theatricalization of everyday life that permeated English society towards the end of the century.⁴ In James’s words:

It sometimes seems to an observer of English customs that this interest in histrionic matters almost reaches the proportion of a mania. It pervades society—it breaks down barriers. If you go to an evening party, nothing is more probable than that all of a sudden a young lady or a young gentleman will jump up and strike an attitude and begin to recite a poem or speech. Every pretext for this sort of exhibition is ardently cultivated, and the London world is apparently filled with stage-struck young persons whose relatives are holding them back from a dramatic career by the skirts of their garments. Plays and actors are perpetually talked about, private theatricals are incessant, and members of the dramatic profession are ‘received’ without restriction. They appear in society, and the people of society appear on the stage; it is as if the great gate which formerly divided the theatre from the world had been lifted off its hinges. There is, at any rate, such a passing to and fro as has never been known; the stage has become amateurish and society has become professional... It is part of the great general change which has come over English manners—of the confusion of many things which forty years ago were kept very distinct. The world is being steadily democratized and vulgarized, and literature and art give their testimony to the fact. The fact is better for the world perhaps, but I question greatly whether it is better for art and literature. (qtd. in Litvak 156-157)

The “hazardous” theatricalization of the English social life James refers to arose largely from the popularity of parlor theatricals, especially tableaux vivants. As explained in the introduction to the dissertation, with the goal to include the middle-class in the shaping of the nation’s image, living pictures often attracted and engaged amateurs and expanded the space of the drawing room into the larger public arena.⁵ Such a cultural phenomenon made the public sphere more inclusive, but it also diluted the barrier between professionalism and amateurism.

Naturally, the theatricalization of home influenced the aesthetics of theater: tableaux vivants became a common genre on the Victorian stage. As Michael R. Booth explains, popular paintings were enacted on the stage in “the form of a tableau at the end of a scene or act” (10). Booth asserts that by 1850 spectatorships got used to viewing the stage “as if it were a picture” and “managers and technical staff” perfected the practice of creating the stage reminiscent of a painting (10). Both drama and acting were pictorial, which was the result of the emphasis on stage illustrations, promoted by Victorian and pre-Victorian theaters (11). Pictorialism on the stage was an important element of the aesthetics of Victorian spectacular theater. Though the spectacular had been the crucial element of “the court masque” and had regularly appeared in “shows, pageants and processions” under the Tudors and Stuarts as well as in “opera, pantomime and ballet” of the 1700s, the nineteenth century was the one that witnessed the rapid advancement of the spectacular in Victorian theaters (2-3). The major reason for this was urbanization and enlargement of metropolises from 1820 until the early 1900s. Various constructions in “stone, brick, steel, iron, and glass” were themselves spectacular “monuments” (3). The public was mesmerized by urbanization and required the same luxurious taste in the space of the domestic as well as on the stage (4). Theaters hired a great number of managers, scene painters, stage carpenters, and gasmen in order to produce shows full of various

constructions, color, light, and mass (4-29). As Booth emphasizes, spectacular theater was associated with a lack of sophistication (29). The degraded, low taste of Victorian people, the gloss and richness of the stage that distracted audiences from their focus on the actors and blended the actors with the stage, the managers' emphasis on the pictorial, and the dwindling number of worthy actors were crucial reasons for the critical debate on spectacular theater (29).

This debate included many famous practitioners and intellectuals of the day. As Booth explains, the debaters who approved of spectacle were convinced that "the pictorial recreation of contemporary and historical reality, together with the beautiful and ornamental additions of fine paintings, rich costumes, and lavishly executed properties, supplied inevitable deficiencies in the imagination of a modern audience no longer content with simplicity of staging, the voice of the actor, and the spoken word" (28). The debaters who disapproved of it, like James, were convinced in quite the opposite: "that spectacle suffocated the imagination rather than nourished it, that it distracted attention from the actor and the spoken word, and that a gorgeous picture was an inadequate substitute for the skills of the actor and dramatist" (28-29). However, both parties believed that "harmony between background and foreground, between picture and actor, was desirable, and that the latter should not be subordinated to the former" (29). E. W. Godwin, a well-known theatrical practitioner and archeological theorist of the day, was a passionate supporter of the popular belief that "acting was a subordinate art" which "must, if necessary, be sacrificed to pictorial and realistic effect" (28). In his brief article entitled "After the Play," which appeared in the *New Review* in June 1889 while *The Tragic Muse* was being serially published, James argued that the spectacle and acting would never perfectly blend on the stage, because "there is evidently a corrosive principle in the large command of machinery and decorations—a germ of perversion and corruption. It gets the upper hand—it becomes the

master. It is so much less easy to get good actors than good scenery and to represent a situation by the delicacy of personal art than by ‘building it in’ and having everything real” (qtd. in Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre* 28). Displeased with the interplay between the profanation of the theater and the degraded public taste, James argued for the elevation of professional acting, believing that it is the *spiritus movens* of a play.

The late 1880s, just before the five years of James’s experimentation with drama and eventually unsuccessful premiere of *Guy Domville* (1895), were the years during which the author contemplated his further writing career. This was the time when James tried to estimate the merits of play-writing by comparing them to those of novel-writing as well as contrasting them with the working conditions on the English stage. In a letter to his brother William, James states that “The whole odiousness of the thing lies in the connection between the drama and the theatre. The one is admirable in its interest and difficulty, the other loathsome in its conditions” (*Letters* 3:452). Though James was enchanted by the possibilities of drama, especially the contemporary French drama, indebted to classical playwrights, he was seriously concerned about the degradation of the English stage, particularly its commercial tendencies. Repelled by the state of the English theater and motivated by Mrs. Mary Humphry Ward’s theatrical novel, *Miss Bretherton* (1884), James decided to write his own theatrical novel, *The Tragic Muse*, in which he proposes a case for the reformation of the theater and culture.

However, aware of the pervasiveness and popularity of theatricalization in all aspects of Anglo-American social life, James needed an executor of cultural change who could easily enter people’s lives, earn their admiration, and guide them skillfully towards the appreciation of sophisticated cultural trends. Such a figure had to be one of the common people, endowed with an artistic talent, charisma, and determination. In his notebook entry of June 19, 1884, James

states that Mrs. Ward's novel, which deals with the personality and professional life of an actress, motivated him to write his own theatrical novel. James describes this nascent writing project as "a story which might be made interesting—as a study of the histrionic character" and approvingly speaks of Fanny Kemble's philosophy of acting, according to which "the dramatic gift is a thing by itself—implying of necessity no *general* superiority of mind" (28, his italics). In other words, the executor of the intended cultural change had to be a professional actress with a superior artistic gift and not with high level of intelligence. Though this notebook entry does not specify the names of James's future characters, it roughly delineates the career of Miriam Rooth and Peter Sherringham's relationship with her. James further explains that his intended theatrical novel will study "the strong nature, the personal quality, vanity, etc., of the girl: her artistic being, so vivid, yet so purely instinctive. Ignorant, illiterate. Rachel" (28).⁶ Evidently, the Rachel in question is the already introduced glorious French actress of Jewish ancestry, Elisa Félix.

Rachel, along with Sarah Siddons, Fanny Kemble, and Sarah Bernhardt, the famous British actresses, became James's paragon for the creation of Miriam. Miriam adopts Rachel's acting style and masters her repertory, stages a tableau vivant of the Tragic Muse, already performed by Siddons, follows Kemble's acting philosophy, and acts in commercial plays in order to earn money, as did Bernhardt. Keeping up with pictorial realism that was in vogue in literature of the day, James makes connections between his portrayal of Miriam and the well-known portraits of Siddons and Félix: Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse* (1784) and Jean-Léon Gérôme's *La Tragédie*, (*Portrait of Rachel* 1859, Salon of 1861). These connections serve to establish the image of Miriam as a classical and tragic actress, who performs the roles already enacted by the two tragic divas. While James uses all the four

actresses as models for Miriam, he borrows the most from the phenomenal Rachel, and references to Rachel occur throughout the novel.

As my previous chapter has pointed out, Rachel was far more influential and outstanding than the other French and European actresses. Rachel's repertory and unique acting style contributed to her international popularity. She excelled on the stages all over the world. As Stokes notes, from 1841 to 1856, she performed in France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Italy, and Switzerland, as well as on the stages of Warsaw, St. Petersburg, Berlin, Vienna, New York, Boston, and Charleston, South Carolina (68). Rachel usually performed in French, and often most of her foreign spectators could not understand her (68). However, she made an impact on her audience through her emotional gestures, facial expressions, and authoritative presence on the stage (68). Rachel was admired, glorified, painted, and photographed.

Romantic painters and early photographers were mesmerized by Rachel. The painters admired her not only for her ability "to stand still as a stone" but for her gift to "convey the sense of gestation" as well (75). As Stokes observes, "Because she [Rachel] can represent both stasis and flux, because she is both ancient and modern, origin and artifice, masculine force and feminine poise, the most revelatory aspects of her acting are the moments of transition that reveal the workings of change itself, the process of coming into being that could be both inspirational and terrifying" (77). All this is obvious in Gérôme's portrait, which was painted from Nadar's photographs. The portrait resembles Rachel's performance of Phèdre in a few scenes. The painting became so popular that it was reproduced and sold as a print (75). Gérôme's portrait demonstrates influences of Nadar's photograph, especially in the position of Rachel's head and the focus of her eyes (76). As Stokes observes, the mid-nineteenth century witnessed an interplay and interdependence of photography and theatrical realism (76). Unlike late nineteenth-century

photographers who tended to capture numerous “instants of arrested motion,” their predecessors, mid-nineteenth-century photographers, preferred “a significant pose,” for which “the codified gesture of nineteenth-century acting” was a source of inspiration (76). Similarly, theatrical realism focused on the presentation of the body with all its energy as if it were a photographic model (76). The “staginess” of Rachel’s photographs is what gives them historical value (76). Rachel’s posing for photographs launched a new testing practice for prospective actresses: beginners were thoroughly examined by theater administrations, and in case they met the demands, their photos were reprinted and disseminated (76). Rachel introduced the photo craze into the theatrical world.

Rachel died in 1858 as the most outstanding and progressive actress in the world (115). Nineteenth-century authors often revived Rachel through their theatrical heroines. Rachel is mentioned “in poems by Matthew Arnold” and “novels by Benjamin Disraeli, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Edmond de Goncourt, and Henry James” (115). Famous nineteenth-century actresses, such as Adelaide Ristori, Aimée Desclée, Charlotte Cushman, Helen Faucit, Helena Modjeska, and Sarah Bernhardt, admired Rachel (115). The last one was proud of her Jewish descent, as was Rachel. Bernhardt eagerly chose Rachel’s roles, but she preferred erotic plays, melodrama, travesty, and the Romantic theater, which Rachel had only started to explore (115). Critics often compared Rachel’s and Bernhardt’s different ways of rendering Phèdre: “Rachel’s volatile strength” with “Bernhardt’s febrile sensuality” (115). Just as Rachel challenged the patriarchy of the early nineteenth century through her feminization of visionary heroics, Bernhardt raised her voice against male dominance in the 1870s through her emphasis on female eroticism (116). Through their courage and progressiveness, both Rachel and Bernhardt did a lot

for the nascent feminist movements, dedicated to women's equality with men and admission to public professions.

As the forthcoming analysis of the novel demonstrates, Miriam has a gift of conveying a sense of flux, permeability, and change, which is reminiscent of Rachel's ability to evoke a sense of gestation or becoming through her poses. Just as Rachel was capable of blending various and often opposite qualities while posing, Miriam successfully synthesizes and molds different aspects of identity into a powerful, coherent whole while sitting for a portrait in Nick Dormer's studio. Through her fluid behavioral patterns and constant improvement of her acting savvy in plays, poses, and everyday situations, Miriam masters the art of elusiveness. Similar to Rachel, Miriam greatly appreciates posing for portraits and photographs, and like her paragon, she mesmerizes her painter and London's photographers. Miriam even believes that the reproduction of her photographs enables her not only to increase her popularity but also to evade showing her real self in public. In other words, photography provides her with a perfect space for being constantly present in the public sphere yet simultaneously elusive. She really becomes "the English Rachel"—an outstanding professional actress and a popular public woman, painted, photographed, and glorified owing to her impeccable histrionics and charisma.

Since acting was considered a "viable and growing trade for women" (Davis 16-17), it is not surprising that it was frequently a subject of literary texts that promoted or at least explored women's entrance into the public arena. As the next section of the chapter explains, though some Victorian theaters were camouflaged brothels and their underpaid actresses were induced into prostitution in order to survive, there were also those that offered talented women space for public success, as Bernhardt and Kemble prove. With the rise of the theatrical industry in the late 1800s, the image of the actress became dissociated from the image of the prostitute. The

nineteenth-century authors were mesmerized by the figure of the popular actress because through her resistance to gender norms she embodied the ideals of the New Woman:

A series of paradoxes characterizes actresses' appearance on stage: while embodying the ideals of feminine beauty and setting the standards for female fashion, they were 'defeminized' by the very act of taking up a public career in the theatre. The same women who impersonated Dianas and Vestias also claimed a place in the competitive co-sexual world of work, spent their evening away from home, and exhibited themselves before the public gaze. (Davis 105)

The association of the actress with the New Woman culminated in the late 1800s when the theatrical industry was in its prime, employing a great number of middle- and upper-class women (Davis 10-15). Victorian masses became keen on reading about the lives of popular actresses, and numerous newspaper articles, biographies, autobiographies, and novels about actresses' lives testify to this fad (Davis 71-78).⁷ Popular actresses fueled Victorians' interest in the theater.

James was quite aware of this cultural trend. In his *Letters* the author specified that one of the themes of *The Tragic Muse* is "[t]he private history of a public woman" (3:59). However, even though James often explored the identity of a public woman in his fiction, he was against women's organized activism. Even Judith Fetterley, who praises James for his portrayals of progressive women as individuals, agrees that he disapproved of women's movements and underlines that "no one would want to make a claim for James as an ardent or perhaps any other kind of feminist" (*The Resisting Reader* 116). As Alfred Habegger points out, in the first half of his life, James was sarcastic about women's right to vote and admission to public workplaces (6). James spoke with irony about "free thinking young ladies" in one of his early letters (1:44), and

he opposed women's right to vote in a later one: "I don't think all the world has a right to it [marriage] any more than I think all the world has a right to vote" (3:54). After reading Mrs. Sutherland Orr's backward article on the consequences of women's emancipation, titled "The Future of English Women," James praised the author of the text, who, among other things, argued the following: "That men possess the productiveness which is called genius, and women do not, is the one immutable distinction that is bound up with the intellectual idea of sex" (qtd. in Habegger 7). In one of his letters, James referred to Mrs. Orr as "a very nice woman who writes in the '19th Century' against the 'emancipation' of woman (sensible creature)" (qtd. in Habegger 7). As Habegger convincingly argues, James must have acquired this condescending attitude towards women's progress from his father, who believed in the inherent social roles of the two sexes, and who was perplexed by "radical nineteenth-century feminism" and "free love" throughout his life (10). In one of his letters to his family, James Jr. approved of James Sr.'s argument about "the distinction of sexes" (1:188). However, James's belief in his father's theory started to weaken with the appearance of Minnie Temple, a popular feminist. Drawing from Leon Edel's biography of Henry James, Habegger notes that "Minnie's charm and intrepidity" fascinated James, motivating him to base the characters of Isabel Archer and Milly Theale on her (11). James was equally intrigued by Minnie's public resistance to his father's views of matrimony and women (11). Prompted by Minnie's charisma and audacity, in the second half of his life, James created female characters capable of avoiding the constraints of the domestic space and fighting for their interests in the public arena.

By casting Miriam as a popular actress, James tries to appeal to a broad readership. By making her reminiscent of Rachel and other actresses glorified by masses, James opens a path for Miriam's successful cultural intervention. Even though the novel does not propose a case for the

organized new woman movement, it does depict Miriam as a celebrity who embodies the ideals of new womanhood. Miriam chooses to work on herself, enter the public sphere, and succeed in it, not being driven by patriarchal currents. As the further analysis demonstrates, Miriam even rejects the marriage proposal from a socialite who wants her to abandon her career and follow him and instead chooses the suitor who buys a theater and commits himself to her success as an artist. Through the choices that she makes in both her private and professional lives, Miriam is James's tool for the cultural transformation of Anglo-America from an entity plagued by isolationism, particularism, and deteriorating taste into a construction refined through fluid identity performances and sophisticated artistry.

James and the Fin-de-Siècle Anti-Semitic Climate

As I have explained in the introduction to the dissertation, the decade prior to the publication of *The Tragic Muse* was particularly marked by anti-Semitism. In the era of increased Jewish immigration to both Britain and the United States, the Jew “conveniently figure[d] the dire threat of over-production and surplus desire in a godless industrial age” (Blair 126). The Jew was seen as an ambitious participant in the competitive capitalist economy. The increase in Jewish immigrants was considered a menace to the future progress and culture of the Anglo-American world. The Jewish presence permeated and reshaped the urban landscapes and institutions of Anglo-America.

In the late 1880s, the popular Anglo-American presses, which James despised for their low themes, propagated the image of the menacing Jew as well. The February 1886 *Pall Mall Gazette* wrote about “a Judenhets brewing in East London,” full of Jews “of the lowest type” (qtd. in Blair 126). In the *St. James's Gazette*, Jews were depicted as a unique “colony... steeped to the lips in every form of physical and moral degradation” (qtd. in Blair 126-27). The *New*

York Tribune identified Jews as merchants who fritter money away and compared this ethnic group “on social terms with parasitic vermin” (qtd. in Blair 127). Arnold White, a staunch supporter of Anglo-Saxon supremacy, spoke of Jews in the same language of indictment: “The Polish Jew drives the British Workman out of the Labour market just as *base* currency drives *pure* currency out of existence” (qtd. in Blair 127, her italics). Even *Poilishe Yidl*, the first socialistic journal in Yiddish published in London spoke of Jews with the same derogatory tone. Not only did its issue on October 30, 1884 condemn the Jewish inclination to wealth, but it also stated that “The most scandalous English newspaper, which is written to popularize dissolute behavior and demoralize young people, is issued weekly by a Jew” (qtd. in Blair 127). The rhetoric of the journal obviously reflected Jewish self-hatred.

However, these diatribes against Jews as fecund and greedy appeared in the time when the British born Jews in London totally appropriated the language and social manners of the Anglo-Saxons and when the second wave of Jewish immigration to the United States was in its prime (Blair 127). The last decade of the nineteenth century followed Disraeli’s successful appointment as the Prime Minister. Furthermore, on January 14, 1881, the Prince of Wales was at the nuptials of Leopold de Rothschild, the first Jewish representative in the Parliament (Gilman 122). In the United States, in the era of post-Civil War anti-Semitism, non-Jewish Americans opposed the influx of the new immigrants, “largely tainted with Orientalism,” believing that they were “a standing menace” to American society (Blair 127). This warning about the threats from Eastern European Jews arose from the social conditions described in the introduction, but it was also stirred up by the sensationalized felonies that frightened the Anglo-American public towards the end of the century.

The anti-Semitism of popular newspapers was exacerbated by the murders which plagued London in the late 1880s and which, some believed, were committed by a Jew. While James was beginning to write *The Tragic Muse*, the British and American presses were closely following Jack the Ripper's serial murders of prostitutes (Blair 123). Since the murders occurred in London's East End, the quarter highly populated by Jewish immigrants, the public associated the heinous crimes with Jews. As Sander Gilman explains, after a Jew discovered the body of Catherine Eddowes in front of the International Working Men's Educational Club on September 30 1888, a massive attack on Jews in East End was about to happen (116-117). As the *East London Observer* noted on October 15, 1888, "the crowds who assembled in the streets began to assume a very threatening attitude towards the Hebrew population of the District" (qtd. in Gilman 117). The protestors claimed that no Anglo-Saxon was capable of committing such a felony and that a Jew was very likely the perpetrator (117). The mob attacked Jewish passers-by (117). As Gilman explains, "The powerful association between the working class, revolutionaries, and the Jews combined to create the visualization of Jack the Ripper as a Jewish worker, marked by his stigmata of degeneration as a killer of prostitutes" (117). According to Gilman, the public envisioning of Jack as "the ritual butcher" arose from the "Western" association of Jews with "the mutilated, diseased, different-looking genitalia" (119). If the English public followed the rule "the diseased destroy the diseased, the corrupt the corrupt" (127), then it is not surprising that in the public imagination, the "degenerate Jew" was the only one capable of "purging" London's streets of prostitutes, the transmitters of venereal diseases.

In the second half of the nineteenth century London was a center of prostitution. Most of the Victorian prostitutes were women who worked for meager salaries and under abysmal conditions for various employers, from theaters to manufacturers (Chesney 312). Not only

gambling salons but theaters as well were courtesans' locales. As Kellow Chesney points out, "The porticos of the main theatres, and the neighboring pavements, were the most celebrated whores' parades in the country, while inside the theatres themselves the saloons and passages were a favorite stamping ground for high-class prostitutes" (307). Many criminal taverns and theaters were situated in "the upper end of the Haymarket" (307-308). However, prostitution and the theater were not linked just by their location in the same quarter (311). In Chesney's words: "Despite the status achieved by some theatrical families, and despite the care some actresses had always taken of their reputations, prostitutes and actresses were still not in wholly separate categories" (311). Famous courtesans of the day were often actresses, and this social phenomenon arose from the underpayment and exhausting working conditions in theaters (311). In the late 1800s, with the growth of the theatrical industry and the appearance of publications on actresses' lives, the image of the actress changed into a socially acceptable and honorable label; until then, "whether or not there really was a secret underground passage linking the rebuilt Lyceum theatre with a brothel, the persisting legend had a symbolic validity" (311). Since women's work was undervalued, the parallel economy of prostitution was the actress's escape from starvation.

In the late 1880s, both the prostitute and the Jew were considered threatening and degenerate elements of society. Both the prostitute and the Jew were regarded as creatures operating exclusively with basic instincts, degraded and dehumanized by their life-styles, and potentially degrading and dehumanizing towards their surroundings. Just as courtesans were considered sources and spreaders of venereal diseases, the Jew was considered a source and a spreader of Anglo-American cultural degeneration and a menace to the integrity of Anglo-America (Gilman 120-127). Hence the sensationalized figure of the Ripper embodied the Anglo-

Saxon fear of the Jewish infiltration, contamination, disintegration, and “killing” of the Anglo-Saxon civic body, just as the Ripper’s victims were polluted, dissected, and murdered.

In such an anti-Semitic climate, James published several fictional pieces that contain Jewish characters. In this period, “Impressions of a Cousin” (1883), *The Reverberator* (1888), *The Tragic Muse* (1890), *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897), *What Maisie Knew* (1897), *The Awkward Age* (1899), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904) are James’s most provocative fictional works that address Jewishness. His response to the Jew in these works varies from blatant anti-Semitism to allo-Semitism. James’s last, non-fictional work, *The American Scene* (1907), the travel piece from his visit to the United States after two decades of his life in Europe, reveals his ambivalent feelings for the Jew. James openly comments on the proliferation of Jewish population in New York’s Lower East Side, worrying about the possibility of Jewish dominance over the Anglo-Saxons. The author states that “There is no swarming like that of Israel when once Israel has got a start, and the scene here bristled, at every step, with the signs and sounds, immitigable, unmistakable, of a Jewry that had burst all bounds. . . . The children swarmed above all—here was multiplication with a vengeance” (464). However, a few pages later, James praises the fervor and vibrancy of the life in the Jewish quarter. In his words: “For what did it all really come to but that one had seen with one’s eyes the New Jerusalem on earth? What less than that could have all been, in its far-spreading light and its celestial serenity of multiplication?” (466). Despite his worries about the Jewish multiplication, James sees a great spirit and strength in the Jewish culture. Miriam embodies this ambivalence regarding the Jew. Miriam is an outstanding artist and an accomplished public woman, but even though she does not have a proliferating offspring, she projects her fecundity on the dissemination of her photographs. Despite all of her

positive characteristics, Miriam is slightly tainted with negative (stereotypically) Jewish features, which marks her as a figure of ambivalence.

Staging Ethnicity and Nationality in *The Tragic Muse*

In *The Tragic Muse* James stages the dynamic relationship between the four English gentlemen, two of whom are influenced by Victorian attitudes towards Jewish people and culture, and the Jewish actress, convinced that ethnicity and nationality are fluid categories. This contact and its outcomes are announced at the very beginning of the novel. Through the portrayal of the characters as figures in tableaux vivants and Gabriel and Peter's racially charged conversation about Miriam, James effectively describes the dominant social order's ethnic and national stereotyping. As I have mentioned in the introduction to the chapter, in this series of tableaux, James inverts the conventional structure of the genre by emphasizing the importance of the spectators' gazes instead of that of the models' intentions. This formal parody enables us to see how stereotyping racializes and nationalizes both the observers and the observed: the observed are presented as fixed images of ethnicity and nationality, made by the ethnic or national group to which the observers belong. Furthermore, James's Goffmanian "experimental hoaxing," in which the figures in the introductory tableaux are unconsciously caught in their observations of Others, vividly portrays the perceptions of ethnicity and nationality as fixed categories.

In order to highlight James's exposure of public perceptions of ethnicity and nationality, I apply Goffman's theory of frame analysis. In his study, Goffman claims that its object is "the structure of experience individuals have at any moment of their social lives" (13). Goffman's interest is in an individual's perception and understanding of different social activities. When one observes an activity in her/ his environment, s/he describes what is going on as a "primary

framework” (21). As Goffman points out, “indeed a primary framework is one that is seen as rendering what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful” (21). However, Goffman notes that sometimes participants in an observed activity may not do it for real but merely play at doing it, in which case the enacted activity is “a transcription or transposition—a *transformation* in the geometrical... sense” (41). What enables a distinction between a real activity and a play is “the key” in the participants’ understanding of the activity (43). Goffman defines the key as “the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else” (43-44). He underlines that an important characteristic of the play is “that all those involved in it seem to have a clear appreciation that it is play that is going on” (41). As he further explains, “Keying provides one basic way in which a strip of activity can be transformed, that is, serve as an item-by-item model for something else” (83). For instance, children in a schoolyard regularly play with each other, but from time to time they play at playing in front of the spectators. In this way, they consciously transform a daily activity into a playful exercise.

However, Goffman points out that, besides keyings, “a fabrication” is a type of activity that has a capacity to transform something perceived as a primary framework. He defines a fabrication as “the intentional effort of one or more individuals to manage activity so that a party of one or more others will be induced to have a false belief about what it is that is going on” (83). Goffman makes a clear distinction between keyings and fabrications. In his words, “whereas a keying intendedly leads all participants to have the same view of what is going on, a fabrication requires differences” (84). He underlines that fabricators are in control of the activity: “for those in on a deception, what is going on *is* fabrication; for those contained, what is going on is *what* is

being fabricated. The rim of the frame is a construction, but only the fabricators so see it” (84, *his italics*). For the purposes of this analysis, I look into Goffman’s “benign fabrications” or “those claimed to be engineered in the interest of the person contained by them, or, if not quite in his interest and for his benefit, then at least not done against his interest” (87). More precisely, I will look into a type of benign fabrications called “experimental hoaxing,” which Goffman defines as “the practice of conducting human experiments which require on methodological grounds (as almost all human experiments do) that the subject be unaware of what it is that is being tested and even unaware that an experiment of any kind is in progress” (92). Speaking of participants in an experimental hoaxing, Goffman explains that “Presumably ignorance on the subject’s part is a safeguard against his consciously influencing his response, his aim being, for example, to produce a self-approving effect or to help the experimenters obtain the results they seem to desire” (92). Goffman concludes that “With fabrications it is apparent that the fabricators have some opportunity to ‘play the world backwards,’ that is, to arrange now for some things to work out later that ordinarily would be out of anyone’s control and a matter of fate or chance” (133). Fabricators determine the conditions and participants for their experiments in order to produce the results that should be presented to the audience and used for later stages of the research process.

The choice of the space for James’s experimental hoaxing in the first series of living pictures is not incidental: James sets up the tableaux in the garden of the Palais de l’Industrie, full of “the figures and groups, the monuments and busts, which form in the annual exhibition of the Salon the department of statuary” (17). By staging the tableaux in a museum-like park, James invites the reader’s perception of the introduced characters, the Dormers and the Rooths, as national and ethnic specimens on display, deriding the Western vogue for exposures of cultural

products of the colonies and even the colonized themselves in museums. Furthermore, James chooses the French park for the introduction of the English family and the Jewish women, announcing his intention to investigate interactions between individuals and foreign environments in the novel. As the further analysis shows, the purpose of staging these interactions throughout the text is to demonstrate how the Jewish actress challenges and subverts certain stereotypes and norms in Anglo-American society as well as to present her simultaneous entrapment by Anglo-American discourses about Jews and women.

In his introduction of the English, the author assumes the position of a prejudiced French spectator, casting the Dormer family, consisted of Lady Agnes, Nick, Grace, and Biddy, through the stereotyped French perception of the English. James begins his introduction of the Dormers by referring to the French belief that the English are “an inexpressive and speechless race, perpendicular and unsociable, unaddicted to enriching any bareness of contact with verbal or other embroidery” (17). The English family in the scene are an illustration of the stereotype; they are quiet, and “they had about them the indefinable professional look of the British traveler abroad... *which excites, according to individual susceptibility, the ire or the admiration of foreign communities*” (17, my italics). The latter part of the narrator’s observation emphasizes an interaction between the posers and spectators, announcing the importance of such a relation for the development of relationships among James’s characters and the building and re-building of one’s cultural imagination of an Other. In the closing sentence of the passage, James emphasizes that the Dormers’ aliveness and contemporariness are the only features that distinguish them from the exposed old *objects d’art*: “The fresh diffused light of the Salon made them [the Dormers] clear and important; they were finished creations, in their way, and, ranged there motionless on their green bench, were almost as much on exhibition as if they had been hung on

the line” (17). This statement implicitly announces the author’s experimentation with the old and the contemporary throughout the novel: the usage of the old as a remedy for the contemporary cultural problems and the departure from the old as a mode of adjusting to the demands of contemporary society.

Just as the introduction of the English comes from the position of the prejudiced Frenchman, the introduction of the Jewish women comes from Biddy Dormer, a prejudiced English girl herself. While Nick and Biddy are walking around, they accidentally encounter Gabriel Nash, Nick’s old school friend, with the two women. Biddy perceives the Rooths as extraordinary figures, “whom in any country, from China to Peru, you would immediately have taken for natives” (28). Biddy’s observation is influenced by the ladies’ rare clothing, particularly Mrs. Rooth’s old-fashioned shawl, made from “an ancient much-used fabric of embroidered cashmere” (28), and both Miriam and her mother’s “low shoes which showed a great deal of stocking and were ornamented with large rosettes” (29). This uncommon dressing style induces Biddy to conclude that the two women are very likely “dancers—connected possibly with the old-fashioned exhibition of the shawl-dance” (29). Through Biddy’s observation of the women’s eclecticism, James alludes to the stereotyped perception of artists as extraordinarily-dressed bohemians and suggests that these women are wanderers, who have collected rare clothes and shoes in distant places. Biddy’s observation announces the author’s experimentation with the English views of artists and wanderers even before the reader realizes that Miriam wants to become an actress and that she is of Jewish ancestry.

James’s experimental hoaxing in the introductory tableaux vividly exposes the common perceptions of ethnicity and nationality as firmly defined qualities. By placing the tableaux in the famous French garden park with statues, James suggests that readership should view the

observers and the observed as figures in this exhibition. Reading the signs of the models' ethnic and national backgrounds, the observers stereotype them as serial products of their ethnic and national groups. Of course, the observers and the observed are caught by surprise. James and the reader are the only ones who know what is going on in these silent observations and poses, and the participants in these tableaux will never realize what their creator has had on his mind in this experiment. However, as the novel develops, the participants in these tableaux interact with and start changing their initial perceptions of each other. Thus, James makes this initial experiment in order to introduce certain perceptions as well as the changing of such perceptions as themes of his novel.

After the introduction of the English through the lens of the French and Jews through the lens of the English, James fully concentrates on the exposition of Anglo-American anti-Semitism, announcing that the relationship between the Anglo-Saxons and Jews is central in the novel, and further delineating the Semitic discourse Miriam is about to enter. Miriam's background and acting aspirations are announced through the racially charged conversation of the gentlemen. After the Rooths leave the garden of Palais de l'Industrie, Gabriel invites Nick, Biddy, and Peter, who has just joined them, to Miriam's audition, revealing and deriding Miriam's Jewish identity. As John Carlos Rowe points out: "The 'Jewishness' that various characters seek to confirm in her [Miriam's] appearance, her ancestry, her career, and her social behavior, is far more the consequence of Victorian anti-Semitism than anything intrinsic to the character or ancestry of Miriam Rooth" (77).⁸ Though the gazes of Gabriel, Peter, and Nick follow and cast Miriam throughout the novel, the first two gentlemen are the only participants in this racist conversation about Miss Rooth. This episode sets the pattern for the gentlemen's attitude to Miriam throughout the novel. While Gabriel and Peter occasionally discuss Miss

Rooth's Jewish descent, Nick is indifferent to it and mainly focuses on Miriam's artistic disposition, anticipating his connection to the young actress and finally his own choice of painting as his occupation.

Gabriel's speech demonstrates that he racializes Jews because he sees certain behaviors as implicitly Jewish and as biologically determined. When he speaks of Miss Rooth as an actress beginner, he remarks that she is "more than half a Jewess" (49). Gabriel informs the company that Miriam's late father was Jewish, whereas her mother is Christian, who, before marrying the Jew, had a noble rank. Mr. Rudolph Roth, whose last name his wife has changed into Rooth in order to avoid the associations with Jewishness, left a property upon his death, "which she [Mrs. Rooth] appears to have muddled away, *not having the safeguard of being herself a Hebrew*" (51, my italics). Evidently, besides suggesting that Jewishness is a uniform category whereby all Jews are thought to have a talent for an accrual of capital, Gabriel's comments reveal the fact that Jewishness is an undesirable quality in England. Furthermore, Nash states that

Her husband, as she has often told me, had the artistic temperament: that's common, as you know, among *ces messieurs*. He made the most of his little opportunities and collected various pictures, tapestries, enamels, porcelains and similar gewgaws. He parted with them also, I gather, at a profit; in short he carried on a neat little business as a *brocanteur* (51, his italics).

Gabriel asserts that Mr. Roth was a stereotypical, shrewd Jewish collector, who parted even from his dearest collection for profit, and he generalizes Jews as people with artistic faculties.

While Gabriel emphasizes the stereotypically Jewish passion for lucre, Peter is convinced that Jews are shrewder than other races. Although Peter does not know Miriam at all, after Gabriel's remarks about Miss Rooth's ancestry, he engages in the mocking conversation about

the actress. When Gabriel claims that Miriam is not clever, Peter offensively responds: “ ‘And more than half a Jewess? Don’t you believe it!’ ” (49). Peter’s comment testifies to his adoption of the popular stereotypes of Jews as inherently shrewd. However, as the further analysis points out, as Miriam progresses as an artist, she earns Peter’s respect and love for who she is as an individual, and Peter no longer considers her a stereotypical representative of her ethnic group.

After the portrayal of the gentlemen’s anti-Semitism, James opens the door to Miriam, who expresses her convictions about racial and national fluidities in a dialogue with Peter. Miriam herself states her Jewish credo. She believes that Jewishness is not a fixed category and that it can be easily appropriated or rejected to certain ends. When Peter alludes to Miriam’s Jewish ancestry, she responds that being Jewish is “ ‘ always possible if one’s clever. I’m very willing, because I want to be the English Rachel’ ” (135). To Miss Rooth, Jewishness is not a biological or cultural feature; instead, it is the label of the outstanding Rachel. If Jewishness is an aid to or a requirement for Miriam’s professional and social success and glory, the young actress is ready to embrace it. When Peter suggests that Miriam’s background makes her “ ‘ very sufficiently of Rachel’s tribe,’ ” she responds: “ ‘I don’t care if I’m of her tribe artistically. I’m of the family of the artists—*je me fiche* of any other! I’m in the same style as that woman—I know it’ ” (135, his italics). Miss Rooth apparently considers herself belonging in the family of the artists only, not in those of Jews or non-Jews, or of the British or other national affiliations. Miriam wants to be Jewish if Jewishness contributes to her popularity, and she wants to be English if Englishness guarantees her finding a job in London’s expanding theatrical arena. As Adam Sonstegard points out, Miriam’s “enacted ‘self’ takes the inherited ‘self’ as its point of departure... Her concocted identity, contingent upon her ethnicity and heritage, affords her performances an impressive latitude” (32).⁹ Miriam’s ethnic and national hybridity and fluidity

as well as her chameleon-like adjustability are in the service of her professional and social ascents.

Miriam's view of ethnicity and nationality is a tactic for challenging the Anglo-Saxon gentlemen's approach to these categories and for avoiding definitions, categorizations, and stereotyping. In terms of ethnicity, the social milieu that Miriam enters exemplifies the space of the Anglo-Saxon prevalence. The derision and stereotyping of Jews are strategies that the dominant social order exercises in order to distinguish itself from the "menacing" Other. In order to challenge fixed notions of identity and succeed in the public arena, Miriam decides to qualify herself as a fluid individual, who subordinates ethnic and national affiliations to her own professional and personal goals. Eventually, Miriam really achieves the status of the English Rachel, owing to her permeability. Miriam mesmerizes both Jews and Christians, simultaneously keeping her Jewish identity and acquiring an English one. She masters Rachel's roles, plays them on the English stage, and ends up accepted and glorified by London's masses. After Miriam gains and exhibits a unique artistic voice, Peter, Gabriel, and many others become her dedicated admirers despite the fact that she is of Jewish ancestry. Her artistic voice is what masses recognize her by and not the common stereotypes for Jewish people. If one bears in mind James's late writing mission, it is not surprising that Miriam insists on the fluidity of her ethnic and national identities and on the importance of artistry in her life. Just as Miriam can be both Jewish and English, Anglo-Saxons, like James, can be both English and American in order to overcome their isolationism and particularism. Finally, just as Miriam values art above everything else, Anglo-Saxons can place it on the highest social pedestal.

Staging Gender in *The Tragic Muse*

The milieu that Miriam enters is based on Anglo-Saxon supremacy as well as on male dominance. The men in Miriam's circles use powerful positions, political connections, and pedigree as strategies for the perpetuation of their social prevalence. Julia Dallow, Nick's fiancée, lives on the money of her late husband, while Lady Agnes urges Nick into politics hoping that his profession will secure the family's economic stability and does her best to match her daughters with prosperous men. In order to secure a space for herself in the patriarchal society, Miriam, a woman without inheritance or political connections, decides to focus on her profession as a tool for social ascent. Her professional decisions—from studying acting in Paris with Madame Carré, to mastering the art of elusiveness both on and off the stage like Mademoiselle Voisin, to moving to London, to succeeding on its stage—represent her tactics for the achievement of success. Staging Miriam's rise as an actress, James depicts the road travelled by many women who sought professional space in the public arena at the end of the nineteenth century. Miriam herself explains her position as a woman: “ ‘Oh I'm an inferior creature, of an inferior sex, and I've to earn my bread as I can' ” (362). As I have already emphasized, James often explores the Woman Question through his female characters. In *The Tragic Muse* James creates the female character more determined than all of his previous heroines: not only does Miriam succeed in London's public sphere as an actress of Jewish descent, but she chooses a partner who supports her and invests in her artistic endeavors as well. Basil Dashwood becomes Miriam's husband as well as her manager.

Goffman's concept of “theatrical frame” helps us understand James's presentation of Miriam's beginnings as an actress through the second series of tableaux. Speaking of a “theatrical frame,” Goffman defines performance as “that arrangement which transforms an

individual into a stage performer, the latter, in turn, being an object that can be looked at in the round and at length without offence, and looked for engaging behavior, by persons in an ‘audience’ role” (124). Goffman elaborates on roles of audiences, pointing out that they respond to theatrical performances as “theatre-goers” and “onlookers” (130). In Goffman’s words:

The difference between theatre-goer and onlooker is nicely illustrated in regard to laughter, demonstrating again the need to be very clear about the syntax of response. Laughter by members of the audience in sympathetic response to an effective bit of buffoonery by a staged character is clearly distinguished on both sides of the stage line from audience laughter that can greet an actor who flubs, trips, or breaks up in some unscripted way. In the first case the individual laughs as an onlooker, in the second as theatre-goer. (130)

The role of an onlooker is to respond to the staged character, whereas the role of a theatre-goer is to respond to the performer. Goffman further explains that though from the perspective of the performers, what is going on the stage can be considered keying, from the perspective of the audience, it can be considered benign fabrication (135-136). Goffman concludes that “the theatrical frame is something less than a benign construction and something more than a simple keying” (138). Thus the theatrical frame combines the arranged with the unexpected, opening a new world of possibilities for an enjoyment, a reflection, and an action.

Goffman notes that sometimes an individual fails to “sustain the frame” s/he is in and thus “breaks” it owing to either outer or inner circumstances (348-349). The breaking of the frame affects “the human body” in it (349). But, as Goffman observes, an individual’s “facial expression” is what gives her/ him away (349). Goffman underlines that “It is through this expression—more constantly than any other—that the individual is obliged to demonstrate

appropriate involvement in and regard for the scene at hand. Yet necessarily this field of expression is a labile, unstable thing” (349). The breaking of a frame often results in the inside-the-frame individual’s “flooding out” or outside-the-frame individual’s “flooding in” (359). In other words, the breaking of a frame may result in the participant’s negligence of the frame and escape from it or the observer’s jumping into the frame (359).

Miriam’s first and unsuccessful appearance as an actress occurs at the audition in the studio of the famous Madame Carré in Paris and serves to present Miriam’s difficult beginnings as well as to announce James’s investigation of the relationship between the female body and the male gaze. Miriam’s first rehearsal is marked by the presence of Gabriel, Peter, and Nick, who are there to observe and assess the performance of the young actress. James presents Miriam’s audition through Peter’s observations, again using formal parody and inverting the genre convention. Miriam does not intentionally stage living pictures at the audition; instead, her speechlessness that originates in her artistic insecurity is cast through the eyes of Peter. Here James exposes to the scrutiny of his readership the patriarchal, male gaze in the perception of the silent female body. As Judith Funston observes: “[H]is reflections [Peter’s] are not punctuated by ‘he thought’ or ‘he felt’—his reactions simply occur... We actually see and feel his conflict—it is neither dissected nor fixed into a frame” (352). Peter’s reflections on Miriam’s three unsuccessful attempts at acting reveal his inclination to draw rash, sexist conclusions about the young woman on the stage.

Peter’s perception of Miriam’s first attempt at acting—her performance of the piece of her own choice—paints the picture of Miriam as a voiceless, subdued, and unconfident actress beginner. Through Peter’s gaze the reader learns that

the girl ruefully rose to the encounter, hanging her head a little and looking out from

under her brows. There was no sentiment in her face—only a vacancy of awe and anguish which had not even the merit of being fine of its kind, for it spoke of no spring of reaction. Yet the head was good, ... it was strong and salient and made to tell at a distance. (85)

Since there is no professional performance to assess, Peter responds to the sight as a theatergoer, and not as an onlooker. His reflection on Miriam's behavior on the stage reveals his patriarchal inclinations. Miriam is mute and blank, and her only promising feature is her head, potentially capable of conveying a message to a spectatorship in a theater. Peter's reflection makes Miriam reminiscent of obedient female models in the tableaux of the day, whose eyes are cast downwards in order to affirm the power of men. Scared by her audience, Miriam ends the opportunity to perform the chosen piece in tears. Her tears are the most conspicuous sign of her breaking of the theatrical frame and flooding out of it into the world beyond the stage: she reveals her weakness and behaves as an insecure person and not as a savvy actress.

In his reflection on Miriam's second attempt at acting—her performance of Clorinde—Peter most openly responds to Miriam's behavior on the stage as a theatergoer. Before Miriam pulls herself together and fulfills Madame Carré's requirement to recite Clorinde's lines, Peter's observation uncovers the secret of the novel's title. The description of Miriam's posture is as follows:

She wore a black dress which fell in straight folds; her face, under her level brows, was pale and regular—it had a strange strong tragic beauty... But still the girl hesitated and for an instant appeared to make a vain convulsive effort. In this convulsion she frowned portentously; her low forehead overhung her eyes; the eyes themselves, in shadow, stared, splendid and cold, and her hands clinched themselves at her sides. She

looked austere and terrible and was during this moment an incarnation the vividness of which *drew from Sherringham a stifled cry*. (90, my italics)

This is the moment of Sherringham's suggestion to Nick that he should paint Miriam as the Tragic Muse (91). Though in this scene Miriam is not intentionally trying to perform the Tragic Muse, her obvious pain, anxiety, and silence elicit Peter's association of her pose with the one of the ancient muse. Voiceless and unconfident, Miriam is vulnerable to Peter's gaze. Honest in her insecurity, she is a perfect site for the projection of Peter's fantasies. If in the previous scene Miriam floods out of the theatrical frame through her tears, in this episode Peter floods into the space of the stage through his "stifled cry," which highlights his response to the young woman as an incompetent actress and not as the character of Clorinde. Only in these scenes is Peter able to detect Miriam's sincerity. As soon as she empowers herself by discovering her artistic voice, she will evade and manipulate Peter's gaze.

The climactic point of Peter's objectification of Miriam at the audition occurs during her third attempt at acting, when even though she manages to recite "The Lotus-Eaters" and "Edward Grey," Peter mostly reflects on her posture and head. Peter's gaze sketches out the following description:

It was the element of outline and attitude, the way she stood, the way she turned her eyes, her head, and moved her limbs. These things held the attention; they had a natural authority and, in spite of their suggesting too much the school-girl in the *tableau-vivant*, a 'plastic' grandeur. Her face moreover grew as he watched it; something delicate dawned in it, a dim promise of variety and a touching plea for patience, as if it were conscious of being able to show in time more shades than the simple and striking gloom which had as yet mainly graced it. These rather rude

physical felicities formed in short her only mark of vocation. (93, *his italics*)

Peter notices and admires Miriam's plasticity and grace, acknowledging that they are significant aids for the success of an actress. However, he does not comment on her recitation, except for noting that Miriam's pleasant look and posture are her only features reminiscent of professional actresses. Even here, Peter's response is the one of a theatergoer and not of an onlooker. The audition leaves much to be desired. At this stage, Miriam is an actress beginner with no distinct artistic voice, and her lack of competence triggers Peter's quick and superficial judgment.

In these scenes, Peter's gaze tries to define Miriam and label her as gifted or ungifted, beautiful or plain. Miriam's silence and facial convulsions mislead Peter into a rash conclusion: "She was too bad to jump at and yet too 'taking'—perhaps after all only vulgarly—to overlook, especially when resting her tragic eyes on him with the trust of her deep 'Really?' " (96). Peter's conclusion reflects his vain convictions that Miriam is too profane to be an artist and that with her tragic humbleness she tacitly begs him for understanding. Peter's gaze reads Miriam as an unsophisticated, ungifted, and docile woman, whose unassuming attitude is a way of asking men to approve of her. James invites the reader's scrutiny of such rash conclusions, highlighting the fact that public women are often observed and evaluated by men.

Shortly after the unimpressive audition, Miriam launches her first tactic for the future success in the public arena: taking lessons from Madame Carré, hoping to empower herself with acting brilliance. Miriam's diligence is fruitful: once she finds her voice, she excels in the repertory of the grand Rachel. Miriam's artistic competence helps her commence a new chapter in her career—the one of success, independence, and popularity. When Peter sees Miriam during her rehearsal of Shakespeare's Constance at Madame Carré's, he responds to her performance as an onlooker for the first time. Mr. Sherringham admits that "she was now the finished statue

lifted from the ground to its pedestal” (214). He further elaborates: “It was as if the sun of her talent had risen above the hills and she knew she was moving and would always move in its guiding light” (214). Being conscious of her talent, its possibilities, and its eternity, Miriam exemplifies Kemble’s theory of dramatic gift as the crucial tool for an actress’s success. This time Peter has to acknowledge that “she [Miriam] had found the key to her box of treasures” (216). Miriam’s voice gives her power, and her savvy acting gives her radiance which Peter has not seen in her before. He admits that her shining and convincing face “showed her as more *intelligent*, and yet there had been a time when he thought her *stupid!*” (214, my italics). Miriam’s artistic perfection reveals to Peter the absurdity of his initial preconceptions. As Goffman reminds us, individuals make “errors” relevant to primary frameworks as well as keys (311). People “misframe” activities when they do not pause to consider what is happening and instead draw quick conclusions or commit premature actions (308). When people become aware of their mistakes, their frames are “cleared” (338). Peter realizes that he has made a mistake regarding Miriam as an actress and corrects his assessment. Miriam’s tactic of constant practicing with Madame Carré helps her change Peter’s patriarchal strategy of dealing with women—judging them without proper consideration.

After the successful completion of the first tactic, Miriam decides to execute the second one: meeting with the outstanding contemporary young actress of the Théâtre Française and learning from her acting style and behavior off the stage. Between the acts of a play with the popular Mademoiselle Voisin, Miriam goes to the Théâtre’s gallery to view the portraits of the famous actresses who had the honor of performing in “the maison de Molière” (225). In the gallery, which, as Miriam says, is “full of the vanished past,” she is enchanted by Gérôme’s portrait of Rachel and loudly expresses her joy of being at the Théâtre, thus catching the

attention of the other viewers of the paintings (225). Realizing that the people in the gallery are looking at her, Miriam says that “ ‘It’s all right. I produce an effect’ ” (225). Not only does Miriam learn the roles on Rachel’s repertory, but she also feels at home in the theater in which Rachel performed. Miriam is comfortable, self-confident, and ready to travel her own road of success and fame. In the glorious theater, Miriam rejects Peter’s first marriage proposal, discarding his suggestion that she should abandon her career and join him as a diplomat’s wife. As a rich and powerful representative of the dominant social order, Peter hopes to secure the hand of the beautiful woman without means through his strategy of offering her marriage. Miriam chooses not to be entrapped by the lack of money and Peter’s assertive proposal and instead launches her third tactic for success: the one of earning her own living through her artistry. Miriam chooses not to be the diplomat’s wife in order to be independent and build her financial stability by herself.

Through her conversation with Mademoiselle Voisin Miriam realizes that the art of constant elusiveness is a requirement for actresses in contemporary societies. She notices that the popular actress has perfected her performances not only on the stage but in off-the-stage public situations as well: in her conversation with Miriam, Voisin does not reveal her true self for a minute. Voisin’s attitude relays a most significant message: the mastery of the classical repertory is not enough for a success in the public arena. This realization “widens[s] the programme of a young lady about to embrace the scenic career [Miriam]. To have so much to show before the footlights and yet to have so much left when you came off—that was really wonderful” (231). Miriam is so enchanted by Voisin’s art of never revealing “her real self” ” (234), that she desires to achieve Voisin’s dramatic brilliancy in each and every moment. Here James extends the importance of acting from the space of the theater to other public spaces as well. He suggests that

mastering elusiveness or acting savvy in everyday situations should be a goal of a prospective public woman and, if Miriam is the stimulant of the cultural regeneration, of Anglo-Americans in general. Constant performance savvy in public protects one's privacy and ascertains sophisticated communication with others, which is important for the elevation of everyday culture. Voisin's behavior significantly shapes Miriam's approach to performance, especially after she moves to London. Miriam's decision to master the art of elusiveness in various situations is the most important tactic for her success in London's public arena: she avoids showing her inner self in front of others, protects her privacy, escapes firm definitions, and completes the mission that James has assigned her.

The "English Rachel" and James's Vision of Anglo-America

Miriam's mission in London is portrayed through the narrator's accounts of her successes on the stage and her resistance to ethnic and national fixity and patriarchy while sitting for portraits in Nick's studio. The narrator's accounts of Miriam's successes reveal her revitalization of the English theater through her performances of classical plays in Rachel's style. Of course, Miriam's mission does not begin or end on the stage. Before the narrator reports on Miriam's ultimate triumph on London's stage, she enacts cultural changes in a secluded space of Nick's studio. Goffman's theory of transforming the existent social practices into the more progressive ones helps us understand James's intentions behind Miriam's posing for Nick as the Tragic Muse. In Goffman's words:

If one wants to end up with vulnerability in the world, especially the everyday world, let us see how an activity could be keyed and then create this keying. From here one is led to appreciate that to transform an activity a way must be found in which the activity can be, bit by bit, systematically altered. And to do this what is needed is an

infrastructure of some kind, that is, a patterning of activity, a structural formula that is repeated throughout the course of the activity. Once this continuously repeated design is found, something about it can be changed or altered, which, when accomplished, will have a generative effect, systematically transforming all instances of the class, and, incidentally, systematically undermining the prior meaning of acts. (493)

As the forthcoming analysis demonstrates, through the last series of tableaux vivants, Miriam transforms an activity of simple posing for a portrait as the Tragic Muse into an experimental hoaxing that inspires Nick to explore his artistic abilities and engage in a sublimated sexual activity with her, symbolically giving birth to the Anglo-American theater, drawn from contemporary English, Jewish, and classical strands. This symbolic procreation promotes cultural fluidity and challenges strict gender norms.

During Miriam's first sitting for a portrait, the actress proves to be more than a model: her posture and charisma direct Nick's painting process. The first portrait is supposed to be Nick's pictorial representation of Miriam's tableau vivant of the ancient muse of tragedy. Since both Nick and Miriam are silent, situated in a small space of his studio, and sometimes even surrounded by spectators, both the painter and the model can be considered participants in tableaux vivants. James describes her first sitting as follows:

On the spot, to his inner vision, *Miriam became a rich result, drawing a hundred formative forces out of their troubled sleep, defying him where he privately felt strongest and imposing herself triumphantly in her own strength.* He had the good fortune, without striking matches, to see her as *a subject*, in a vivid light, and his quick attempt was as exciting as a sudden gallop—he might have been astride, in a boundless field, of a runaway horse. (262, my italics)

Through the narrator's account of Nick's train of thought, the reader learns that Miriam gives the painter vigor and inspiration to launch and pursue a challenging project. Unlike the heroines of traditional tableaux, in which, if there are any painters on the stage, they just try to picture the heroine's fall and death, Miriam develops a tactic of challenging her painter, imposing her own attitude and energy.¹⁰ She reinvents the tableaux trope of the sitter as a mere victim of male dominance, creating the image of the sitter as a dominant force in the painting project. Miriam thus becomes Nick's real muse.

While Miriam's performance of the Tragic Muse could be considered a theatrical frame if Nick were not her painter but a mere spectator, in this scene, the ongoing activity is reminiscent of a simple keying since both the painter and the poser are conscious of their roles. However, the tableau turns out to be more than that. Since Miriam tactically directs Nick's painting process, the scene grows into her experimental hoaxing: through her superb posing, Miriam leads Nick to believe that their activity is a simple keying, while, in fact, she guides him through the project. Miriam is the benign fabricator in the posing session since she consciously performs the Tragic Muse as an invigorating and enchanting woman. She turns Nick into a research specimen in her experimental hoaxing: being a popular and skillful artist herself, she lures Nick to herself and to artistry as an occupation. The language that James chooses to depict the result of Miriam's experiment—Nick's unique perspective on Miriam as a model in this tableau—is very different from the one he uses in Peter's reflections. In this scene, the reader learns that Nick "had the good fortune... to see her as a *subject*" (262, my italics), while in Peter's observations at the audition, Miriam is cast as an *object*. Through her own artistry Miriam transforms Nick into a painter who understands and respects the individuality of his model.

During Miriam's second sitting in Nick's studio, James's language implies the sublimated sexual intercourse between the painter and the poser. However, unlike numerous underpaid Victorian actresses, induced into prostitution in order to earn a living, Miriam exposes her body for Nick's viewing, painting, and fantasizing in order to connect him with the world of artistry. She does not expect or require any materialistic reward from Nick. Again, the scene that initially looks like a simple keying turns into Miriam's experimental hoaxing. Through her sensual and invigorating performance of the Tragic Muse, Miriam encourages an artistic exposure of the female body as a source of inspiration and admiration, which in this scene results in the creation much higher than the intended portrait. When Miriam decides to take a break from posing, approaches Nick's easel in order to see his accomplishment, and excitedly approves of it, James informs us that "Nick was pleased with *her ejaculation*, he was even pleased with what he had done; he had had *a long, happy spurt and felt excited and sanctioned*" (269, my italics). James's language implies that Nick and Miriam's artistic engagement, supposed to produce a work of art only, results in a sublimated sexual activity as well. The scene of Miriam and Nick's "transgression" is interrupted by Julia, Nick's fiancée, and Gabriel. However, after Julia disappointedly leaves, Gabriel remains in the audience, and Miriam and Nick continue with the previous tableau as if they were not caught in their "sin" during the break. Both of them are now highly motivated to perform their artistic roles as if they were inspired by their "transgression":

Miriam looked indeed still handsomer than before, *and she had taken up her attitude again with a splendid sphinx-like air of being capable of keeping it for ever*. Nick said nothing, but went back to work *with a tingle of confusion, which began to act after he had resumed his palette as a sharp, a delightful stimulus*. Miriam spoke never a word,

but she was doubly grand, and for more than an hour, till Nick, exhausted, declared he must stop, the industrious silence was broken only by the desultory discourse of their friend [Gabriel]. (272-273, my italics)

In this tableau Miriam is not a mere objectified woman. Instead, she steers the course of the relation between herself and her male painter by resuming her plastic pose after the “transgression” and motivating Nick to continue with his work. Miriam’s silent performance is different from the initial series of tableaux in the novel. There she is framed by male gazes, whereas here she is the one who directs the tableau, subordinates the male gaze to her own power, and encourages artistic exposures of the female body in order to lure Nick to the world of artistry and “give birth” to the Anglo-American theater.

Miriam’s sublimated intercourse with Nick during the tableau of the Tragic Muse symbolizes the blending of contemporary Anglo-Saxon, Jewish, and classical artistic strands into James’s Anglo-American theater. This scene announces and encapsulates what Miriam will do with and on London’s stage through her performances of classical roles. Miriam and Nick’s sublimated eroticism moves Miriam away from a common association of actresses with prostitutes towards an appreciation of the actress’s body as a model of female beauty, sexuality, and artistry. Miriam enriches the solemn ancient muse with her own sensuality and vigor that inspire the young aristocrat to search for his own artistic voice, buried under his fiancée’s pressure to become a politician. Through her unique rendering of the classical theme, Miriam enchants and suffuses the English painter into her world of creation. Miriam and Nick’s artistic project—a unique collage of painting, acting, and sublimated sexuality—is thus a hybrid and fluid construction, capable of inspiring, regenerating, and recreating, just like the Anglo-American theater which Miriam eventually revitalizes.

Just as in Nick's studio, Miriam uses the old theatrical themes and expected patterns of posing on London's stage as well, in order to build on and alter them. She also develops the tactics of accepting the current standards of theatrical life and then using her artistry and public authority to change them. In other words, she revises the image of the popular actress in the English society of the day: she accepts acting in commercial plays in order to become famous and then uses her popularity in order to change the current theatrical fad. Starting with a role in the popular comedy *Yolande*, a testimony to the commercial tendencies of the English theater, Miriam accepts the working conditions and standards on London's stage and thus earns the adoration of the public. Through the narrator's account of Miriam's acting in *Yolande*, the reader realizes that

Miriam's performance was a thing alive, with a power to change, to grow, to develop, to beget new forms of the same life. . . She had her ideas, or rather she had her *instincts*, which she defended and illustrated, *with a vividness superior to argument, by a happy pictorial phrase or a snatch of mimicry*; but she was always for trying; she liked experiments and caught at them, and she was especially thankful when someone gave her a showy reason, a plausible formula, in a case where she only stood on *an intuition*. (315, my italics)

Apparently, Miriam is constantly open to suggestions and experiments, continuing her artistic education and re-invention, initiated by Madame Carré and Mademoiselle Voisin. The language of the passage demonstrates James's commitment to casting Miriam as an actress with a great artistic talent and no superior intelligence. Miriam's primary tools are her intuition and histrionic nature, and on them she builds her performances and career. In the moments of Miriam's first successes in the public arena, James reminds the reader that she is like Rachel—"ignorant" and

“illiterate”—which makes her widely acceptable before she moves to the crucial stage of her task as an actress.

As time passes, owing to her histrionic gift and charisma and Basil’s managerial skills, Miriam manages to make the classical drama popular in London. She performs the roles of Constance, Hermione, Phedre, and Juliet, all of which were on Rachel’s repertory. Bringing her French acting style to the contemporary English stage, Miriam revitalizes the theater. Describing her performance of Juliet, James states:

It is enough to say that these great hours marked an era in contemporary art and that for those who had a spectator’s share in them the words ‘revelation,’ ‘incarnation,’ ‘acclamation,’ ‘demonstration,’ ‘ovation’—to name only a few, and all accompanied by the word ‘extraordinary’—acquired a new force. Miriam’s Juliet was an exquisite image of young passion and young despair, expressed in the truest divinest music that had ever poured from tragic lips. The great childish audience, gaping at her points, expanded there like a lap to catch flowers. (486)

Apparently, Miriam’s performance redefines the terminology of theatrical criticism, adding new dimensions to the art of acting and proving that her talent and skills are as powerful as those of her great predecessors. Her staging of Juliet’s passion and despair, conveyed through the most enchanting music that “had ever poured from tragic lips,” makes her timeless and divine in her artistry and deserving of the title “the Tragic Muse.” Nick effectively condenses her brilliance into a single sentence: “Miriam Rooth was sublime” (490). Beginning with the commercial play *Yolande* and ending with Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Miriam manages to bring the Anglo-American theater to the state of sublimity.

The common characteristic in both Miriam's interventions in Nick's studio and those on the stage is her tendency to remain elusive and undefinable. The climax of Miriam's engagement with Nick is when she advises him to finish her portraits based on her images in photographs. Hoping to remain in his heart forever and not to be defined by the male gaze, Miriam advises Nick to paint other people: " 'It will be good to get rid of him [Gabriel]. Paint Mrs. Dallow [Julia] too,... paint Mrs. Dallow if you wish to eradicate the last possibility of a throb' " (467). Miriam apparently believes that if she continued to sit for a portrait, she would destroy Nick's love for her. She is eager to always be in Nick's heart but also keen on remaining free and elusive. Therefore, instead of posing for Nick, she offers him her photo as a model, which is an allusion to Gérôme's portrayal of Rachel from Nadar's photograph. Miriam embraces photography in order to increase her popularity as well as escape from Nick's and others' defining gazes.¹¹

While the painting would capture one of Miriam's poses, photographs are cheap and quick reproductions of countless moments of Miriam's performances. In the time of Victorian vogue for collecting information about and pictures of popular actresses (Davis 71-80), Miriam accepts photography as a common medium for the dissemination of her image throughout the public arena. Speaking of Miriam's success in contemporary society, Alan Bellringer explains that "Her distinction manifests itself in a modern adaptability, reminiscent of Mademoiselle Voisin's social brilliance" (82). The proliferation and dissemination of Miriam's photographs not only prove and bolster her popularity but enable her to "hide" in the photographic space as well. As Daniel Novak points out, "In the 1850s, 'art photography' was associated with a single technique called 'composition photography,' in which figures were transposed from one scene to another, bodies from different images juxtaposed in new (and often compromising) contexts, and

single bodies even sutured together from different models” (1-3). Novak further explains that in this way “the photographic body and its private identity were torn apart: made abstract, anonymous, exchangeable, and endlessly divisible” (3). This technique and its effects would persist throughout the Victorian era (5). Novak asserts that “in Victorian photography, replication is pressed into the service of fictional creation; the abstract bodies and body-parts of art photography remain forever new, forever able to be transformed into something else” (5).¹² Through photography, Miriam remains esoteric and transformable, secure behind her masks as Voisin, and accessible to masses as Rachel.

Besides, Miriam’s passion for photography in the era of the Kodak girl echoes women’s participation in public activities other than acting. As Sonstegard notes, Miriam’s photographs belong to the period of “the Kodak girl,” an amateur who always carried a camera (37). At the turn of the century, the Kodak girl fad offered women some space for self-expression and opened them a door to the world of publishing (37). Borrowing from Judith Fryer Davidov, Sonstegard informs us that there were about 500 Kodak girls “who published their work in gift books and periodicals within a decade of *The Tragic Muse*” (37). Davidov explains that Kodak girls’ “considerable success in photography had a good deal to do with the fact that their entry into the field coincided with the development of new modes of production of cheap paper and new methods of photoengraving and printing, all of which has its effect on popular press—which, as it did for women writers, became a vehicle for the publication of their work” (qtd. in Sonstegard 37). Though there are no instances of Miriam’s open praise of Kodak girls in the text, Miriam’s appreciation of photography evokes the image of women’s popular hobby. No matter whether some of Miriam’s photos are or are not done by Kodak girls, they do spread the message of a public woman’s success.

However, despite all the positive characteristics that Miriam embodies, she is slightly tainted with (stereotypically) Jewish fecundity. Miriam's passion for the multiplication and dissemination of her photographs can be interpreted as her sublimated desire for reproduction. As Sonstegard points out, "James's novel projects Miriam's fecund capacities onto photography, a new technology of rampant duplication" (37). Miriam does not have the numerous offspring that would turn London into "New Jerusalem," but she "procreates" through the distribution of her printed images. Photography enables Miriam to be pervasive. Miriam's admiration of this thrilling technology at the end of the novel reveals another mode of her subtle ruling in the public arena: she commands the Anglo-American public taste not only through her brilliant shows but through the dissemination of her images as well. Through her photographs Miriam permeates Anglo-Americans' lives even when they are not in theaters, watching her performances. Even though James casts Miriam as the carrier of the intended cultural regeneration, he is still entrapped by the current Semitic discourse. Even though Miriam serves to elevate the degraded Anglo-American culture, James is still subconsciously anxious about her pervasiveness through the Anglo-Saxon civic body.

What then should we conclude about Miriam's cultural intervention? Through her views on ethnicity and nationality as fluid categories, she certainly challenges stereotyped perceptions of these categories as fixed and static. This ethnic and national fluidity is what James wants for himself as well as his Anglo-American compatriots. Through her permeability, theatrical sophistication, and rise from poverty in the cultural margins to affluence in the cultural center, James appeals to a wide audience and negotiates the distance between different circles and tastes. With her elusiveness, Miriam manages to secure her privacy and avoid showing her inner self to the public, promoting savvy in various everyday situations. Miriam's fluidity,

professionalization, and elusiveness help her become the English Rachel, bring classical drama to London's stage, change Peter's views of her, motivate Nick to develop his artistic gift, and increase her popularity and lucre. Through Miriam's contribution, Anglo-American culture becomes an entity appreciative of the theater and art in general. Miriam's plays attract masses, her artistry motivates other gifted individuals to pursue art, and her photographs ensure her presence in Anglo-Americans' lives beyond the space of the theater. Even though she possesses the gift for cultural regeneration, her sublimated fecundity, reminiscent of the proliferating Jewish immigrants who James is concerned about later on in *The American Scene*, reveals James's worries about the future Jewish prevalence over the Anglo-Saxon stock. Despite all her positivity, this characteristic still marks her as a slightly ambivalent figure, echoing the author's entrapment by the current Semitic discourse.

Notes

1. Litvak discusses James's novel as a theater of social life. Funston argues that James's narrator is a painter of life. Bellringer contends that Miriam is the objective center of the novel. Gunter discusses Miriam's predecessors in Russian realism. Jobe investigates an artist's life as the best one. Goetz discusses politics, paintings, and drama as types of representation. Krook analyzes characters' inner dramas.

2. For a discussion of race and nation in James's late works, see Blair's study. Blair's fourth chapter focuses on *The Tragic Muse*.

3. Freedman's article analyzes the anti-Semitic discourses of the day and their influence on James.

4. For James's discussion of contemporary acting trends, dramatic art, and the state of theater, see his book *The Scenic Art*.

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5. Halttunen thoroughly analyzes this process on pages 153-191.
 6. James's comments on Mrs. Humphrey Ward's novel as well as a rough proposal of his own theatrical novel are reprinted in his *Complete Notebooks*, pages 28-29.
 7. Davis's study thoroughly analyzes the status, income, public perception, and working conditions of actresses in Victorian culture.
 8. In his study, Rowe makes a case for James as a predecessor of postmodern cultural theory. His chapter on *The Tragic Muse* examines the ethnic, sexual, and aesthetic issues in the novel.
 9. Sonstegard's essay examines truthfulness in life vs. truthfulness in art.
 10. See Chapman's interpretation of the role of the male painter in the tableau vivant of Charlotte Corday's last moments, right before her execution (34-35).
 11. For a discussion of Miriam's histrionic nature and various problems of representation in the novel, see Storm's essay titled "The 'Impossible' Miriam Rooth: Performance, Painting, and Spectatorship in *The Tragic Muse*."
 12. Both Novak and Armstrong examine connections between nineteenth-century photography and literature in their studies.

Chapter 3

**Acting, Matchmaking, and Jewishness in Henry James's *The Golden Bowl*
and Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth***

This chapter juxtaposes *The Golden Bowl* and *The House of Mirth* in order to demonstrate how non-Jewish characters' everyday performances of Jewishness or their rejection of such performances contribute to their success or destruction in social life. As novels of manners—the genre that exhibits values and behaviors of a certain social circle as well as a complex relationship between an individual and society—*The Golden Bowl* and *The House of Mirth* treat Jewishness as a quality or manner that can be acquired and performed by non-Jewish characters so that they can progress and prosper like, as James and Wharton believed, the proliferating Jewish immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century. Fanny Assingham of *The Golden Bowl* (1904) maintains her popularity, ensures her economic stability, and directs the transatlantic functioning of the Verver family and circuitry of their capital through her performances of Jewishness, whereas Lily Bart of *The House of Mirth* (1905) ends up ostracized and eventually dies after she rejects such performances, even though they would result in her prosperity. Combining Patrick E. Johnson's concept of “appropriating” ethnicity through performances with Certeau's concepts of strategies and tactics, the chapter demonstrates that by appropriating positive (stereotypically) Jewish characteristics, Fanny tactically reshapes the established order in the social milieu dominated by the wealthy Ververs, moving herself and a few other poor characters from the margins to the center of the Anglo-American capitalist system. Unlike Fanny, Lily refuses to assume Jewishness and instead develops a series of tactics that only deepen the abyss between her and society and lead her to severe pauperism.

In his study *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity*, Patrick E. Johnson analyzes both blacks' and whites' performances of blackness, pointing out that blackness is an unstable category that depends on various social factors and that changes over time. In Johnson's words, "Because the concept of blackness has no essence, 'black authenticity is overdetermined—contingent on the historical, social, and political terms of its production. Authenticity, then, is yet another trope manipulated for cultural capital" (3). Johnson notes that different black individuals and communities define and perform blackness in different ways (3-4). In Johnson's words, "Within racially and politically charged environments in which one's allegiance to 'race' is critical to one's in-group status, one's performance of the appropriate 'essential' signifiers of one's race is crucial" (6). Thus one's acquisition of certain personality features and behavioral patterns commonly associated with a particular ethnicity marks that individual as a member, admirer, disciple, or mocker of that ethnic group. Johnson explains that whites often "essentialize blackness," keeping "'whiteness' as the master trope of purity, supremacy, and entitlement, as a ubiquitous, fixed, unifying signifier that seems invisible" (4). Furthermore, Johnson contends that when whites appropriate blackness, they often "exoticize and/or fetishize blackness, what bell hooks calls 'eating the other' " (4). In other words, "whites construct linguistic representations of blacks that are grounded in racist stereotypes to maintain the status quo only to then reappropriate these stereotypes to affect a fetishistic 'escape' into the Other to transcend the rigidity of their own whiteness, as well as to feed the capitalist gains of commodified blackness" (5). However, Johnson points out that inter-ethnic appropriation sometimes results in positive changes and revelations, opening some space for "new epistemologies of self and Other" (6). There are instances, he observes, when "the colonized" appropriated "the colonizer's forms" in order to oppose oppression and when "the

colonizer” got more tolerant through adaptation to the colonized (6). I argue that performances of Jewishness in the selected novels both exemplify and expand the introduced theory of the roles and results of inter-ethnic appropriations. James and Wharton essentialize Jewishness since they create characters who, to some extent, perform Jewish stereotypes, but these authors simultaneously present (stereotypically) Jewish features as positive and worthy of emulation by non-Jews. Furthermore, the authors demonstrate that non-Jews’ appropriations of Jewishness can result in prosperity and increase in power, and that owing to such appropriations Anglo-America could progress. Poor non-Jews’ appropriations of Jewishness become tactics by which they reshape the milieu dominated by the rich and the powerful. The appropriated Jewishness becomes the tool for one’s social ascent and empowerment in the expanding capitalist Anglo-American project.

Since James and Wharton approve of some (stereotypically) Jewish characteristics and simultaneously expose the others to the scrutiny of the readership, drawing from Cheyette’s approach to Jewishness delineated in the introduction to the dissertation, the chapter demonstrates that these authors’ portrayals of Jewishness are allo-Semitic—simultaneously philo- and anti-Semitic—or, in other words, that Jews and non-Jewish appropriators of Jewishness are cast as figures of ambivalence. Even though the authors propose a more complex view of Jewishness than popular derogatory perceptions of the Jew as a swindler and a usurer, their vision is still entrapped in the current Semitic discourse. In order to introduce Jewishness-related tasks that Fanny and Lily complete in the novels, the authors use *tableaux vivants* with these characters as major posers. Spectators’ reactions to the *tableaux* announce the outcomes of Fanny’s and Lily’s performances throughout the novels. Thus these *tableaux vivants* are

examples of Lucien Dallenbach's aporetic duplication since they encapsulate the novels' messages about the appropriated or rejected Jewishness and the others' responses to it.

James makes it clear that Fanny Assingham is not Jewish by birth or marriage, but he makes her reminiscent of a stereotyped presentation of a Jewish woman through her look and behavior. The author describes Fanny as a woman with a "generous nose" as well as with a "richness of hue," but he openly states that she is not "a pampered Jewess" (49). Furthermore, though her first name is popular among Jewish women, her last name humorously evokes the image of meat that has not been koshered, suggesting that Fanny has not been officially Judaized and that she is a performer of Jewishness. James informs his readership that Fanny's "birthplace" is New York (49), which was the center of Jewish American culture at the turn of the twentieth century, and where Fanny could have acquired the (stereotypically) Jewish shrewdness and sublimated fecundity projected onto the multiplication of her social interferences. Moreover, speaking of Fanny's character, James claims that her "eyes of the American City" observed from "under the lids of Jerusalem" (50), alluding to the stereotyped presentation of Jewish eyes as piercing and capable of discerning the best for themselves. The tableau vivant that announces Fanny's behavior throughout the novel presents her as the legendary Queen of Sheba, who, as many believe, was a wise ruler of an ancient Near Eastern kingdom, a successful diplomat, and a symbol of female power. Fanny is the one who plots, schemes, and brings about marriages, but who always remains socially intact owing to her diplomacy. I consider the wealthy society through which Fanny circulates the space of strategies, while I analyze Fanny's appropriations of Jewishness through both her look and behavior as tactics. Though Fanny makes herself and other people happy, she is slightly touched with the (stereotypically) Jewish shrewdness and sublimated fecundity, which marks her as an allo-Semitic character.

Unlike Fanny, Lily Bart of *The House of Mirth* fails to accept performances of Jewishness that could secure her economic stability and high social status. Lily is often framed by male gazes, including the ones of the Jewish financier Simon Rosedale, who sees in the marriage with Lily a possibility for his social success. When Lily stages the tableau vivant of Sir Joshua Reynolds's famous painting, *Mrs. Lloyds*, which presents the devoted aristocratic matron, Miss Bart casts the painted woman as herself, attractive and almost naked, challenging the patriarchal notions of women's obedience and subordination. This tableau announces Lily's behavior throughout the novel: she refuses Rosedale's marriage proposal and thus becoming Jewish through matrimony, because she is ambivalent to "the Jewish social climber," and instead tries to develop a series of tactics (from gambling to hat-making) that could help her become independent and wealthy. However, Lily's tactics do not result in success in the social circles she moves through, and she ends up abandoned and eventually dies. The chapter demonstrates that Wharton's portrayal of Jewishness is allo-Semitic: while the others neglect Lily, Rosedale is the one who offers her help, and despite all Lily's initial conformity to the public condemnation of Rosedale, she notices his honesty and willingness to save her from poverty and ostracism.

So far scholarly discussions on the two novels have mostly focused on the genre and issues of class, gender, and race as an inherited ethnic category. Brudney, Torgovnick, Cox Wessel, Boone, Leibowitz, Priest, and Guerra have analyzed social issues and behaviors in *The Golden Bowl*.¹ Steele has concentrated on rhetorical devices that James uses in order to emphasize the characters' actions and features, whereas Norrman has explored James's effective use of dialogues.² Meeuwis, Zacharias, and Kimball have examined individual characters and messages that James conveys through their actions, while Davidson has focused on gender relations, sexual desire, and commodity fetishism.³ Freedman and Oster have explored the

characters of the only born Jews in the novel—the two Jewish vendors who appear in a few scenes—paying no attention to Fanny’s assumed and performed Jewishness.⁴ Similarly, Beaty and Lidoff have analyzed the genre of *The House of Mirth*, while Dimock and Gargano have investigated social phenomena depicted in the novel.⁵ Modellmog, Larson Benert, Clubbe, Totten, Griffin Wolff, Restuccia, Maness Mehaffy, and Baker Sapora have dealt with the issues of gender, gender relations, and selfhood, whereas Hochman has examined the meaning of art and its reception in the novel.⁶ Finally, Goldman and Kassanoff have investigated the issues of race, paying attention to Rosedale’s Jewishness and the racial typology in the novel and neglecting the significance of Jewishness as an acquirable manner that could ensure Lily’s prosperity.⁷

This chapter’s concerns expand the discussions of race in the two novels, emphasizing the authors’ approach to Jewishness as a manner that could be mastered non-Jews so that they could overcome the economic restrictions and exclusions and move towards the center of the capitalist society. In the social spaces of the rich and the powerful, Fanny’s performances of Jewishness—her diplomatic matchmaking and counseling—make her an irreplaceable link in the perpetuation of the couples’ happiness. Furthermore, her skillful performances ensure the unimpeded transatlantic circulation of Adam’s money. In similar social spaces, Lily’s initial rejection of performances of Jewishness distances her from the suitor whose financial support could ensure her unrestricted experimentation with art in public, her extravagance in fashion, and her irreplaceability in the circles of the nouveaux riches. In both of the novels, Jewishness is a manner that enables one’s access to valuable resources, promising comfort and safety to the successful performers.

James, Wharton, and Jewish Immigrants

As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, James published several works with Jewish characters at the turn of the twentieth century. James's response to Jews in these texts moved from blatant anti-Semitism to allo-Semitism. *The Golden Bowl*, published in the prime of the second wave of Jewish immigration and assimilation, registered the author's ambivalent feelings towards Jewish immigrants. James acknowledges the success of (stereotypically) Jewish characteristics and manners in social life and applies them on non-Jews in order to propose a different vision of Anglo-America. In so doing, he demonstrates both anti- and philo-Semitic attitudes.

Similarly, Wharton was influenced by anti-Semitic discourses, and her attitude to Jews varied between anti- and allo-Semitism. The nineteenth-century racial stereotyping (especially the one endorsed by the Eugenics) provoked anti-Semitic feelings in Wharton's social milieu (her father was a rich businessman, whose family had lived in New York for a long time). As Goldman points out, "While Wharton was coming of age, anti-Semitism became more and more visible and public among the upper class of the country" (28). Jews were frequently evicted from hotels and considered unacceptable for jobs (28). Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, well-known for his introduction of the law that was supposed to prevent Jews and southern Europeans from immigrating to the United States, was Wharton's acquaintance (28). Furthermore, Lodge, Henry Adams, and President Roosevelt, firm believers in the ideology of the Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic "superiority," were in Wharton's social circles while she worked on *The House of Mirth* (28-29). Additionally, Wharton acquired some of her anti-Semitic views from the works of William Lecky and Hippolyte Taine. She considered both of them as well as Spencer and Darwin "the formative influence of my life" (29). Lecky labeled Jews as "shrewd, thrifty, and sober... with a

rare power of judging, influencing, and managing men,” and claimed that “great Jewish capitalists largely control the money markets of Europe” (qtd. in Goldman 29). According to Taine, race was one of the factors that shaped one’s moral principles (29). Influenced by the popular racist writings, Wharton was convinced that “all people belonged to a particular race and that this racial inheritance accounted for not just physical attributes, but intellectual, linguistic, moral, and spiritual characteristics as well” (qtd. in Goldman 30). Wharton shared James’s belief that the purity of the English language should be maintained despite the variations caused by increased Jewish immigration (30).⁸

However, even though Wharton’s reading lists were full of anti-Semitic texts, I contend that in *The House of Mirth*, her rendering of Jewishness is more complex than the popular pejorative presentations of Jews. Wharton casts Rosedale as a character with both negative and positive characteristics and makes him and Lily complementary in their social ambitions: while Lily wants to secure her economic stability through a marriage with a wealthy man, Rosedale wants to ensure his public reputation through a marriage with a sophisticated woman. Throughout the novel, Rosedale is loaded with the (stereotypically) Jewish materialism, but he is simultaneously the only character who offers Lily assistance in critical moments. I contend that by casting Rosedale as Lily’s only friend in the final stage of her personal disaster, Wharton highlights the cruelty, superficiality, and hypocrisy of the careless Christian socialites, making Lily aware of Rosedale’s qualities as an individual and dispersing her obnoxious anti-Semitic prejudice from the first part of the novel. The sympathetic Jew serves as a reminder of Christian socialites’ callousness, and Lily’s and his struggles for social approval uncover the backwardness of the classes of people who determine who is or is not a desirable presence in their circles.

Admiring the Spectacle: Fanny as an Actress in *The Golden Bowl*

In James's presentation of Fanny Assingham (the non-Jewish American expatriate, married to the English colonel Bob Assingham and living in London), Fanny's appropriation of (stereotypically) Jewish personality characteristics such as determination, shrewdness, and materialism are means for all of her achievements. Fanny is the one who sets the plot in motion through her matchmaking schemes (she introduces Amerigo/ Prince to Maggie/ Princess), who influences the relationships of the two couples (Amerigo and Maggie and Adam and Charlotte), who accepts Adam and Maggie's generous invitations to enjoy the luxury of their habitations, who successfully gets out of all her intrigues, and whose help everyone seeks. Just as in the case of Miriam Rooth of *The Tragic Muse* and her "patron" Peter Sherringham, James introduces Fanny and her protégée Amerigo through an unintended tableau vivant that occurs during Amerigo's visit to Fanny before his wedding, when she reassures him in the success of the marriage that she has arranged for him. Drinking tea, sitting in comfortable chairs in Fanny's drawing room, and pausing in their discussion of Fanny's matchmaking success, Fanny and the Prince are captured silently looking at each other. In James's words, "They [Fanny and Amerigo] might at this moment, in their positively portentous stillness, have been keeping it up for a wager, sitting for their photograph or even enacting a *tableau-vivant*" (49, his italics). Fanny is the central figure in the living picture and, as James notes, she looks like the ancient Queen of Sheba. While the unintended tableau is happening, James introduces Fanny's look, origin, and life-style, and Amerigo is mentioned just as a subsidiary participant in the scene. This tableau sets the pattern for the relationship between Fanny and Amerigo as well as Fanny and other characters throughout the novel: Mrs. Assingham is the crucial figure behind most of the plots, and all the other characters depend on her to some extent.

After noting that the silent scene between Fanny and Amerigo is reminiscent of a tableau vivant, James focuses on the description of Mrs. Assingham, underlining the importance of Fanny's performances for the development of the plot. Noting that Fanny's sense of fashion and confidence are similar to those of the Queen of Sheba, James sketches out Mrs. Assingham's physique, dressing style, background, and behavior through the observations of the third person omniscient narrator. The elements of the depiction that openly refer to Fanny's appropriation of (stereotypically) Jewish features sometimes invite the readers' praise and sometimes their scrutiny, revealing the author's allo-Semitic attitude. The unintended living picture invites the reader's assessment of the effects of Fanny's performances of Jewishness.

However, before I closely read the scene, I digress here in order to introduce the available information about the legendary Queen of Sheba, mentioned in the author's description of Fanny. The legend has it that she was a powerful, wise, and mysterious ruler. Jews, Arabs, and Ethiopians are the most prolific creators of the tales about the Queen. As James B. Pritchard notes, both the Old Testament and the Qur'an contain parables about the Queen of Sheba (7-15), and she is briefly mentioned in the New Testament (Matthew 12:42, Luke 11:31) as the Queen of the South (11). While the Bible version of the tale stresses King Solomon's "wisdom and wealth" during the Queen's diplomatic visit to Jerusalem, the Qur'an version focuses on the Queen's decision to accept Solomon's religion and believe in "the true god instead of the sun-god of Sheba" (14). The Queen's appearance in the Holy Scripture is a major explanation for her presence in "the Christian art and iconography of Europe" (11), while her appearance in the Qur'an was a source for Arabic literary elaborations on the legend, gathered in *Stories of the Prophets* and commentaries on the Qur'an, as well as in various Turkish and Persian collections (14). Furthermore, the tale of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon served as the basis for the

foundation of the modern state of Ethiopia. The 1955 Revised Constitution of Ethiopia claims that the sovereign family “descends without interruption from the dynasty of Menelik I, son of the Queen of Ethiopia, the Queen of Sheba, and King Solomon of Jerusalem” (qtd. in Pritchard 14). This claim is based on the material presented in *Kebra Nagast*, the fourteenth-century collection of Ethiopian legends that date back to the times of “oral traditions” (14). According to *Kebra Nagast*, after finishing his Hebrew education and spending some time in Jerusalem, Menelik realizes that he should join his mother in the land of Sheba, or Ethiopia (Ullendorff 109). Solomon permits him to go and sends his missionaries with him to establish the Hebrew “colony” there (109-110). The famous Queen happily yields her throne to her son (110). Menelik introduces the God of Hebrews to the Ethiopians and continues to lead the country (110). Tales about the Queen of Sheba are still popular in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities (Pritchard 7).⁹ In 1959, Hollywood released its version of the legend, entitled *Solomon and Sheba*.

Though the Queen of Sheba appears in religious documents and arts of many nations, the origins of her legend are still vague and the Queen’s historicity is still debatable. Jewish Roman philosopher Josephus argued that the Queen was a descendant of the biblical Moses, but such a connection has not been proven. The first appearance of the tale of the Queen of Sheba’s diplomatic meeting with King Solomon is a brief episode in the Old Testament:

Now when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to test him with hard questions. She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels bearing spices, and very much gold, and precious stones; and when she came to Solomon, she told him that was on

her mind. . . . And King Solomon gave to the Queen of Sheba all that she desired, whatever she asked besides what was given her by the bounty of King Solomon. So she turned and went back to her own land, with her servants. (qtd. in Pritchard 8)

This episode, along with the scenes “in Job, the Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel,” has puzzled historians for centuries (van Beek 40). As Pritchard points out, contemporary experts on “the history of the Bible and the ancient Near East” have different opinions about the historical validity of the story (11). Some scholars believe that the tale is a fictional creation of “an oriental story-teller” who wanted to glorify his royal “hero”—the King of Jerusalem (11). These experts claim that the proof for their hypothesis is the story-teller’s usage of expressions commonly found in “folk-tales,” such as “very great retinue,” “very much gold,” a “very great quantity of spices,” and “such an abundance of spices” (qtd. in Pritchard 12). The others believe that the story has certain historical value since archeologists have found remnants of the capital of the ancient kingdom of Sheba, or Saba in Arabic (12). As Gus W. van Beek notes, the capital was at the current location of Marib in eastern Yemen, and the kingdom of Sheba had plenty of natural resources and a well-developed trade (40). Furthermore, it is not unusual that a woman ruled a country; in Arabia, Israel, and Egypt, women sometimes performed this role (40). Thus, the Queen of Sheba could have been a real historical figure, a clever ruler of the rich and powerful kingdom, but for centuries, she has certainly been a source of religious and national inspiration as well as a symbol of female power and wisdom.¹⁰

This versatility of the legendary Queen of Sheba, her charisma, power, indulgence in luxury, as well as some countries’ appropriation of the Queen as their own founder or ancient ruler, very likely motivated James to establish the stylistic resemblance between Fanny and the Queen in the tableau. Fanny’s charismatic persona and effective performances of Jewishness

give her enough social power to maintain her social status, influence other characters' decisions, and arrange transatlantic and inter-class marriages, thus serving as a catalyst of Anglo-American unity and supporter of class mobility. After mentioning that Fanny and Amerigo's scene looks like a living picture, James points out that Fanny is conscious of her resemblance with the Queen of Sheba. In James's words:

She [Fanny] wore yellow and purple because she thought it better, as she said, while one was about it, to look like the Queen of Sheba than like a *revendeuse*; she put pearls in her hair and crimson and gold in her tea-gown for the same reason: it was her theory that nature itself had overdressed her and that her only course was to drown, as it was hopeless to try to chasten, the overdressing. So she was covered and surrounded with 'things', which were frankly toys and shams, a part of the amusement with which she rejoiced to supply her friends... With her false indolence, in short, her false leisure, her false pearls and palms and courts and fountains, she was a person for whom life was multitudinous detail, detail that left her, as it at any moment found her, unappalled and unwearied. (49-50, his italics)

Fanny believes that the combination of her clothing style and her physique can only contribute to her popularity and social influence. Mrs. Assingham's numerous possessions, her "false" habits and trinkets, as well as the "false" impressions that she makes on the others, make her a unique participant in the social milieu through which she circulates.

One of Fanny's most striking characteristics is that she is a hybrid individual. James introduces Fanny's physical features, based on a stereotyped presentation of "the Jew," her misleading appearance, and her background as follows:

Her [Fanny's] *richness of hue*, her *generous nose*, her eyebrows marked like those of an *actress*—these things, with an added amplitude of person on which middle age had set its seal, seemed to present her insistently as a daughter of the South, or still more of the East, a creature formed by hammocks and divans, fed upon by sherbets and waited upon by slaves. She looked as if her most active effort might be to take up, as she lay back, her mandolin, or to share a sugared fruit with a pet gazelle. *She was in fact, however, neither a pampered Jewess nor a lazy Creole; New York had been, recordedly, her birthplace and 'Europe' punctually her discipline.* (49, my italics)

As I mentioned in the introduction to the chapter, James's depiction of Mrs. Assingham's nose can be read as a reference to the turn-of-the-century's stereotyped image of the Jewish nose as a regular facial feature of the entire group (as Jonathan Freedman reminds us, in the fin-de-siècle racist discourse, "the long Jewish nose" was considered a Lamarckian trait that could be inherited).¹¹ Besides, Fanny's "rich hue" emphasizes her resemblance with the stereotyped presentations of Jews as people with darker complexions than Christians. However, in the aforementioned passage, the author explicitly claims Fanny's non-Jewish origin. The reader realizes that Mrs. Assingham is an American connoisseur of Europe, and that her appearance suggests not her Jewish origin, but her performance of Jewishness. Fanny originates from New York, the city with the largest Jewish diaspora in the country, where she could have acquired (stereotypically) Jewish manners. Furthermore, the fact that Fanny is a native of New York and a resident of London makes her a complex cosmopolitan character like Miriam Rooth, whose mission is to destabilize the foundations of Anglo-American nationalism and integrate Jews, at least to some extent, in the Anglo-American future progress.

As an appropriator of Jewishness, Fanny is particularly charged with shrewdness. James notes that there is an apparent discrepancy between Fanny's lazy appearance and "her character" (50). The author states that

Her character was attested by the second movement of her face, which convinced the beholder that her vision of the humors of the world was not supine, not passive. *She enjoyed, she needed a warm air of friendship, but the eyes of the American city looked out, somehow, for the opportunity of it, from under the lids of Jerusalem.* (50, my italics)

The reference to Fanny's piercing eyes, capable of detecting promising opportunities for herself and for the others, suggests Fanny's unique power of seeing what the others are not able to see and of keeping herself ahead of the game. The point about Fanny's eyes also reveals James's ambivalent attitude towards Jews—he establishes the image of Fanny as an active, outgoing individual, who seeks contacts and establishes relationships, but the description of her eyes suggests James's anxiety about the stereotyped proliferating Jew, whose immigration and multiplication tend to make New Jerusalem out of New York. However, James casts other characters as admirers of Fanny's piercing eyes and clairvoyance, who seek her advice before making their own decisions. The (stereotypically) Jewish skill of discerning the best opportunities for themselves is the feature that the author apparently admires and believes that it should be appropriated by non-Jews in their struggle for success in the growing society.

Besides resembling the Queen of Sheba in the sophistication of her appearance and charisma, Fanny is the founder of the "tribe" of American women married to English gentlemen and living in England, just as the legendary Queen of Sheba is considered an ancestress of a few

ancient nations. Married in the time when transatlantic marriages were not a common occurrence, the author labels the Assinghams as “discoverers of a kind of hymeneal Northwest Passage” (50-51). Though Fanny is hardly the first among American women married to Englishmen, “she accepted resignedly the laurel of the founder, since she was in fact pretty well the *doyenne*, above ground, of her transplanted tribe, and since, above all, she *had* invented combinations, though she hadn’t invented Bob’s own” (51, his italics). The quoted passage clearly states that Mrs. Assingham, an important member of the American expatriates’ community, is a matchmaker, and that, though her own marriage happened by chance, she has initiated other people’s marriages, including the transatlantic ones.

Through Fanny’s appropriation of (stereotypically) Jewish physical features and personality characteristics described above, James proposes a model of desirable behavior for non-Jews in the accelerating Anglo-American capitalist project and shapes the novel into an ideological handbook for the future progress of Anglo-America. Though Fanny appropriates (stereotypically) Jewish features, she does not escape into the realm of the Other in order to fetishize her/him; instead, she assumes a Jewish mask in order to point at the possibilities that this inter-ethnic appropriation enables. James does not create Fanny as a character who blatantly essentializes or commodifies the Other, but who reveals the potential of the Other’s characteristics and through her performances surpasses the vulgar and narrow common perceptions of the Other. Using the visibility of Jews, James plays with features associated with them in order to reshape the culture, which, as my previous chapter has demonstrated, he considers contaminated by the triviality, profanity, and racism of various national institutions, particularly popular presses and theaters. However, in this novel he goes a step further in his attempt to regenerate the Anglo-American culture. While in *The Tragic Muse* he proposes a

cultural reformation through theater, in *The Golden Bowl* he ventures a reformation through one's everyday behavior.

James's description of Mrs. Assingham reveals that her appropriations of Jewishness include her physical appearance, adjustability, shrewdness, and multiplication and dissemination of her social influence through her matchmaking schemes. All of the features announced in the tableau are evident in Fanny's performances throughout the novel, and James casts some of them in the positive and the others in the negative light. However, the crucial question raised by the introduction of Mrs. Assingham is: If Fanny and Bob's marriage is a union of an American woman/ appropriator of Jewishness and an Englishman, and if Fanny initiates the marriage between Maggie, a wealthy American's daughter, and Amerigo, an Italian nobleman, what role does Mrs. Assingham play in James's vision of Anglo-America? The following section answers this question by looking into Mrs. Assingham's social interferences— her performances beyond the initial tableau.

“Like a Dazzling Curtain of Light”: Fanny's Social Interferences

Mrs. Assingham is perceived as a nurturer, guide, and matchmaker, but all of these social roles are integral parts of her major occupation, the one of an everyday actress. The Prince and the Princess think of Fanny as a capable nurturer and guide, whereas Charlotte, the Prince's former lover and Adam's wife, sees her exclusively as a treacherous matchmaker. Fanny performs all of her roles with a dose of shrewdness, with persistence to maintain the luxurious life enabled by the Ververs, and with a touch of vitality and indestructibility. In this section of the chapter I argue that Fanny's role in this novel of manners is to promote the behavioral patterns that lead to one's own successes (for instance matchmaking and “counseling” maintain

her own economic stability and circulation through the high-class gatherings) and that through such actions the author commends Fanny's determination and vitality and exposes to the scrutiny of the reader her treachery and materialism. Thus, just like Miriam, Fanny is a figure of ambivalence in James's vision of Anglo-America. If Jewishness can be appropriated by Anglo-Americans, then there are some (stereotypically) Jewish characteristics that James praises while he condemns the others. This section further demonstrates that Fanny's habits which demonstrate her appropriated Jewishness in action, such as nurturing, guiding, matchmaking, and counseling are tactics that help her rearrange the order in Adam Verver's world and Anglo-American society. Owing to her tactics, Fanny moves herself, Amerigo, and Charlotte from economic margins to the economic center of the capitalistic society, serving as a paragon to all Anglo-Americans eager to succeed.

The complexity of Fanny's character is reflected in the other characters' perceptions of her performances. Since the novel is divided into two volumes, "The Prince" and "The Princess," most of the observations of Mrs. Assingham's performances come from Amerigo and Maggie. Their observations acknowledge Fanny's agency and power. In his first reflection on Fanny, the Prince associates Mrs. Assingham's skillful and mysterious orchestration of his life with the white light that mesmerizes Edgar Allan Poe's Gordon Pym:

He [Amerigo] remembered to have read, as a boy, a wonderful tale by Allan Poe, his prospective wife's countryman—which was a thing to show, by the way, what imagination Americans *could* have: the story of the shipwrecked Gordon Pym, who, drifting in a small boat further toward the North Pole—or was it the South?—than anyone had ever done, found at a given moment

before him a thickness of white air that was like a dazzling curtain of light, concealing as darkness conceals, yet of the color of milk or of snow. There were moments when he felt his own boat move upon some such mystery.

The state of mind of his new friends, including Mrs. Assingham herself, had resemblances to a great white curtain. (40-41, his italics)

Amerigo's reflection reveals his anticipation of a new chapter in his life, planned by someone else—Mrs. Assingham. The color of the curtain implies something fascinating and promising, which can be interpreted as a reference to Amerigo's wealthy future, but the curtain still effectively conceals what is behind it, leaving him in mystery. Amerigo's comparison between Mrs. Assingham and the curtain is not incidental; it emphasizes Fanny's power of enchantment and camouflage, suggesting theatricality.

More importantly, Amerigo's comparison of Fanny with the "dazzling curtain of light" that lured Gordon Pym during his voyage conveys a racial message as well. As Dana Nelson points out in her *The Word in Black and White: Reading "Race" in American Literature, 1638-1867*, Pym and his companions' scientific expedition to the South Pole occurs in the time of the early nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxon expansionism (93). Following Henry Levin, Nelson underlines that Pym's voyage arises from "the abundance of travel literature and fiction of the early 1800s, and particularly from Jeremiah Reynold's *An Address on the Subject of Surveying and Exploring Expedition to the Pacific Ocean and the South Seas*—'a project for discovering the South Pole and claiming the Antarctic continent on behalf of the United States' " (qtd. in Nelson 93). This "geographical/scientific exploration" was tightly connected with "nationalistic" and "*capitalistic*" "expansion" (93-94, her italics). Pym's descriptions of the island of Tsalal, which he and his companions reach, demonstrate his dual view of race (96). Pym sees the

natives, especially his crew's hostage, Nu-Nu, and the island as black, whereas he perceives his compatriots as white (96-97). Furthermore, as Nelson explains, during their journey, Pym describes the ocean and its abundant flora and fauna as white, reflecting the logic of the expansionist and civilizing mission of the Anglo-Saxon race (97). In Nelson's words, "If the Anglo-Saxon colonist project was to 'whiten every sea,' the 'truth' objectively recorded by Pym revealed that the white colonist's right—physically and metaphysically—to the South Sea is already guaranteed: it *is* white" (97, her italics).¹² Just as Pym is mesmerized by the whiteness of the light and nature during his voyage, Amerigo is enchanted by Fanny's beaming charisma.

If Pym is constantly fascinated and led by the "curtain of white light," and if Amerigo compares Fanny to such a "curtain," then James implies that despite her appropriations of Jewishness through both her look and behavior, Fanny *is* considered white. In other words, James again underlines that Fanny is not Jewish by birth or by marriage, and that she has appropriated Jewish characteristics in order to lead poor individuals towards success and prosperity. If Fanny is a white performer of Jewishness, then her leadership suggests that James sees whites, enriched with (stereotypically) Jewish characteristics, as leaders of the transatlantic nation. James's comparison between Fanny and the mesmerizing white light reveals his belief in the superiority of the white "Anglo-Saxon body total" over the other "stocks" in his Anglo-America.

It is not incidental that in the time when James worked on and published *The Golden Bowl*, the United States was in the new era of expansion. As Jacobson explains, "at the end of the very decade in which the superintendent of the census had declared the frontier 'closed,' a new frontier opened up farther west, across the Pacific" (*Barbarian Virtues* 224). The new era of the

American expansion began in “the summer of 1898” (223), though Jacobson points out that the “the imperialist epoch” lasted from 1876 to 1917 (224). As he explains, “These years witnessed Indian wars in the West, the last phase in the subjugation of the continent in the 1870s; trans-Pacific involvement in Samoa, Hawaii, Wake, Guam, and the Philippines, and Caribbean interventions in Cuba and Puerto Rico at the century’s close; and a number of Latin American interventions in the 1900s and 1910s, including the taking of Panama” (224). The American expansionism was publicly glorified through literature, visual arts, early cinematography, and particularly through “lavish world’s fairs from Philadelphia (1876) to Chicago (1893) to St. Louis (1904) to San Francisco (1915), each profoundly structured by the aspersions, the aspirations, and the national self-ascriptions associated with empire” (224). The empire permeated lives of the people beyond and within the US borders.

James was aware of the courses of the Anglo-Saxon expansionist missions, and though he wanted to improve and reform the Anglo-American national entity, he had an ambivalent attitude towards imperialism. In his letter to Jessie Allen, written on September 19, 1901, five days after Theodore Roosevelt, a passionate participant in the US intervention in Cuba, became President, James said: “I don’t either like or trust the new President, a dangerous and ominous Jingo!” (4:202). As Pierre A. Walker reminds us, James did comment on the British Empire as well, as early as 1878 and 1879 (xiii).¹³ James’s essay entitled “The British Soldier” appeared in the August 1878 issue of *Lippincott’s Magazine* (xiii). Towards the end of the same year, James published two political essays in the *Nation*— “The Afghan Difficulty,” on November 14, and “The Early Meeting of Parliament,” on December 26 (xiii). The *Nation* also published James’s article entitled “The Reassembling of Parliament” on March 20, 1879 (xiii). “The British Soldier” was inspired by James’s tour of the British army’s training camp in Aldershot in the

spring of 1878. In this essay, James reflected on the hostility between Britain and Russia after Russia won the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) (xiii-xiv). “The Afghan Difficulty” focused on the influence of imperialistic politics of Edward Robert Bulwer-Lytton, the viceroy of India, on the British occupation of Afghanistan as well as on the British and Russian competition for supremacy in the area (xiv). “The Early Meeting of Parliament” reflected on how the leader of the Liberal Party, William Gladstone, constantly referred to the Afghan War in his two Midlothian campaigns in order to win the national election of 1880 and defeat the incumbent Disraeli (xiv-xv). “The Reassembling of Parliament,” inspired by the publicized Zulus’ fight against the British army in Isandhlwana, criticized the British public for simultaneously wishing to keep the empire and challenging the colonial politics. James believed that, in case the British decided to preserve their empire, they would have to accept the sacrifices and investments required for such an enterprise (xv). As Walker points out, James was a keen analyst of political games and imperialistic endeavors, but he did not propose the dissolution of the empire (xv).

However, though the aforementioned historical and political contexts correlate, to some extent, with the background of Poe’s *Pym*, in *The Golden Bowl* James’s focus is on the enhancement of Anglo-America from within. While the United States wages wars to expand and secure its influence on Latin America, playing with the visibility of the Jew, James demonstrates how one can succeed as an individual at home—in the rapidly amalgamating capitalist society. There are no scientific expeditions or military conquests of distant islands in the novel; instead, James’s concern is one’s navigation towards affluence through everyday performances. If Fanny is “the curtain of white light” that mesmerizes and leads Amerigo towards a prosperous marriage with the daughter of a rich American, then Amerigo’s “expedition” is the one towards success in the Ververs’ circles and Anglo-American society. The Prince’s first name—Amerigo—suggests

his voyage towards his future American wife and in-laws, and for him, they are his island of salvation from poverty and indeterminacy. Fanny's appropriated Jewishness helps James teach Anglo-Americans how to enrich and empower themselves, whereas the Prince's association of Fanny with the "curtain of white light" suggests that James believes in the supremacy of the "Anglo-Saxon race" and its "predestined" mission of leading and nurturing the other "races."

Indeed, Amerigo is aware that Fanny's most important roles are those of his guide and nurturer. James emphasizes the importance of Mrs. Assingham's presence in Amerigo's life through the latter's straightforward acknowledgment of the accuracy of the former's perceptions. Amerigo respects Mrs. Assingham's observation skills: " '...I shall always want your eyes. Through them I wish to look—even at any risk of their showing me what I mayn't like. For then,... I shall know. And of that I shall never be afraid' " (47). Here James once again refers to Fanny's eyes as capable of detecting what the others cannot see. The eyes of "American City" observing from "under the lids of Jerusalem" are presented as an object of desire. Amerigo's lack of such eyes induces him to seek Fanny's company and advice whenever he is not able to discern the best solution to his problems with the Ververs.

Just like the Prince, the Princess considers Fanny an important facilitator in the relationships depicted in the novel. Even after Maggie realizes that Charlotte and the Prince had been lovers before their marriages, she counts on Fanny as support in her intended plan to invite Charlotte to the Ververs' country house. In James's words: "It was the strangest thing in the world, but it was as if Mrs. Assingham might in a manner mitigate the intensity of her [Maggie's] consciousness of Charlotte" (395). Fanny is the person whose diplomatic statements would soothe the negative effects Charlotte might have on the Princess. Similarly, just as

Amerigo wants to have Fanny's penetrating eyes in order to clearly see his path through the Ververs' world, Maggie needs Fanny's eyes in order to discern the right solution to her marital problems. In James's words:

‘Help me to find out *what* I imagine. I don't know—I've nothing but my perpetual anxiety. Have *you* any?—do you see what I mean? If you'll tell me truly, that at least, one way or the other, will do something for me.’ ... Maggie had sprung up while her friend sat enthroned, and, after moving to and fro in her intensity, now paused to receive the light she had invoked. It had accumulated, considerably, by this time, round Mrs. Assingham's ample presence, and it made, even to our young woman's own sense, a medium in which she could at last take a deeper breath... (405-406, his italics)

The passage invokes the image of Fanny as a prophetess, which is an allusion to the cleverness of the Queen of Sheba. Fanny's piercing eyes and enthroned posture make her reminiscent of the ancient rulers-prophets, whose knowledge and aura kept their disciples in thrall. Just as Amerigo is bedazzled by Fanny's "curtain of light" (41), Maggie is enchanted by Fanny's "ample presence" and the "halo" of "light" it has produced (406). James's language in both of the examples suggests that Amerigo and Maggie admire Fanny in a religious and spiritual way. James suggests that Fanny's beaming white (Anglo-Saxon) aura, supported by the appropriated (stereotypically) Jewish characteristics, is worth adoration. Fanny's persona unites the two volumes, the Prince's and the Princess's perspectives on the issues, into the novel of manners, James's ideological handbook on how to become successful in the Anglo-American capitalist project. Mrs. Assingham's appropriated Jewish eyes and lucidity help the Prince and Princess get

married, sustain the marriage despite Charlotte's brief, adulterous intrusion, and keep living in Europe using Adam Verver's financial support from American City.

Fanny's appropriation of Jewish eyes and clairvoyance helps this Anglo-Saxon woman become a successful guide, nurturer, and facilitator, and all of these social roles are important to James as the author of this behavioral manual. If Fanny's piercing eyes and prophetic skills help her solve the Prince's and the Princess's problems and lead them towards the achievements of their goals, then such qualities are highly recommendable in Anglo-America. James implies that through appropriations of these Jewish qualities, Anglo-Americans could become their own guides, nurturers, and facilitators in important human relationships. If both the impoverished Italian nobleman and the daughter of the well-off American perceive Fanny as the most reliable and influential advisor, then Fanny's diplomatic skills are truly desirable. Fanny looms as a diplomatic paragon for Anglo-Americans in James's vision of this transatlantic national entity.

Through her tactics of guiding, nurturing, and facilitating, Fanny opens herself a door to the Ververs' world. Both the Prince and the Princess need her as an advisor for the further courses of their lives in peace and abundance. By offering suggestions and mediating the communication between certain characters, Fanny is more influential than the people around her. Even though she has no pedigree and no money, through her counseling, Fanny becomes an irreplaceable link in the Ververs' everyday machinery. The Prince and the Princess do not seek advice from Adam Verver even though he is the most powerful figure in the household; instead, they rely upon Fanny's wisdom and diplomacy. Thus Fanny proves the paramount importance of advisor's role in the lives of the rich and the powerful. The relationships in the Verver household are truly orchestrated by Fanny and not by Adam, and as the further analysis demonstrates, the

circulation of Adam's money maintains its incessant flow owing to Fanny's interferences. Thus through her carefully chosen tactics, Fanny rearranges the established order in the Ververs' world. By securing Amerigo's and Maggie's affection and dependence on her favors, Fanny gains more social power and secures living in luxury for her and Bob.

Unlike the aforementioned characters, who consider Fanny a guide and nurturer, Charlotte is the one who thinks of Mrs. Assingham's actions as self-consciously orchestrated schemes. Charlotte is not afraid of the possibility of Fanny's interference in her *ménage à trois*. On the contrary, she is convinced that Fanny is not going to inform Maggie and Adam of Charlotte and Amerigo's transgression since such an act would label the matchmaker inconsiderate, short-sighted, and unreliable. In Charlotte's words:

I only say that she's *fixed*, that she must stand exactly where everything has, by her own act, placed her... She's condemned to consistency; she's doomed, poor thing, to a genial optimism. That, luckily for her however, is very much the law of her nature.

She was born to soothe and to smooth. Now then therefore... she has the chance of her life! (278, his italics)

Charlotte considers Fanny a person who keeps the equilibrium in the Verver household. Fanny's social performances are, in Charlotte's opinion, geared towards keeping the two marriages at least seemingly in good standing. Most importantly, Charlotte believes that it is in Fanny's nature to keep things in order for the others, implying that Fanny is so successful in her social performances that they seem natural to the people around her.

Even though Charlotte's perception of Fanny is to some extent negative, it is important that even Charlotte considers Fanny very capable of maintaining the equilibrium in the Verver

household. Even Fanny's foes, then, are impressed with her effectiveness in keeping everything under control. James's message is that even personal adversaries of appropriators of Jewishness find such appropriations admirable, particularly in situations when it is crucial to maintain reason and peace. Apparently, James praises Jewish diplomacy, underlining how important it is for the balance in Anglo-America. If Fanny perpetuates the balance between the couple that stays in Europe and the one that eventually moves to the United States, then the equilibrium in question is the one between Great Britain and the United States. The Old and the New World remain reconciled and peaceful owing to Fanny's diplomatic efforts. If Fanny secures the balance between the two poor youths and their rich partners, then the equilibrium in question is the one between the impoverished and the wealthy. The appropriated Jewish diplomacy is what glues both of the countries and all of their members into a stronger and more powerful unit.

The climax of Fanny's intervention in the Ververs' space of power and wealth is her destruction of the golden bowl, the symbol of Amerigo and Charlotte's transgression, which enables both of the couples to stay together and herself to maintain her current social status. Even though Fanny does not reveal Charlotte and Amerigo's secret affair, after Maggie finds out about it and discovers the golden bowl, Charlotte's intended wedding gift for the Prince and Princess, Fanny is the one who breaks the bowl and urges Amerigo to discontinue his adulterous affair with Charlotte. The novel ends happily in that it sustains the established matrimonies. While the Princess and Prince stay in London, Charlotte and Adam go back to American City, and the transatlantic distance helps to keep the equilibrium in the family. The Princess remains in London, becoming a member of Fanny's transplanted community, and both the Prince and Princess continue to enjoy Fanny's presence, and presumably her roles of a guide and nurturer. Even though Fanny seems unimportant in the lives of Charlotte and Adam, she is there to care

for Adam's daughter, to prevent Charlotte's indiscretions with Amerigo, and to keep the Verver couple within the permissible closeness to the Prince and Princess. Evidently, by being so admirably caring and responsible, Fanny maintains her own financial stability.

Through her tactics of matchmaking and marriage counseling, Fanny secures an invincible stronghold for herself in the Ververs' world. By initiating the marriages between Amerigo and Maggie and Charlotte and Adam, Fanny inserts the two poor youths in Adam's economic circuitry. By moving Amerigo and Charlotte from the economic margins to the economic center of Anglo-American capitalistic society, Fanny opens a path for the two characters' access to money and future participation in the economic matters in the family. Simultaneously, by making Maggie and Adam happy through their matrimony, Fanny secures her future good standing with the wealthy and the powerful. Furthermore, by destroying the golden bowl, the reminder of adultery in the family, Fanny tacitly commands Amerigo and Charlotte that their affair not be revived. This interference helps the two couples overcome their crises and move forward and Fanny herself keep the image of a good matchmaker and continue her good standing in the family. Through her tactics of matchmaking and marriage counseling Fanny revises the established order in the family: though she is not a family member, she is the one who determines the future course of the family.

The final pages of the novel suggest Fanny's continued mission in the orchestration of the lives of the two couples and of James's Anglo-America. In her final conversation with the Princess, Fanny boosts Maggie's confidence in her future happiness by prophesying that Charlotte will never return to Europe. As Fanny predicts, "I see something, thank God, every day... I see the long miles of ocean and the dreadful great country, State after State—which have

never seemed to me so big or so terrible. I see them at last, day by day and step by step, at the far end—and I see *them* never come back. But *never* simply” (547, his italics). Mrs. Assingham’s clairvoyance appeases Maggie, suggesting the ideological status quo: both of the marriages do continue to exist despite the committed adultery. What bridges the transatlantic distance between the couples, making them an interdependent family union, is the circulation of Adam’s money (which enables the Princess, Prince, and little Principino, their son, to live in London) as well as the Principino himself, who will eventually inherit Adam’s possessions. The continued interdependence and coexistence of the parties on both sides of the Atlantic will thus be continued and sealed: as long as American City produces money and as long as London has progeny that will inherit and potentially invest and increase it, the unity between the members of Anglo-America is guaranteed. However, the one who has envisioned, initiated, arranged, and executed everything is the matchmaker, actress, and diplomat—Fanny Assingham herself—and the reader is convinced that as long as she steers the course of the transatlantic family well, she will live in affluence.

Through her tactics, which demonstrate her appropriated Jewishness in action, Fanny manages to change the structure of her social circles and propose ways of including economically marginalized individuals in the growing capitalistic society. Even though Adam Verver is rich, Fanny is the one who subtly opens new paths for the circulation of Adam’s money. Through her tactics, Mrs. Assingham enables the progress of the people without inheritance or political influence. According to James, she succeeds owing to her skillful application of Jewish formulas, which can, apparently, solve the most discouraging economic problems. If James’s “Anglo-Saxon body total” copies Fanny’s tactics, it will strengthen itself economically and socially, serving as a paragon of progress to other nations.

However, despite all the praise that James has for Fanny's appropriations of Jewishness, there is a problem embedded in her social intervention. Just as Miriam projects fecundity onto the multiplication of her image through the circulation of her photographs, Fanny "procreates" through her constant interferences into the other characters' matters. Just as Miriam accumulates lucre through her professional acting, Fanny secures economic stability through her social performances of sympathy and assistance to the others. Fanny's "caring" for the others is her passion and profession. In James's words:

'Sophisticated as I may appear'—it was her frequent phrase—she had found sympathy her best resource. It gave her plenty to do; it made her, as she also said, sit up. She had in her life two great holes to fill, and she described herself as dropping social scraps into them as she had known old ladies, in her early American time, drop morsels of silk into the baskets in which they collected the material for some eventual patchwork quilt. One of these gaps in Mrs. Assingham's completeness was her want of children; the other was her want of wealth. (50)

As Fanny believes, her sophistication makes her capable of making convincing offers of compassion to her friends, but James's language of economy through which he refers to Fanny's commiseration as "her best resource" suggests a possibility of Fanny's profit from an adequate use of such a "resource." Mrs. Assingham's sympathy that constantly makes her "sit up," as if she were posing for a portrait or acting in a tableau vivant, is her recognizable social performance, her label. Just as the Queen of Sheba offered her kindness and valuable goods to King Solomon in order to appeal to him and secure his generosity to her people, Mrs. Assingham

offers her most valuable “possession,” her performances of sympathy, to the wealthy Ververs, in order to appeal to them and secure their generosity to her and Bob.

What then should we conclude about Mrs. Assingham’s tactical interferences with the family businesses throughout the novel? What kind of role does she play in James’s vision of Anglo-America? As a non-Jewish American expatriate in London, who appropriates Jewishness and is married to an Englishman, Fanny is reminiscent of cosmopolitan Jews, whose hybridity destabilizes discourses of national particularism and isolationism. Through her transatlantic matchmaking plots, Fanny supports James’s vision of Anglo-America as a unified whole, consisting of Great Britain and the United States. However, besides Fanny’s support of hybridity and cosmopolitanism, she encourages individual economic stability and possibilities of an individual social ascent. If *The Golden Bowl* as a novel of manners promotes Fanny’s resolution, social skills, and vitality, it also exposes her sublimated fecundity and materialism. But, despite the fact that Fanny’s negative features are there, all the characters accept to revolve around the positive aspects of Fanny’s charismatic persona, whom they thank and glorify. If this is the case, then James’s allo-Semitic vision is more philo- than anti-Semitic. Though James is anxious about the Jewish rapid multiplication and active participation in the Anglo-American economy, he certainly admires (stereotypically) Jewish shrewdness, determination, and vitality, which, if adequately performed by non-Jews, could result in non-Jewish class mobility and financial security as well as the progress of Anglo-America.

“Like a Water-Plant in the Flux of Tides”: Lily’s Fatal Performances

in *The House of Mirth*

Similar to Fanny Assingham, Lily Bart of *The House of Mirth* (1905) is presented as an actress. Lily’s acting is depicted through her tableau vivant of Sir Joshua Reynolds’s *Mrs. Lloyds* as well as her own and other characters’ perceptions of her behavior off the stage. However, unlike Mrs. Assingham, whose performances of Jewishness are helpful to her social ascent, Lily’s performance of Mrs. Lloyds, or as the other characters see it, of herself, as well as her off-the-stage performances are detrimental to the protagonist. Lily’s tableau vivant, based on Reynolds’s portrait of an elegant, faithful woman, married to an aristocrat, is a presentation of the poser herself—beautiful, daring, and resistant to the patriarchal views of women. Lightly dressed and proud of her beauty, Lily inverts the ideological role that the tableau of *Mrs. Lloyds* should have—the one of inviting women to be docile wives. Lily’s tableau encapsulates her behavior throughout the novel: unlike most of the other female characters, compliant with patriarchy, Miss Bart challenges and breaks the established norms of women’s conduct, emphasizing that she cannot be possessed by anyone, not even Simon Rosedale, a successful Jewish financier, Lily’s suitor, and one of her spectators in the tableau scene. Lily’s initial refusal to marry Rosedale, because he is a Jew, as well as Rosedale’s later refusal to marry Lily because she has been slandered and ostracized by New York’s socialites, expose to the scrutiny of the audience the values of the society depicted in the novel. Matrimony with the Jew could have saved Lily from poverty and public vilification, but the incongruity in Rosedale’s and her agendas results in the protagonist’s death. Wharton’s portrayal of patriarchy is bitterly negative, while the one of Jewishness is allo-Semitic.

Lily's on- and off-the-stage performances are influenced and provoked by the society through which she circulates. Very often men's gazes try to define, capture, glorify, or malign the protagonist. Lily's most significant viewers are Selden Lawrence, whom she loves, and Simon Rosedale, for whom she has ambivalent feelings. While Miss Bart is viewed and commented on by many a man, Lawrence and Rosedale are the ones whose views are the most important to her. Both Lawrence and Rosedale love her, but they view Lily and their relationships with her differently. While Lawrence understands Lily's ambitions and wants to save the protagonist from the society that vilifies and judges her, by taking her out of it, Rosedale wants to place her back in that society, in order to prove the society's wrongdoing as well as benefit from the wife whose beauty and social skills would secure his favorable social reputation. None of the gentlemen manages to save Lily or make her happy, and her behavior remains elusive to them by the end of the novel. The other gentlemen in the novel, such as Lily's cousin Jack Stepney and acquaintances Percy Gryce, Gus Trenor, George Dorset, and Ned Van Alstyne look at Lily exclusively as a patriarchal subject, designed to conform to public rules and expectations. While Stepney and Van Alstyne malign Lily through their remarks about her unduly liberal behavior for a single woman, Gryce often misunderstands Lily's decisions, Trenor expects her to pay him back through an adulterous affair, and Dorset cannot even master the strength to defend Lily when his wife makes public insinuations about Lily's involvement with him. Among such men, women in the novel are cast as passive and loyal patriarchal subjects, such as Julia Peniston, Grace Stepney, Judy Trenor, and the Van Osburgh women; as philanthropic spinsters, such as Gerty Farish; as devoted friends with limited social power, such as Carry Fisher; as adulterous wives and malicious schemers, such as Bertha Dorset; and as rebels against patriarchy, such as Lily. Within such a backward milieu, Lily's ambitious cultural

intervention is doomed to fail no matter how much she strives to build her own space of action and comfort. Wharton's naturalistic portrayal of Lily's struggle for a decent life in New York's high social circles exposes the callousness and malice that permeate the sophisticated mansions, summer houses, and yachts of the affluent, suggesting that independence or honesty must be sacrificed to the high society if a woman wants to be financially secure.

Lily's mission in the novel is announced through her own life philosophy. While the protagonist thinks that one can easily be enchanted and intoxicated by society, she also believes that the ways of society can be manipulated to one's own ends. In her dialogue with Lawrence, Miss Bart reveals her social credo: " 'Don't you think,... that the people who find fault with society are too apt to regard it as an end and not a means, just as the people who despise money speak as if its only use were to be kept in bags and gloated over? Isn't it fairer to look at them both as opportunities which may be used either stupidly or intelligently according to the capacity of the user?' " (72). This credo induces Lily to develop a series of tactics, hoping to financially succeed and rearrange the order in male-dominated society. However, as the forthcoming analysis demonstrates, all the tactics that she has chosen to develop prove fruitless and futile because society is not ready to accept the amount of audacity, disobedience, and extraordinariness that Lily tries to present as her best assets. Her decisions to gamble in order to make money, to pay her gambling debts through Trenor's investments, to refuse Rosedale's marriage proposal, and to work for Mrs. Hatch, the infamous nouveau riche, expose her to the cruelty of social judgment. No matter how much Lily wants to secure her economic status, she ends up being disappointed and destroyed because of her inability to make the choices that could lead her to the achievement of her goals. Trying to live against societal norms on the one hand and to secure her future on the other, Lily ends up slandered, impoverished, and ruined in the

public sphere. As the following section points out, Lily's failure in life is connected to the issues of both gender and race in early twentieth-century New York.

Staging Gender and Race in *The House of Mirth*

Miss Bart's mission in the society depicted in the novel stems from her distinct persona, initially introduced through the male gaze. Lily's constraint by societal norms and expectations is firstly announced through Lawrence's observation. At the beginning of the novel, when Lily accepts Lawrence's invitation to stop by for a cup of tea, Lawrence labels her a prisoner of society. In Wharton's words:

She [Lily] paused before the mantelpiece, studying herself in the mirror while she adjusted her veil. The attitude revealed the long slope of her slender sides, which gave a kind of wild-wood grace to her outline—as though she were a captured dryad subdued to the conventions of the drawing-room; and Selden reflected that it was the same streak of sylvan freedom in her nature that lent such savour to her artificiality. (11)

Lawrence's observation suggests that Lily's "wild-wood grace" is constrained by women's etiquette and that her resistant temperament only emphasizes the fact that her manners are a result of her adaptation to society. Unexpectedly captured and framed by Lawrence's gaze, Lily gives the impression that she does not completely fit into the social "contours" assigned to women. Lawrence's observation announces Lily's major struggle in the novel—the conflict between her own self and the outer world.

The center of the novel that announces this conflict and presents Lily in all her beauty and talent among the patriarchal gentlemen, her severest critics and arbiters of public mores, is Lily's tableau vivant of Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Mrs. Lloyds*.¹⁴ The contrast between who Lily is

in this tableau and how men in the audience see her sets the pattern for Lily's struggle for social recognition throughout the novel. Lily's living picture occurs in the mansion of the Welly Brys', who, just as Rosedale, meteorically ascend in society owing to their smart investments in Wall Street. The choice of the setting for Lily's tableau is not incidental. The pompous residence of the rising businessman is a perfect space for staging Lily's delicacy and talent, which most of the spectators do not know how to appreciate and thus tend to vulgarize.¹⁵ At the Welly Brys', the abyss between Lily and her spectators becomes obvious. Wharton's language in the description of Lily's enthusiasm and attitude towards the parlor theatrical reveals the protagonist's awareness of her grace, acting skills, and their effects. In Wharton's words:

Lily was in her element on such occasions. Under Morpeth's guidance her vivid plastic sense, hitherto nurtured on no higher food than dress-making and upholstery, found eager expression in the disposal of draperies, the study of attitudes, the shifting of lights and shadows. Her dramatic instinct was roused by the choice of subjects, and the gorgeous reproductions of historic dress stirred an imagination which only visual impressions could reach. But keenest of all was the exhilaration of displaying her own beauty under a new aspect; of showing that her loveliness was no mere fixed quality, but an element shaping all emotions to fresh forms of grace. (137-138, my italics)

The selected passage demonstrates that Lily has a dramatic talent, just as Jean Muir, Miriam Rooth, and Fanny Assingham. The tableau vivant excites her artistic sensibility, making her eager to produce and display new sediments of her physical and inner beauty and reaffirm her sensual influence on the audience. Her spectatorship consists of the high-class men and women, who have lately gossiped about Lily's extraordinary gambling habit, associated with women without proper etiquette. The tableau vivant serves as Lily's invitation to her audience to

reexamine their backward attitude towards ambitious women of the day by accepting Lily's presentation of beauty and extraordinariness.

Lily's artistic talent and the effect that she produces on the spectators model her broader relationship with society. In Wharton's words:

Indeed, so skillfully had the personality of the actors been subdued to the scenes they figured in that even the least imaginative of the audience must have felt a thrill of contrast when the curtain suddenly parted on a picture which was simply and undisguisedly the portrait of Miss Bart. Here there could be no mistaking the predominance of personality—the unanimous 'Oh!' of the spectators was a tribute, not to the brush-work of Reynolds' 'Mrs. Lloyd' but to the flesh-and-blood loveliness of Lily Bart. She had shown her artistic intelligence in selecting a type so like her own that she could embody the person represented without ceasing to be herself. It was as though she had stepped, not out of, but into, Reynolds' canvas, banishing the phantom of his dead beauty by the beams of her living grace. (141)

The quoted passage demonstrates Lily's keen eye in the selection of the adequate role as well as the remarkable outcomes of her acting. Unlike the other participants in Morpeth's series of living pictures, who blend with the scenery on the stage, Miss Bart stands out from the background of Reynolds's portrait, beaming with her own beauty and inner strength. The protagonist resists being a representation of an aristocratic matron; instead, she is a presentation of herself—a single, poor, sophisticated, and daring young woman, who does not want to conform to society.

The fact that Lily does not pose as Mrs. Lloyd, but as Miss Bart herself, inverts the established ideological role of the tableau. Lily invites women in the audience to bravely show their charm, creativity, and sense of independence. Bearing in mind that at the time Reynolds's

original was in the collection of rich German Jews, the Rothschilds, Lily's daring presentation of herself as a woman who cannot be possessed by anyone, not even the affluent Simon Rosedale, announces the protagonist's resistance not only to the backward patriarchal norms and roles for women but to the Jewish marriage as a way of securing economic stability as well. The tableau audaciously implies that the protagonist promotes women's rights to make choices of self-presentation and self-support without sacrificing their reputation or ethnic belonging.

Despite her efforts to promote a new ideological role for women, there are many viewers who do not understand the actress's intention at all. Women's comments center on Lily's beauty and grace, not recognizing and acknowledging Lily's feminist cause and call for an action. In fact, Gerty Farish and Carry Fisher are the only ones who praise Lily's look and acting, but they are not able to discern the significance of Lily's presentation of herself instead of the loyal wife of a wealthy and reputable aristocrat. Lily's call for women's willingness to step out of the current social roles and invent the new ones remains futile among the female audience at the *Welly Brys*'. The affluent women at this social gathering are fully preoccupied with finding proper matches for their daughters, organizing show-off banquets, and enjoying the luxury provided by their husbands. Even Gerty and Carry, though philanthropic, remain rooted in the system of male dominance—Gerty lives for the day when Lawrence will recognize her devotion to him and marry her, while Carry offers Lily help only if her own social status is unimpaired by her association with the protagonist. Thus both of the women who admire Lily's artistry preserve the ideological status quo—they continue to perpetuate the patriarchal hierarchy and etiquette.

In the time when the New Woman movement opened a path for women's wider access to public jobs and freedoms in clothing, the women in Lily's circles still behave as docile patriarchal subjects, contented with the ranks and possibilities which the patriarchal culture

offers them. Even the women who are not present at the Welly Brys' tableaux party, such as Lily's Aunt Julia Peniston and her cousin Grace Stepney, the final inheritor of Julia's property, are presented as loyal patriarchal subjects. Grace is the one who conveys malicious rumors about Lily's gambling to Julia, and Julia is the one who despises new women's habits and fashions and therefore decides to bequeath all her property to Grace, and not to Lily as initially planned. Indeed, Lily does not fit in Aunt Peniston's residence; she feels out of place in that old-fashioned house filled with objects tainted by patriarchy. Lily especially despises Julia's bronze box with the image of Beatrice Cenci,¹⁶ whose face particularly disturbs her after the tableau, when she confides in Mrs. Peniston that she has a gambling debt. Unlike Beatrice, Lily is not physically punished for performing "herself" in the middle of Reynolds's background and challenging the dominant social order's views of women. However, Lily is constantly slandered for her "improper" habits, which makes her hate patriarchal society as well as Julia's abode. In Wharton's words, "Lily felt for these objects [in Julia's house] the same distaste which the prisoner may entertain for the fittings of the court-room. It was here [in the drawing room] that her aunt received her rare confidences, and the pink-eyed smirk of the turbaned Beatrice was associated in her mind with the gradual fading of the smile from Mrs. Peniston's lips" (178-179). Lily is revolted by the transparent falseness of her everyday life in Julia's mansion. She is not only entrapped by the superficiality and snobbism of the New York socialites; she is constrained by the symbols of patriarchy in her temporary habitation as well.

Speaking of the male spectators, most of their responses to Lily's tableau reveal rigid patriarchal views of single women. Except for Lawrence, who admires Lily's performance and believes that it is "cheapened and vulgarized" (142) by the audience and the setting, and Rosedale, who praises Lily's beauty and notes that Lily could profit from her art, all the male

spectators blatantly objectify and judge Lily. Ned Van Alstyne's observation is highly sexist: " 'Deuced bold thing to show herself in that get-up; but gad, there isn't a break in the lines anywhere, and I suppose she wanted us to know it!' " (141). He perceives Lily as a shameless young woman who is not afraid to be lightly dressed in front of the male audience. His further comment reveals his patriarchal views on women's options in society of the day: " 'When a girl's as good-looking as that she'd better marry; then no questions are asked. In our imperfectly organized society there is no provision as yet for the young woman who claims the privileges of marriage without assuming its obligations' " (166). According to Van Alstyne, the fact that Lily is ready to reveal her beauty to the world implies that she claims the privileges of a married woman, whose public exposure can exclusively be validated by her husband's gaze. Grounded in the same patriarchal ideology, Jack Stepney, Lily's relative, makes a similar comment: " 'Really, you know, I'm no prude, but when it comes to a girl standing there as if she was up at auction—I thought seriously of speaking to cousin Julia' " (165-166). Stepney's language suggests that Lily's sense of artistry is a cheap way of displaying her body, and the girl who allows herself a public exhibition of her beauty has to be reprimanded by her benefactress.

In such a climate, perpetuated by both men and women, Lily decides to develop a series of tactics that would help her build her own economic stability, gaining independence from Aunt Julia. Her series of tactics arises from her unhappiness in the life she leads; as Wharton notes, "She was beginning to have fits of angry rebellion against fate, when she longed to drop out of the race and make an independent life for herself" (39). Since Lily's beauty and artistic talent are the pillars of her persona, she hopes that her selection of tactics will enable her to "preserve" and profit from her charms and gifts. In Wharton's words: "She [Lily] knew that to betray any sense of superiority was a subtler form of the stupidity her mother denounced, and it did not take her

long to learn that *a beauty* needs more *tact* than the possessor of an average set of features” (34, my italics). Wharton’s language reflects Certeau’s cultural terminology: Lily is aware that her beauty should find a proper way of expression, a proper audience, a proper sponsor, and a proper habitation in the rapidly changing society, and she therefore seeks a way that would lead her to the accomplishment of her goal in the milieu of uncultivated and malicious socialites. Lily is aware that the independence she seeks should grant her financial security since she is used to exorbitant attires, posh mansions, and exotic cruises: “She [Lily] knew that she hated dinginess as much as her mother had hated it, and to her last breath she meant to fight against it, dragging herself up again and again above the flood till she gained the bright pinnacles of success which presented such a slippery surface to her clutch” (39). However, the tactics that Lily opts for, such as gambling, allowing Gus Trenor to make investments for her so that she could pay her gambling debts, then paying her debts to Trenor by working as an assistant to the dubious Mrs. Hatch and as a milliner at Regina’s, only lead her to severe social vilification and pauperism. The only option that an ambitious woman without inheritance and pedigree has if she wants to achieve a certain social and economic rank is matrimony. Like Jean Muir and Miriam Rooth, Lily needs an alliance with a man in case she wants to pursue her artistic and materialistic goals.

Wharton speaks positively of Lily’s artistry and brave exposure of her talent in the public arena, but she also makes it clear that money is still in the hands of men. Even in the cases when a woman is a prosperous inheritor, an alliance with a man is necessary for the social approval of the woman’s investments. In case Lily inherited Julia’s money instead of Grace Stepney, would Lily’s public displays of her body be approved by men if she were not married? No, even then Lily would be an object of Van Alstyne and Stepney’s sexist conversations since there is no husband whose gaze would validate her. Surrounded by weak and indeterminate Lawrence, shy

and slow Gryce, and unstable Dorset, Lily's only chance of getting back to society once she is penniless, ill, and abandoned, is the marriage with Rosedale. Unlike the obnoxious sexism of the Christian gentlemen's remarks about Lily's tableau, Rosedale's comment, though undoubtedly revealing his inclination towards lucre, demonstrates his admiration of Lily's almost naked beauty: " 'My God, Mrs. Fisher, if I could get Paul Morpeth to paint her like that, the picture'd appreciate a hundred per cent in ten years.' " (166). Rosedale evidently thinks of Lily's tableau as potentially remunerative, but he does not insist on the rigid views of women as Van Alstyne and Stepney. As much as Lily's message in the living picture is that she seeks independence (though, as the reader learns, she cannot achieve it without money), Rosedale's response to the scene is business-like—he wants to eternalize the tableau vivant of Lily Bart by having Morpeth paint her so that he could exhibit it for money or even sell it. If Lily wants a luxurious life in which she could devote herself to beauty, arts, and travels, Rosedale is the one who can offer her such luxury, respecting and being proud of her charm and artistic talent. Lily as the model in the tableau and Rosedale as one of her spectators are the most complementary participants in the parlor entertainment.

Beyond the stage, Rosedale and Lily are complementary in the sense that both of them calculate on what they have in order to achieve what they want. Through Lily's train of thought, the reader realizes that "Rosedale, with that mixture of artistic sensibility and business astuteness which characterizes his race, had instantly gravitated towards Miss Bart. She understood his motives, for her own course was guided by as nice calculations" (15). Lily is aware that as much as Rosedale wants a woman that could ensure his favorable social reputation, she wants a man that could ensure her financial stability. Rosedale is similarly conscious of their complementariness, believing that Miss Bart has the exact qualities that are "needed to round off

his social personality” (127). Naturally, Rosedale’s proposal of marriage comes after the tableau vivant, which highlights Lily’s beauty and social skills, implicitly asking the audience to “forgive” the model her improper gambling habit that has already caused her social harm and simultaneously inviting the proposals from interested suitors. Lawrence is not rich and in favor of marriage enough, while Gryce is deterred by the rumors of Lily’s gambling debts, and the only one keen on securing the hand of Miss Bart is Rosedale himself. Rosedale’s proposal to Lily clearly states his view of the role and position of his spouse: “What I want is a woman who’ll hold her head higher the more diamonds I put on it. And when I looked at you the other night at the Brys’, in that plain white dress, looking as if you had a crown on, I said to myself: ‘By gad, if she had one, she’d wear it as if it grew on her’ ” (185). Evidently, Rosedale admits the importance of Lily’s agency should she accept his proposal: her agency itself will be a crucial tool for Rosedale’s safe social ascent. Lily would be able to pursue her artistry and dominate the social milieu that they inhabit, and in return, she would have access to money.

While Rosedale seeks becoming a whiter Jew through his marital affiliation with Lily, Lily believes that she will become less white if she marries Rosedale and thus appropriates Jewishness by living with him—by entertaining his Jewish family, giving birth to their children, observing Jewish festivities and ceremonies, walking with her husband to the synagogue, and being introduced and known in society as Mrs. Rosedale. In other words, Lily perceives her potential appropriations of Jewishness as negative influences on her public image. As the forthcoming analysis demonstrates, Miss Bart denigrates the Jewish Other through her reflections on Rosedale in the first part of the novel. She is convinced that appropriations of Jewishness would taint her public image. If such appropriations provided Lily with money, they would simultaneously mark her as a wife of a Jew in the years of intense anti-Semitism.

Despite the accuracy of Rosedale's estimation of Lily's and his situations, Miss Bart's initial anti-Semitism prevents her from accepting Rosedale's marriage offer. Indeed, at the beginning of the novel, Lily's observations of Rosedale are imbued with prejudice. Lily's train of thought at the Benedick introduces Rosedale to the readership: "Mr. Rosedale stood scanning her with interest and approval. He was a plump, rosy man of the blond *Jewish type*, with smart London clothes *fitting him like upholstery*, and small sidelong eyes which gave him the air of *appraising people as if they were bric-a-brac*" (13, my italics). Wharton's language emphasizes that Lily stereotypes Rosedale as an example of "the Jewish type," ridiculing his lack of taste for clothing and ascribing his eyes an inclination to materialistic assessment. Furthermore, after Rosedale proposes to Lily, she conceives of the union with him as "one of the many *hated possibilities hovering on the edge of life*" (58, my italics). Blind-sighted by the discourse of anti-Semitism that was in vogue at the time depicted in the novel, Lily rejects Rosedale as an undesirable member of society. Convinced that her beauty can find a better audience and habitation, Lily discards Rosedale as too inferior to her in pedigree and social status, both of which she associates with the image of the adequate partner.

Lily's aforementioned comments from the beginning of the novel reflect her association of Jews with negative signifiers perpetuated by Christians, which means that as a white Christian woman she essentializes Jewishness. For her, appropriating Jewishness means labeling oneself with derogatory common perceptions of Jews and drowning in the public contempt of the group. Lily does not even consider marriage with a Jew an exit out of her economic instability and entrance into the possibilities of Rosedale's financial support of her artistry. Instead, convinced that Jewishness is a quality to be despised and that appropriations of Jewishness would make her despicable, she rejects Rosedale's proposal. At this point of the plot, Lily believes in the

fruitfulness of her tactics and considers all other options for reaching her goals more acceptable than marrying a Jew.

Unlike Jennie Kassanoff, whose most recent study of the novel contends that Wharton wants to “prevent” Christian women from marrying Jews by “making” her protagonist die, I argue that Lily’s anti-Semitism weakens and eventually disperses after she realizes that the desirable and proper suitors have abandoned her, neglecting her poverty and participating in her isolation.¹⁷ After Bertha Dorset sacrifices Lily’s reputation in order to save herself from public condemnation of her adultery, the Christians in the novel behave just as they did after Lily’s tableau vivant at the Welly Brys’: Lawrence sympathizes with her, condemning society but not offering to marry her, Gerty and Carry try to help her for a while, while the others malign and ignore her. In such a moment, Lily realizes that the only one who has ever honestly offered her protection is Rosedale. Even though she is not in love with him, she reevaluates Rosedale’s character, detecting his virtues. She does not think of him as a Jewish stereotype anymore; instead, she considers him an accomplished individual: “Much as she disliked Rosedale, she no longer absolutely despised him. For he was gradually obtaining his object in life, and that, to Lily, was always less despicable than to miss it” (253). Rosedale’s success, built by his own talents, skills, and efforts, convinces Lily that he is a worthy man. Through Lily’s train of thought the reader realizes that “there were even moments when a marriage with Rosedale seemed the only honourable solution of her difficulties” (262). Once the Christian gentlemen reveal their prudery and lack of honor, Lily realizes that Rosedale is more reasonable and nobler than all of them, and her union with him becomes the most appropriate solution to her troubles. Having noticed Rosedale’s stereotyped Jewishness only in the past, now Lily even perceives his fatherly kindness to Cary’s youngest child: “Rosedale in the paternal *role* was hardly a figure to

soften Lily; yet she could not but notice a quality of homely goodness in his advances to the child” (263, *her italics*). Lily’s anti-Semitism vanishes once she is able to discern Rosedale’s qualities and juxtapose him to the insincere and slanderous circles of Christian socialites. The protagonist now considers Rosedale very humane and worthy compared to her malicious Christian acquaintances.

This shift in Lily’s convictions suggests that she realizes that racial signifiers are arbitrary. Miss. Bart does not see Rosedale as a Jewish stereotype any more; instead, she thinks that he has many admirable qualities. If Lily understands that racial signifiers are fictional, then she realizes that in case she marries Rosedale, she is not going to become an embodiment of a Jewish stereotype. She now sees appropriations of Jewishness through matrimony as not just a desirable option but as a necessary one as well. As Mrs. Rosedale, Lily would be able to reshape the established cultural order in the spheres of New York socialites: Lily, a young woman without inheritance and parents, would organize parties, perfect and expose her artistry, and spend time with the most powerful and affluent people in New York. The tactic of marrying Rosedale would place her higher than any of the women who slander her.

However, just as Lily initially rejects Rosedale’s proposal because he is Jewish and because she does not love him, although she is aware of her and Rosedale’s complementariness, Rosedale now rejects Lily’s acceptance of his offer because she is maligned by the society in which he seeks an honorable place. In Rosedale’s words: “ ‘There it is, you see. I’m more in love with you than ever, but if I married you now I’d queer myself for good and all, and everything I’ve worked for all these years would be wasted’ ” (270-271). Rosedale makes it clear that he will marry Lily only if she publicly declares that she possesses Bertha’s letters to Lawrence, which will induce Mrs. Dorset to negate her accusations of Lily. However, Lily does

not want to expose Lawrence to public disapprobation, depriving herself of the only possibility of her social restoration. Thus both Lily and Rosedale are dependent on the white, Christian, patriarchal society that none of them appreciates: in order to have more access to power, Rosedale needs the society's approval and admiration of his wife, whereas in order to become a successful and wealthy woman, Lily needs the respect of the society, which will always evaluate her performances, both on and off the stage.

The aforesaid exchange between Rosedale and Lily proves that the dominant— white, Christian, and patriarchal— social order determines what sorts of behavior are appropriate and tolerable. The dominant social order decides whether a “fallen” Christian woman can recover from social disgrace and whether she can pull a Jewish social climber into the maze of opportunities that society offers to desirable subjects. Even the born Jew such as Rosedale realizes that in the current society Jewishness can reshape the established cultural order only if it accepts certain game rules determined by that order. However, even if Lily comes to the same conclusion as Rosedale, she does not want to compromise her moral principles by respecting the hypocritical rules of society.

Though Lily and Rosedale are complementary in many respects, this discrepancy in their attitudes towards society's required sacrifices for the achievement of their individual goals makes them distinct from each other. Wharton casts Rosedale as a stereotyped Jewish social climber who does not want to compromise his business and current social status by marrying the “fallen” woman until she successfully defends herself in the public sphere. Even though Rosedale adores Lily, his career, wealth, and public respect are more important to him. Unlike Rosedale, Lily puts her personal principles and loyalty above her need to overcome poverty. By casting Rosedale as ready to play society's game in order to succeed and Lily as dedicated to her

inflexible personal credo, Wharton does not intend to create a moral dichotomy between the two characters. Instead, she highlights the two different approaches to and ways of dealing with the unscrupulous society depicted in the novel. These two characters' decisions illustrate what social pariahs need to do in order to be admitted to high social circles.

The end of the novel reveals Lily's philo-Semitic responses to Rosedale as well as the ironic importance of society's validation of both of them. When the protagonist is exhausted by her work at Regina's and addicted to sleeping drugs, the only person whom she welcomes to her lonely world is Rosedale himself. When Rosedale asks Lily for permission to visit her, Wharton informs us that Lily happily approves "*in the first sincere words she had ever spoken to him*" (311, my italics). Evidently, Rosedale is the only person to whom she honestly talks in the moments of despair. Rosedale's benevolence and generosity are evident when he offers Lily to pay her debt to Trenor, considering such an offer "a plain business arrangement, such as one man would make with another" (317). Lily cannot help noticing his humaneness and love for her. Even though Miss Bart does not love Rosedale, she admits to herself that "[her] dislike, indeed, still subsisted, but it was penetrated here and there by the perception of mitigating qualities in him: of a certain gross kindliness, a rather helpless fidelity of sentiment, which seemed to be struggling through the hard surface of his material ambitions" (318). Even though Lily is right to believe that Rosedale will not marry her unless she exposes Bertha (and thus Lawrence as well) to the scrutiny of the public, she would be unjust if she judged him upon her realization that "his new passion [for her] has not altered his old standard of values" (318). If Rosedale does not see a possibility of his existence beyond the cruel society, or does not consider such a possibility worthy enough, Lily is equally incapable of totally abandoning the society that has harmed her. Indeed, Lily admits her own dependence on society in her final dialogue with Lawrence: "I can

hardly be said to have an independent existence. I was just a screw or a cog in the great machine I called life, and when I dropped out of it I found I was of no use anywhere else. What can one do when one finds that one only fits into one hole? One must get back to it or be thrown out into the rubbish heap—and you don't know what it's like in the rubbish heap!" (327). This confession exposes the failure of Lily's series of tactics. Paralyzed by the complex interlacement of her personal interests and happiness with the interests and happiness of the others, Lily ends up performing her "dying picture" for real. Lily's death underlines the cruelty and power of the white, Christian, and patriarchal society, revealing the end of those who do not want to play by its rules.

If the novel ends with the protagonist's "tableau mort" not because she does not have an option to save herself (by marrying a Jew), but because she does not want to expose Lawrence to social judgment, what should we conclude about Wharton's portrayal of patriarchy and Jewishness in the novel? If Lily calls for an organized feminist action against patriarchy through her tableau vivant, if none of the socialites understands her message, and if she has to marry in order to achieve her goals as well as save herself from starvation, then Wharton's description of early twentieth-century New York as a male-dominated space is bitterly negative. However, even in such a space, organized and perpetuated by passive and loyal, both male and female ideological subjects, there is a figure that stands out as much as Lily, and that figure is Rosedale, the only Jewish character in the novel. Even though Lily's tableau vivant relays the message that Miss Bart is not going to be possessed by anyone, especially not by a Jew, in the second half of the novel the protagonist views marriage with Rosedale as a favorable option for herself, acknowledging Rosedale's virtues and giving the novel the allo-Semitic tone. By making Rosedale more sympathetic to Lily than her Christian friends are, Wharton criticizes Christian

hypocrisy and makes the protagonist realize the arbitrariness of categorizations as well as their detrimental effects.

Turning the Inside Out: Aporetic Duplication in *The Golden Bowl* and *The House of Mirth*

In both of the novels, tableaux vivants announce the Jewishness-related missions of the major characters, sketch out the protagonists' relations with the surroundings, and encapsulate crucial messages of the texts. Both of the tableaux can thus be considered examples of aporetic or paradoxical *mises en abyme* (mirrors in the text), which, according to Lucien Dallenbach, are scenes which "cast back" entire texts that contain them (35). Aporetic mirrors in the text embed the larger frames in which they are already embedded (35). Such scenes help the reader vividly remember the author's intentions and the development of the plot. The messages that the tableaux vivants in these novels convey to their spectators reflect the messages that these novels convey to their readers.

The unintended tableau featuring the subsidiary character of Amerigo and the dominant figure of Fanny encapsulates the structure and message of James's novel. Fanny's dominance over Amerigo initiates and moves the plot of the novel forward (through matchmaking and counseling), and Fanny's appropriated (stereotypically) Jewish diplomacy, shrewdness, and charisma mesmerize Amerigo in this scene as well as throughout the novel. Fanny's dominance over Amerigo also ends the plot of the novel (through her act of breaking the golden bowl as a symbol of adultery and through further counseling of the couples), and her appropriated (stereotypically) Jewish qualities continue to fascinate the couples as they continue their married lives. If Fanny lures Amerigo to the marriage with Maggie owing to her appropriated Jewishness, she also saves and perpetuates that marriage owing to the same qualities. The tableau encapsulates the beginning, the course, and the ending of the novel. We, the imagined spectators

of the tableau and simultaneously readers of the novel, understand the dynamic between the characters in the tableau as well as throughout the plot. If, as imagined spectators of the tableau, we anticipate the further development of the novel, as readers of the novel, we understand the mirroring role of the tableau in it.

Similarly, Lily's tableau of *Mrs. Lloyds*, in which she actually presents herself against Reynolds's backdrop, and through which she evokes controversial responses from her audience, encapsulates the crucial conflicts and messages of the novel. In the tableau of the portrait, Lily casts herself as a rebel against patriarchy. Lily's resistance, announced through the living picture, continues throughout the novel. In the tableau episode, different patriarchal subjects respond differently to Lily's self-presentation, and their responses to it reoccur as the plot develops. If Lily mesmerizes and shocks different spectators through her tableau, she does the same through her public actions later on. Rosedale appreciates Lily's beauty and artistry, but he simultaneously finds them potentially lucrative (in case he asked Morpeth to paint Lily and expose the portrait for sale). Later on, when Rosedale proposes marriage to Lily out of his deepest admiration for her, he simultaneously emphasizes that he would benefit from such a wife. Finally, even when he offers to save Lily from extreme poverty and disgrace by marrying her, he does not want to do that unconditionally: he asks her to expose Bertha and Lawrence in public. Just as in the tableau Lily adheres to her personal credo, in the final stage of her disaster she remains loyal to her principles as well and refuses to expose Lawrence to social disapprobation in order to save herself. As readers of the tableau scene, we anticipate the development of the relationship between Lily and her spectators beyond the Welly Brys' mansion, whereas as readers of the novel we understand how the effects of Lily's tableau on her audience influence her future relations with her viewers.

As novels of manners, both *The Golden Bowl* and *The House of Mirth* endorse or expose certain values and behavioral patterns through tableaux vivants—the didactic performance genre—testifying to the authors’ desires to teach their readers about human relationships and success in Anglo-America of the early 1900s. The two tableaux convey in a nutshell the authors’ suggestions about how to act or what kinds of actions to avoid in the rapidly growing and changing society. As aporetic mirrors in these texts, the two living pictures illustrate and encapsulate the manuals’ crucial advice and social commentary. Unlike the previously analyzed novels, *The Golden Bowl* and *The House of Mirth* revolve around single instances of living pictures, reflecting the genre’s withdrawal from American stages and parlors. As the forthcoming coda demonstrates, tableaux vivants disappear as the early twentieth-century silent film industry emerges.

Notes

1. Brudney discusses the characters’ intentions and conduct. Torgovnick analyzes the characters’ manners, understatement, and ambiguity of expressions. Cox Wessel explores the characters’ survival strategies in the urban arena. Boone examines the non-traditional marriages in the novel. Leibowitz discusses the importance of verbal self-restraint for the sake of social promotion and happiness. Priest concentrates on the exchanges of ideas, powers, and feelings among the characters. Guerra explores the language, knowledge, and truth in the novel.

2. For a discussion of the roles of references in dialogues and presentations of the characters’ experiences, see Steele. For a discussion of end-linkings in the creation of dialogic intensity, see Norrman.

3. Meeuwis analyzes the characters as flaneurs. Zacharias argues that Adam Verver is an embodiment of Jamesian morality. Kimball claims that Charlotte is the central figure in the

novel. Davidson examines masculinity, commodity fetishism, gender relations, and sexual desire.

4. For a discussion of Jewish vendors, see Oster and Freedman.

5. Beaty focuses on the psychological realism and sentimentality in the novel. Lidoff argues that the novel is a romance of identity. Dimock concentrates on the roles of various exchanges in the novel. Gargano investigates the importance of moral laws, social norms, and faith in the novel.

6. For a detailed discussion of the metaphors of female desire in the novel, see Mehaffy. Sapora investigates literary doubling in the novel. For a detailed discussion of feminist ideologies that influenced Wharton's construction of Lily, see Restuccia. Griffin Wolff discusses the influences of Art Nouveau on Wharton's presentation of Lily. Totten examines the role of gaze in self-construction and self-representation. For a thorough discussion of different interiors and sequences of Lily's search for selfhood, see Clubbe. Larson Benert argues that there are gendered spaces in the novel. Modellmog investigates different stages in Lily's fight for privacy. Hochman examines the relationship between the performer and the audience and writer and reader.

7. Goldman's essay argues that Rosedale is a figure through which Wharton criticizes society more freely. Kassanoff's article examines the figures presented through the tableaux sequences at the Welly Brys' as racial types.

8. Both Goldman and Kassanoff discuss the racist discourses that influenced Wharton's writing.

9. In his introduction, Pritchard mentions all the Queen's appearances in Jewish, Islamic, Ethiopian, and Christian documents.

10. For a detailed discussion of how Jewish and Muslim authors reshaped the biblical Queen of Sheba from a wise ruler into a “demon” that challenges and threatens gender boundaries, see Lassner’s study.

11. As Freedman reminds us, “American physical anthropologists” considered the “Jewish nose” “a Lamarckian acquired trait—a mysterious piece of adaptive behavior that soon becomes genetically encoded; and some even speculated over the precise means by which that trait was acquired” (64-65).

12. Nelson’s fifth chapter examines the imperialistic ideology in Poe’s novel.

13. For a thorough discussion of these essays, see Walker’s introduction, pages xiii-xv.

14. Totten’s article investigates Lily’s gaze in the self-construction and self-representation in the tableau. Kassanoff’s essay examines tableaux sequences as presentations of different racial types. Hochman’s article examines art, including tableaux, as both a need and a planned public act.

15. Clubbe examines the connections between different interiors and Lily’s different phases of searching for selfhood.

16. Beatrice was the sixteenth-century Italian noblewoman who killed her father after he raped her. She was sentenced to death for her crime. Beatrice was often staged in the nineteenth-century tableaux with the pro-patriarchy agenda. Chapman briefly reflects on Beatrice in her article; see pages 33-34.

17. For a thorough discussion of racism and nationalism in Wharton’s novels, see Kassanoff’s book.

Epilogue

From Living Pictures to Moving Pictures and the Jewish American Immigrant Novel: The Emergence of the Early Twentieth-Century Jewish American Culture

As I have argued, Alcott, James, and Wharton used tableaux vivants in order to propose the paradigms of desirable non-Jewish behavior through the presentations of Jewish figures or non-Jewish figures performing Jewishness. By inscribing the staged figures in tableaux with the messages pertinent to the progress of American society in general, and sometimes of the Anglo-Saxon stock in particular, these authors manipulated the personality characteristics and behaviors commonly associated with Jewish people to their own ideological ends. Through the characters in tableaux, Alcott, James, and Wharton proposed a number of actions and changes, such as resistance to patriarchy, social ascent, economic progress, and search for independence and individuality. By choosing the well-known historical, biblical, literary, or artistic figures for the characters in tableaux, these authors attempted to evoke the common perceptions of the dignitaries and celebrities of the past and load them with their own contemporary messages. After the models present the well-known individuals in tableaux, they step out into the everyday life, applying the staged figures' proven formulas of success in contemporary situations.

The Jewishness staged through tableaux and appropriated, recreated, or rejected in everyday life becomes a tool in the major characters' struggles for success and progress. The Jewishness is presented as a desirable and acquirable quality or manner that can blur social boundaries and move individuals from the social margins to the social center. The tableau vivant as a performance genre that conflates the counterfeit with the real and the private with the public highlights the convergence and shifting of the margins and the center. By appropriating Rachel's characteristics and roles, Jean Muir brings the public to the Coventrys' parlors, simultaneously

calling for the organized feminist action from the space of the domestic. Through her impersonations of Rachel's roles in various artistic studios, Miriam Rooth pours the influences of the larger public arena into smaller public spaces, inviting women to cross the borders of their homes and enter public professions. Posing as the ancient queen of Sheba and as the model in Reynolds's portrait, Fanny and Lily respectively revive the staged figures, adding to them their own personal touch, and irradiate the effects of such recreations in various public spaces. In all of these instances, the Jewishness leaks from the public into the private and vice versa, creating new social maps.

As this study has demonstrated, Alcott, James, and Wharton responded to the increasing Jewish presence on American soil by acknowledging the value of behaviors commonly associated with Jews and applying them on non-Jews. The novels discussed in this project imply the visibility of the growing Jewish social agency, which the major non-Jewish authors noticed and which simultaneously inspired and troubled their imaginations. Alcott, James, and Wharton realized that Jewish immigrants developed the tactics that enabled them to play with, manipulate, and subvert the social restrictions and exclusions imposed by the dominant social order as well as the racial stereotypes that guarded such restrictions and exclusions. In Jewish performative abilities, these authors saw the promising modes of fighting for what they considered worthy social causes. They did not play with Jewish performative tactics in order to stimulate Jewish agency. Instead, they applied those tactics on non-Jews in order to propose solutions to the current social problems or to stimulate the further advancement of the Christian mainstream. However, despite these authors' ambivalence towards Jewish agency, the emerging performance and fiction genres opened a path for the Jewish artists' inclusion in the cultural center.

The discussed practice of inscribing the mute Jewish figures with the non-Jewish authors' messages did not last for a long time. As the new century opened, the tableau vivant as a parlor entertainment disappeared, leaving the public version of the genre to linger a little longer, until it yielded the floor to other competing entertainments, especially the silent film. With the growth of the silent film industry and the appearance of the immigrant novel in the late 1910s and 1920s, Jewish newcomers found spaces for their own art- and culture-making. They gained their own public voices through their performances in music halls and movie theaters as well as through the Jewish American immigrant novel—the voices they were deprived of in the non-Jewish *fin de siècle* novels. Jewish women appeared on the stage and the screen and wrote novels, proposing various ways of acculturation, activism, and progress in the new country. By letting their own voices being heard, Jewish public figures confirmed the non-Jewish novelists' inchoate fears of the Jewish cultural power, opening the door to the era of the increasing Jewish American art production. The following sections will delineate the vanishing of tableaux vivants with the advent of the silent film, the silent film's popularity among Jewish immigrants, Jewish active engagement in music halls and movie theaters, and the emergence of the Jewish American immigrant novel as a newcomers' reflection on their adaptation to the United States during the second immigration wave.

The Disappearance of Tableaux and the Rise of the Silent Film

Though tableaux vivants were such a popular parlor and public entertainment in the 1800s, they had almost vanished from New York's social life by the beginning of the twentieth century. The new genre—moving pictures—as well as the old genres, such as the leg show, the striptease burlesque, the musical revue, and the operetta managed to win the competition with living pictures. Tableaux were not often staged in the early 1900s, and when they were, they

were used in different ways and in different contexts than in the previous century. With rise of sexual freedoms in the 1900s, tableaux were sometimes used to promote female sexuality.

McCullough points out that “The great revues of Ziegfeld, Earl Carroll, the Shuberts, and others exhibited tableaux designed to ‘glorify the American girl,’ and many of these employed actual nudity, even without fleshings” (144). The early twentieth-century tableaux portrayed paintings or sculptures on very rare occasions. McCullough points out that “Living statues occasionally served as gymnastic presentations and were favorites of some school physical education programs” (144). Sometimes the posers used classical sculptures as models in these exercises.

Speaking of “the legitimate theatre,” McCullough explains that “the practice continued for a time of ending key scenes with a tableau which froze a significant moment in the play” (144). In other words, tableaux were not staged as an independent genre. When they were included in larger genres, they were often based on the scenes from the script (144).

Jewish artists and activists used tableaux vivants as well, but usually when they wanted to call for an organized action against oppression and for social inclusion. One of such activists was Fannia Cohn, a member of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU) (Katz 105). This union was “affiliated with the Socialist Party,” and just like similar organizations, through its educational projects, it complemented other socialistic enterprises (105). Fannia Cohn, “whose ideas about union, education, and ethnicity predated the formation of the CP [Communist Party],” searched for the educational methods that would help the union overcome ethnic and cultural divisions in the recruitment of prospective members (105). The 1927-1928 Educational Bulletin published Cohn’s article on education, in which she said that “since teaching methods are really influenced by the instructor’s knowledge of the group to whom he is presenting his material, our Educational Department makes every effort to acquaint the

instructors with the character—social and racial background—and the experience of the group he is teaching, to give him some idea of their social aims, aspirations and hopes for the future” (qtd. in Katz 105-106). Cohn and her co-workers began recruiting white, Jewish, and African-American members in 1927 (106).¹

As the chair of the educational program, Cohn had been in charge of seminars and leisure activities since the spring of 1927 (Katz 106). Under her direction, the activists staged Walt Whitman’s poem “The Mystic Trumpeter” as a musical pageant in September (106). The performance contained twenty tableaux-vivants, involving “150 actors, dancers, and chorus members of the Workman’s Circle, Brookwood Labor College, and several unions including the Pullman porters in the ILGWU pageant” (106). Daniel Katz emphasizes that “The choice of Whitman’s poem allowed Cohn to express a militant and iconoclastic message of racial and gender inclusion” (106). As a reporter in New Orleans, Whitman witnessed the consequences of chattel slavery, which motivated him to establish the *Brooklyn Freeman*, the abolitionist newspaper, in 1848 (106). “The Mystic Trumpeter” resonates with Whitman’s antislavery convictions and a call for an organized action against social injustice (106-107).² The poem helped Cohn establish a common ground with the radical members of the organization. Tableaux vivants emphasized the importance of equality and solidarity, inviting the audience to take action against racism and patriarchy.

Despite the fact that other performance genres surpassed the popularity of tableaux, living pictures have continued to live through circus performances. From time to time, circus artists pose as “gilded” or “whitened” statues, but such performances are rarely based on famous paintings or sculptures and are usually invented (McCullough 144). In the twentieth- and twenty-first century theaters, tableaux have rarely been staged independently, but it is worth mentioning

a few of such unique cases. Most of the summers since 1932, Laguna Beach, California, has hosted a yearly “Festival of Arts and Pageant of the Masters” (145). The event engages “some five hundred volunteer models and backstage workers,” displaying scenes from paintings and sculptures (145). McCullough claims that “The works of art are represented with extreme fidelity, and audiences are able to compare the tableaux to large, full-color photographs of the originals, published in the Pageant’s *Official Souvenir Program*” (145). The participants pay as much attention to the art of modeling, scenography, clothing, and make-up as their predecessors did in the 1800s (145). The most remarkable recent tableaux event was Marina Abramovic’s silent performance entitled “The Artist is Present” and staged in the Museum of Modern Art in New York City from March 10 to May 31, 2010. Abramovic had silent sitting sessions at the table, and the spectators were encouraged to sit opposite her and establish an eye contact with her. By being silent, pensive, and focused on her inner self, Abramovic made the individuals sitting opposite her cry. Abramovic did not pose as a figure from a painting or a sculpture, but as an artist capable of eliciting a certain response from an audience through her superb performance. The purpose of Abramovic’s tableaux was to demonstrate the power of artistry.

Evidently, living pictures do appear from time to time in the contemporary performance art, but the fact is that the nineteenth-century tableaux were overcome by the appearance of the mesmerizing new medium—the silent film. Eadweard J. Muybridge’s “still photography of horses in motion,” which appeared in 1877, “two years after Alexander Graham Bell’s invention of the telephone,” announced the beginning of artistic experimentations with moving pictures (Everson 17). Thomas Edison started his exploration of this new genre in 1887, “two years after Friese-Green had begun his experimental work in Great Britain” (18). In 1889, Edison’s Kinetograph and Kinetoscope were ready for public display and use (18). Everson points out that

“He [Edison] was able to shoot movies and then show them on a combined projection-viewing machine, which limited viewing to a single person on a peep-show basis” (18). On April 23, 1896, Koster and Bial’s Music Hall in New York City projected short moving pictures on the large screen, opening the path for the early twentieth-century cinema craze (19).³

Many artists experimented with the direction of moving pictures, but Edwin S. Porter and David Wark Griffith were the most influential directors in the initial stages of this genre’s development (Everson 30). Both Porter and Griffith worked for film companies. Porter worked for Edison, whereas Griffith worked for the Biograph (30).⁴ These two companies were the most influential ones in the period before 1912, the year in which movie-makers shifted their focus from early narrative films towards feature-length films (31). Both of the companies based their films on sequences of tableaux vivants, though they had different approaches to the transmission of this theatrical genre to the new medium.

The Edison script resembled a series of tableaux shown on the screen. William K. Everson explains that “An Edison ‘script’—and they were all uniform—consisted of two or three letter-size sheets of paper, broken down into shots, each of which was given a line or two (at most) of description” (32). The difficult parts were the transmission of the initial “story” to the “script” on which the directors had to base the film as well as the directors’ inadequate “imagination” (32). The staff who worked on the conversion of the story into the script assumed that if they were able to grasp the meaning of the plot through the script, then the “shot breakdown” would undoubtedly convey the text’s messages to an audience (32). The Edison scripts contained “extras and bit players” in order to enrich “the narrative” and not to establish a certain “atmosphere or a sense of casual reality” (32-33). In such films, unexpected characters all of a sudden appeared in the final scenes, showing their confused faces to the already confused

spectatorship (33). The plot of the film was “telegraphed” through the “titles” that announced each scene, which even more reduced the feeling of expectancy (32). In Everson’s words: “The lack of an editorial structure caused the films simply to end, when they had run their last scene, rather than build to a climax” (33). The early Edisonian silent film suffered from the simple “projection” of tableaux on the screen without the necessary transitioning between the scenes, the enrichment of characters, or the addition of special effects.

“Tableaux-like” scripts were typical of Porter’s work, whereas Griffith paid more attention to the logical ordering of scenes through the use of special effects in order to establish a sense of the setting as well as to the development of the characters in order to avoid one-dimensionality (Everson 37, 32). Porter’s production of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, for instance, was a collection of representative scenes from the script without any links between them (37). He assumed that the audience would be familiar with the plot since Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel was very popular. Porter’s *Life of an American Policeman* (1905) was even more incoherent, and “later editions of the film were able to rearrange its scenes quite drastically without in any way harming its continuity!” (37). Unlike Porter, Griffith tried to avoid the pitfalls and dangers of the genre’s emphasis on the visual. Before Griffith joined the Biograph in 1908, this company’s films had been similar to those of Edison (41). However, Griffith’s gift for characterization and utilization of lighting made the Biograph films outstanding. The period between 1912 and 1915 was the time when very few silent films were made, but Griffith’s *Judith of Bethulia* (1913) is often considered the best film of the period (54, 72).⁵ Owing to Griffith’s popularity, *Judith* has been mischaracterized as his first feature-film or as the longest film up to that point, though it does not deserve such glorifications (72). It is a four-reeler, and it runs for an hour, but its structure is loose, partly because Griffith did not have an adequate financial support for the film and partly

because he did not aim at making a feature film (72, 73). In Everson's words: "Best of all is the acting—the dignified underplaying of Henry B. Walthall as Holofernes and the rich, often subtle, always passionate performance of Blanche Sweet" (74). The effectiveness of Walthall's and Sweet's performances comes from their ability to convey emotions through facial expressions, gestures, and movements. With the production of Griffith's *The Birth of the Nation* (1915), the Biograph gained a new filming style, which motivated others to adopt it. The "innovative cutting techniques" that Griffith promoted motivated "directors who had hitherto kept their cameras nailed to the floor and had rarely broken up scenes into successions of long, medium, and close shots" to acquire Griffith's tricks (5). This is the reason why films produced between 1916 and 1919 "really *moved*" (5, his italics). Griffith made a great impact on the status of the Biograph and the further development of the silent film.

Griffith's *The Birth of the Nation* initiated the new moving picture era. The post-1915 period was the time when "the feature-length film (of five reels or more)" managed to surpass "the two-reeler," the dominant genre in movie theaters, changing the course of both "the art" and "the economics of film" (Everson 54). *The Birth of the Nation* is a twelve-reeler, almost three hours long (79). The film is divided into two parts, and it depicts the situation leading to the Civil War, the war itself, and the aftermath of the war, particularly the emancipation of Southern African Americans and the maltreatment imposed on them by Northern bankers and both Northern and Southern politicians. The second part of the film glorifies the early KKK, which marked the film as racist and smeared Griffith's reputation (79-81).⁶ After *The Birth of the Nation*, directors were drawn to feature films, and the 1920s witnessed a new trend in the moving picture production. In Everson's words: "With the lessened use of the moving camera and of editing rhythms, the films of the early twenties concentrated more on beauty of camerawork and

lighting—a beauty enhanced by the skilled utilization of tints and tones and by the increased and soon perfected use of gauzes, filters, and glass shots” (10). The camerawork was the directors’ primary focus, and special effects became a necessary ingredient of a popular feature film. With the appearance of the sound film in 1929, moving pictures lost their visual perfection. The emphasis on the visual simultaneously made the silent film unique and led to its disappearance. The silent film “pampered the vanity of stars who could monopolize the screen in long-held filtered close-ups, and it resulted in a plethora of theatrical scenes in which prolonged exchanges of dialogue (via subtitles) were played out against meticulously lit sets, usually in medium or long shot, as on a stage, and in which even action and spectacle were often presented as a series of tableaux” (Everson 11). Apparently, the visual communication of tableaux artists with their audiences had a great influence on the early silent film directors’ approach to the script and to the art of acting on the screen.

Owing to the early feature films’ visual perfection, the 1920s have been labeled a decade of the most remarkable classics. F. W. Murnau’s *Sunrise*, Erich von Stroheim’s *Greed*, King Vidor’s *The Big Parade* and *The Crowd*, Herbert Brenon’s *A Kiss for Cinderella*, Griffith’s *Isn’t Life Wonderful?* and *Orphans of the Storm*, John Ford’s *The Iron Horse* and *Four Sons*, Frank Borzage’s *Seventh Heaven* are some of the most respected features in the American movie production (Everson 11). Furthermore, comic films with Buster Keaton, Charles Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, Harry Langdon, and Laurel and Hardy are among the most successful examples of the genre (11). Feature films with Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, and William S. Hart are recognized for the outstanding performances of these stars (11). The silent feature film of the 1920s was a source of enticement to audiences, owing to both its technical brilliance and the stars’ superb acting.

Silent moving pictures offered a lot to Americans, as both an entertainment and a business. June 19, 1905 was the day when the “modern” cinema craze officially began (Ross 16). On the warm summer evening, Harry Davis, a famous vaudeville house owner, and his brother-in-law John P. Harris presented their movie theater to the Pittsburgh audiences (16). Steven J. Ross points out that their “Nickelodeon, whose name combined the slang word for the cost of admission (nickel) with the Greek word for theater (odeon), was little more than a remodeled storeroom fitted up with a ‘white linen sheet, some [ninety-six] opera chairs, a crude phonograph, a lot of stucco, burlap and paint, and a myriad of incandescent light’ ” (16). The positive public response to this event incited the openings of numerous nickelodeons all over the country. Ross explains that “By 1913, every community with a population of five thousand had at least one movie theater and most averaged four” (16). Cities, towns, and villages had nickelodeons, and this new business attracted new immigrants, eager to prosper in their new country (16). The newcomers were the most active movie-theater-goers. By watching moving pictures, they learned how to speak English and form a relationship with the culture of the United States. Although movie theaters attracted a great number of immigrants, these venues were initially located in richer quarters of cities, and the immigrants, who mostly inhabited ghettos, eagerly went to these areas for their favorite entertainment until the nickelodeons appeared in their quarters (18). Since the nickelodeon business could be based on very little money and no male authority, many ambitious women decided to start their own movie enterprises (18).⁷ Nickelodeons brought a lot of money to their owners, and many entrepreneurs sold their shops in order to get involved with moving pictures.

As the century opened, institutions other than cinemas started showing films as well. Ross points out that “Thousands of churches, schools, unions, factories, settlement houses, and

numerous voluntary associations screened carefully selected movies as a means of bolstering attendance” (19). According to a congregational minister whose church showed films, such a practice was particularly beneficial for “reaching out to interest those who remain away from religious service and attend the movies on Sunday” (qtd. in Ross 19). Moving pictures had both educational and entertaining roles, but even though new immigrants did not blindly absorb whatever they noticed in films, it was clear that directors and actors presented certain trends as commonly American. Ross convincingly argues that “The desire to read intertitles (dialogue cards that were flashed on the screen), which were often translated by a *spieler* hired by the exhibitor, may have encouraged many immigrants to achieve English-language skills and prepare them to participate in political life” (21, his italics). Films were an ideologically-coded entertainment that influenced the immigrants’ opinions on “what it meant to belong to a particular class, and whether strikes, labor unions, and radical organizations were needed in their new land” (21). This was a reason why “reformers, radicals, and conservatives” were sometimes thrilled and sometimes scared by the possibilities of films (21).

Jewish immigrants found pleasure and a site for cultural contribution in the silent film. They frequented nickelodeons, opened their own movie theaters, and played in moving pictures. However, it is worth noting that Jewish audiences were initially drawn to combinations of both vaudeville and silent films, shown in Jewish music halls. The Yiddish vaudeville, a variety show that arose from the American vaudeville, helped Jews get accustomed to their new society. Furthermore, when performed between the moving pictures, the Yiddish vaudeville helped Jews channel their own assimilation to the American mainstream, propagated through the early cinema. Both the Yiddish vaudeville and the silent film alleviated Jewish adaptation to the new culture, connecting them with other Americans.

The Yiddish Theater, the Yiddish Vaudeville, and the Jewish American Silent Film

As I have explained in the introduction, in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, a great number of educated Russian Jews made homes in the United States, pouring their energy into important cultural projects, such as socialist newspapers, labor movement, and Yiddish literature and theater (Warnke 23-24). Though the Yiddish theater had existed before their arrival to the United States, Russian Jewish intellectuals were not pleased with the low taste of this theater and its audiences (24). The modern secular Yiddish theater grew from two important sources: the folk Purim plays, based on the Bible's parable of Esther and similar stories retold during the festivities, as well as the popular Maskilic or Enlightenment genre from the 1850s, which was a combination of sequences of songs and funny sketches, performed in cellars, breweries, and other places for relaxation and entertainment (24). There were many Yiddish theaters in late nineteenth-century New York City. Audiences in these theaters consisted of working class Jews, who enjoyed seeing the spectacular, the emotional, the supernatural, and the comical on the stage (25). As Nina Warnke points out, "This audience delighted in stories about Jewish heroism and in the spectacular and sensational: the bright and lavish costumes, the big orchestras and choruses, the titillation of men in tights and women in raised skirts, and such special stage effects as live animals or thunder and lightning on stage" (25).⁸ These performances appealed to the spectators through the visual and other special effects.

The Jewish intellectuals spoke publicly against such spectacular tendencies of the Yiddish theater. Getsl Zelikovitsh, "the editor of the pro-labor weekly *Folksadvokat* (*People's Advocate*) from 1888 to 1889," criticized the Yiddish theater, since through its low plays it contaminated the "uneducated" working class audience (Warnke 26). Israel Barsky, "an avid labor organizer who had been instrumental in launching a tailors' union in 1888," believed that

the Yiddish theater should be transformed into a people's theater, or a vehicle for the propagation of the labor movement (26). He recommended the establishment of the "Dramatisher untershtitsungs fareyn" (Dramatic Benevolent Society), "to which each member would contribute a monthly fee and have to sell a dollar's worth of tickets per performance" (26). The money would be given to the families of the "deceased" and to the "unemployed" (26). When journalist Jacob Gordin settled in New York in 1891, he became a member of the socialist *Arbayter tsaytung* and got interested in the Yiddish theater (27). As Warnke points out, "Like the proponents of Russia's people's theater movement, who organized troupes to bring literary plays to the peasants, Gordin placed particular hope in the potential of the stage to serve as a tool to enlighten, educate, and civilize the broad masses of the population" (27). Gordin soon became known as the "reformer of the Yiddish stage" (27).⁹ He insisted on the thematic seriousness of plays, and many of his controversial and progressive pieces attracted both intelligentsia and the working class (33). Under Gordin's leadership, the Yiddish theater was a site for the promotion of various progressive causes (33). He often scrutinized the gender inequity, attacking male dominance in marriage and family, and some of his female protagonists murdered their abusive partners in the final scenes (33). However, he was not the backward newspapers' hero. Under the attack of conservatives and with the growing popularity of vaudeville, Gordin's popularity dispersed after 1905 (34).¹⁰

With the appearance of music halls and nickelodeons in 1905, the Yiddish theater lost its appeal to Jewish immigrants (Warnke 35). Instead of going to the Yiddish theater, Jews developed a passion for the entertainment offered by the Yiddish music halls. In Warnke's words, "By 1906, there were about twelve Yiddish music halls on the Lower East Side and two in Brooklyn" (35). When moving pictures appeared, music hall owners started offering

combinations of vaudeville and silent films. Towards the end of 1907, Yiddish music halls incorporated moving pictures in their repertoires (35).¹¹ Both the vaudeville and the silent film were the most appreciated entertainment of the new immigrants.

The Yiddish vaudeville was a performance genre grounded in American culture and similar in its structure and tone to the American vaudeville. Judith Thissen explains that “The history of Yiddish vaudeville goes back to the beginning of the century when some East Side saloonkeepers began to offer ‘free’ variety shows” (“Charlie Steiner’s Houston Hippodrome” 44). In the early days of the vaudeville, performances were staged in “the backrooms” of the “saloons,” where “clients were required to order a glass of beer for five cents” (44). The Jewish intelligentsia was convinced that this form of entertainment, so popular with the newcomers, was “the wrong” way of assimilation to the new country (44). They believed that the Yiddish vaudeville had a detrimental influence on the immigrants, and that it could affect Jewish families, marriages, and the unity of their ethnic communities (44). Using the *Forward* as a means of reaching out, Abraham Cahan “strongly condemned the coarse language, low-life topics, double meanings, and provocative dances that were common features of the Yiddish vaudeville repertoire” (44). In spite of Cahan’s chastisement, the Yiddish vaudeville continued to mesmerize the immigrants, and the Yiddish music halls were constantly overcrowded (44).

As the Yiddish vaudeville attained a remarkable level of popularity, Cahan changed his approach to it. Thissen convincingly argues that “In an attempt to protect the status quo, Cahan and his staff had decided to incorporate—or rather ‘assimilate’—Yiddish vaudeville into the mainstream of Jewish culture” (“Film and Vaudeville” 53). The December 1909 issue of the *Forward* moved from the previous diatribe against the Yiddish vaudeville as the inappropriate means of acculturation to the approval of it as a genre reflecting the *yiddishkayt*, or the Jewish

feeling (53). Thissen eloquently explains that “Programmed in between moving pictures, Yiddish vaudeville shaped the reception of the films that were shown, thus reducing the impact of the growing Americanizing tendency of the silver screen” (56). The Yiddish vaudeville stimulated the Jewish immigrants’ sense of “belonging” to their ethnic culture and the sense of “community” in the United States (56). The Jewish working class did not oppose the moving pictures trend, which Cahan and similar socialist intellectuals considered a negative influence on the new immigrants, but instead embraced it, adding the Yiddish vaudeville to their list of their favorite entertainments. By approving of the Yiddish vaudeville sessions performed between moving picture shows, the immigrants wanted to channel their own adaptation to American soil (56). Thissen effectively concludes that “What emerged from this dynamic dialogue was a heterogeneous entertainment product that remained flexible enough to serve multiple, often contradictory purposes: providing the basis for ethnic solidarity among audience members and, at the same time, inviting them to participate in the American dream of the movies” (56). However, the prosperous nickelodeon businesses started affecting the music halls. Warnke emphasizes that “By the summer of 1908, nickelodeons had also pushed the Yiddish music halls almost entirely out of the market” (35). The new entertainment business was in its full speed.

One of the most successful early Jewish entrepreneurs in the moving pictures entertainment was Charles Steiner, the founder and owner of the Houston Hippodrome movie theater in New York City (Thissen, “Charlie Steiner’s Houston Hippodrome” 27). What contributed to the prosperity of the Houston Hippodrome was Steiner and his partner Minsky’s engagement of “famous Yiddish sketch artists and well-known Yiddish stock companies” (39).¹² By employing the celebrated Yiddish entertainers, the Houston Hippodrome attracted Jews who lived outside New York to attend the shows. This made the theater stand out from the numerous

nickelodeons on the East Side (39). As Thissen explains: “During the 1909-10 season, a program in the Houston Hippodrome could contain, besides moving pictures, comic sketches, dramatic scenes, one-act plays, songs, and dances as well as jugglers, acrobats, or an animal act” (41). In the first months of 1911, the Houston Hippodrome’s repertoire contained “two new three-act productions every week” (41). The employed stock companies staged such productions “with six to eight actors,” usually borrowing the plots from the Yiddish music halls (41). The music halls regularly borrowed the plays from Broadway or Yiddish theaters. According to Thissen: “Titles such as *Lost in New York*, *Kain and Abel*, *The Jewish Queen*, and *On the Grave of Her Child* highlighted the melodramatic nature of the three-act plays or stressed the specific Jewish quality of the subject matter” (41). Very often, the plot of these plays revolved around the problems that Jews had in their new country, such as family divisions, lack of money, conflicts of values, and the like (41). In the 1912-1913 season, “four-act plays” and the “weekly feature film” became regular attractions in the theater’s repertoire (42).

Once the nickelodeon appeared, the vaudeville houses lost their customers. Thissen explains that “In 1907, the Grand Street Music Hall, Agid’s Clinton Vaudeville House, and many more Yiddish vaudeville theaters were turned into moving picture houses” (“Charlie Steiner’s Houston Hippodrome” 44-45). The *Forward* claimed that “only four Yiddish music halls” in the New York area managed to resist the triumph of the nickelodeon and continue with their own entertainment (45). In a few years, a miracle happened. According to Thissen: “During the 1909-10 season, all former music halls on the East Side, uptown, and in Brooklyn switched back to full-fledged Yiddish vaudeville shows” (45). The Grand Street Music Hall invited the public to enjoy again the “first-class Yiddish variety,” claiming that the moving pictures were out of vogue (45). The re-established popularity of the Yiddish vaudeville was, according to the Grand

Street Music Hall's placard, the result of the contest between this Jewish entertainment and the American moving pictures. However, the public witnessed a more concrete war in September of 1909, when Marcus Loew and Adolph Zukor bought the lease for Jacob P. Adler's Grand Theater and converted it "into a moving picture and English-language vaudeville theater" (45). Despite the fact that both Loew and Zukor were Jews, just like Adler, "the king of the American Yiddish stage," the spin in the articles published by Jewish presses was "that the Grand had become a goyish (Gentile) moving picture house owned by a 'million-dollar trust of American theater managers,' and as such, it became a symbol for the loss of *Yiddishkayt* in the New World" (45).

Loew and Zukor's enterprise was of a twofold significance: it convinced theater owners in the area that bills offering both moving pictures and vaudeville attracted "patrons," and it proved Jewish intelligentsia that the new immigrants were ready to embrace an "institution" more embedded in their everyday culture than "the 'legitimate' Yiddish theater" (Thissen, "Charlie Steiner's Houston Hippodrome" 46). The Yiddish vaudeville was a new source of the immigrants' sense of belonging to their ethnic culture. Thissen emphasizes that "In response to cinema's imminent monopolization of the Jewish immigrant market, the *Forward* began to construct Yiddish vaudeville as a distinctively Jewish immigrant tradition, by emphasizing its *Yiddishkayt* while obscuring its American roots" (46). Even though in September of 1910 "the leading Yiddish daily" began offering the music halls' repertoires in its weekly section on theater, Cahan kept chastising the vaudeville producers and participants whenever the script was vulgar and word choice inappropriate (46). Thissen points out that "in these attacks, the Yiddish music halls were dissociated from their American counterpart, whereas beforehand, the *Forward's* negative apprehension of the Yiddish music halls was rooted in the 'obvious

affiliation with its model, the American music halls' ” (46). Cahan's attitude shifted significantly.

The Jewish intelligentsia's initial reaction to the Yiddish vaudeville arose from their conviction that, as Warnke explains, “English-language music halls and concert saloons in America” were “centers of vulgarity and vice” (qtd. in Thissen, “Charlie Steiner's Houston Hippodrome” 46). However, after Loew and Zukor's decision to change the repertoire of Adler's vaudeville theater, Cahan “considered the prevailing American music halls a morally correct form of entertainment, and they were held up as a model for the Yiddish music halls” (qtd. in Thissen, “Charlie Steiner's Houston Hippodrome” 46). The *Forward* continued to criticize the staff of People's Music Hall and Grand Street Music Hall, but it did change the initial approach to the Yiddish vaudeville's profanity. At this point, Cahan considered such profanity a characteristic of the Jewish music halls and not of the American ones. In fact, he started recommending that the vaudeville producers, performers, and audiences look up to the American vaudeville houses. Thissen explains that “Meanwhile, prostitution, white slavery, and loose sexual behavior—vices of urban America that had been associated with the early Yiddish music hall business—became more and more linked with the moving picture houses on the East Side” (47). The nickelodeons were labeled the new source of social profanity.

Feature films eventually defeated the Yiddish vaudeville. In 1914, Charlie Steiner himself opened a movie theater on the East Side. His movie theater “had a sloped floor, two projectors, and music provided by an orchestra” (Thissen, “Charlie Steiner's Houston Hippodrome” 47). His nickelodeon's name, “the American Movies Theater,” reflected his views of the future of Jewish leisure-time activities in the United States (47). Historian Henry Feingold convincingly argues that American popular culture “increasingly acted as the cultural cement for

all segments of American Jewry” (qtd. in Merwin 6). Through popular culture Jews found a middle ground with “other Americans” (Merwin 6). As the definition of entertainment changed over time, the definition of Jewishness changed as well (8). Referencing Kate Simon’s memoir that describes her coming of age in the Bronx, Ted Merwin claims that “Saturday became a day for many Jews to go not to synagogue but to the cinema” (8). The meaning of the Sabbath has changed from a strictly religious day of the week to a day associated with entertainment (8). Going to the movies became a new Saturday ritual for Jews, and such a ritual bolstered the Jewish “production” as well as “consumption” of the presentations of “the Jew” in popular culture (8-9).¹³

Jewish immigrants with different occupations decided to lease buildings in ghettos and start nickelodeon businesses in them. The famous twentieth-century moguls Adolph Zukor and Marcus Loew, who had been “furriers,” William Fox and Harry Warner, who had been “clothiers,” and Lewis Selznick, who had been “a jeweler,” decided to abandon their businesses and open nickelodeons (Ross 18). Some of them decided to found their own nickelodeon “chains” (8). In 1910, Loew had twelve and Fox fourteen nickelodeons in New York City (8). Those who were not as successful as Loew and Fox realized that joining “distribution and production networks” was a great opportunity (8). According to Lester D. Friedman: “In 1917 Paramount (the leading distributor), Famous Players-Lasky (the major producer), and twelve lesser producers merged under Adolph Zukor” (8). Zukor had distributed “some twenty-nine features to over 5,000 theaters” by the beginning of 1918 (8). Having realized the advantages of owning his own theaters and showing his own products in them, Zukor decided to expand his business by purchasing more theaters. He had owned 300 theaters by the beginning of 1921 (8). Goldwyn Pictures and Warner Brothers decided to follow Zukor’s example and purchased a

great number of theaters (8). Friedman points out that “By the mid-twenties, the once ramshackle companies of aggressive Jewish immigrants had evolved into vast entertainment empires that survived until the 1950s” (8). These prosperous Jewish enterprises attracted a great number of skillful Jewish bankers. Goldman and Sachs joined Warner Brothers, Kuhn and Loeb joined Paramount, and S. W. Strauss joined Universal (8). Jewish artists, the stars of both vaudeville and film, began to work for such studios. Al Jolson, George Gershwin, George Jessel, the Marx Brothers, Eddie Cantor, Sophie Tucker, Irving Berlin, Fannie Brice, Ben Blue, Jack Benny, George Burns, George Sidney, Milton Berle, Ted Lewis, Bennie Fields, and many others were attracted to the businesses of the moguls (8). The film industry was always interested in talented individuals, and many new immigrants found jobs in these studios (8-9).¹⁴

Though both Jews and the silent film were present in the United States in the late 1800s, it was in the early 1900s that Jews were more and more associated with the film industry (Friedman 9). The successes of the moguls and artists of Jewish ancestry made the connection between the film and the Jews very conspicuous. Furthermore, directors often made films that dealt with the lives of Jewish people. As Friedman notes, “Between 1900 and 1929 alone, approximately 230 films featured clearly discernible Jewish characters” (9). This number is much higher than the numbers of films portraying individuals from other ethnic groups (9). As the forthcoming analysis demonstrates, silent films with Jewish themes can be grouped in several categories, and all of them portray different aspects of Jewish life in the United States or abroad.

In the early silent film, Jews are often cast as representatives of certain occupations. Jewish characters usually appear in “lower-class positions,” such as “pawnshop owners, clothing merchants, money brokers, sweatshop workers, peddlers, tailors, grocery store/delicatessen owners” (Friedman 10). Despite the fact that many Jews found jobs in the film industry, they

were not portrayed as movie-makers or performers on the screen (10). However, there are several films that portray Jews as social climbers or individuals with higher-class occupations. The protagonist of *The Song of Solomon* (1914) is a very accomplished “song plugger,” the Jewish father in *A Woodland Christmas in California* (1912) is a curios vendor, Jacob Levy in *The Missing Diamond* (1914) is a diamond vendor, and *Israel Levy in A Daughter of Israel* (1914) is an antiquarian (10). By presenting Jews as holders of different positions, these films reflected the increasing Jewish presence on American soil.

Many silent films portray well-known Jewish historical figures, teaching audiences about the glorious Jews and their accomplishments. The most remarkable historical figure in such films is the first British Jewish Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli (Friedman 10). There are three “unrelated” silent films that portray the career and life of Disraeli (1917, 1921, and 1929) (11-12). The films cast him as a good-natured individual and a long-sighted diplomat (12). Besides secular historical characters, silent films portray biblical characters as well (14). Some of the most frequent characters are Saul, Moses, Abraham, Cain, and Abel, David, Noah, Esther, Joseph, Samson, Bar Kochba, the Maccabees, Judith, and Elisha (14). Griffith’s *Judith* portrays Jews as meek and submissive, and the protagonist is the one who seduces her enemy, intoxicates him, decapitates him, and saves her nation from the conquest (15). All of these films present important scenes from Jewish history and mythology, informing the American public about the progress of such an old ethnic group.

Besides drawing inspiration from historical accounts, early directors often based their films with Jewish characters on classical literature. Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* and Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* were the most inspiring sources for such films (Friedman 16). These novels had “at least eleven adaptations” in the silent film period, and in addition to them, there

was *A Female Fagin* (1913), motivated by Dickens's novel (16). Though in most of the films from this category, the Jew is a perpetrator, in some of these films, Jews are cast as victims of prejudice towards Judaism (20). Films set in the United States present some of their Jewish characters as victims of racism, while films set abroad regularly present Jews as victims of narrow-minded, hateful politicians and rulers (20). Among the most representative films in this category are *The Yiddisher Cowboy* (1909, 1911), *Legally Dead* (1910), *The Embodied Thought* (1916), etc. Such films reveal to the spectators the strength of the anti-Semitic prejudice and its consequences.

Just as in the literature of the day, the Jew as a swindler and a cheater appears often in early films. He is usually an unscrupulous "businessman," who causes problems to Gentiles in various fields of life (Friedman 22). The Jew dominates and destabilizes romantic relationships, civic leadership, sports contests, and family reunions (22). Some of the most representative titles from this category are *Levy's Seven Daughters* (1915), *The New Fire Chief* (1912), *How Mosha Came Back* (1914), and *Levinsky's Holiday* (1913). In each of them, the Jew presents a threat to the Gentile dominance in society, community, or family.

The most popular films that feature Jews deal with forbidden love. In such films, Jewish youths want to marry non-Jews, which results in conflicts with different resolutions (Friedman 24). Some of the hits are *Faith of Her Fathers* (1915), *The Pawnbroker's Daughter* (1913), *The Jew's Christmas* (1913), and *None So Blind* (1923). Films that feature Jewish-Irish romances and marriages are more numerous than the ones that portray Jewish characters' love affairs with representatives of other ethnicities (28). Both the Jews and the Irish destabilized the Protestant mainstream through their religions—Judaism and Catholicism—which must have motivated directors to explore these two groups' relationships with each other in the New World. Besides,

the differences between “shanty” and “lace-curtain” Irish resemble the differences between the Germanic and Eastern European Jews: the first waves of these immigrants had already been settled by the time the second wave happened (28-29). Though reasons for this artistic occurrence are debatable, it is certain that “Hollywood from its earliest days happily paired the Jews and the Irish, sometimes with good humor and other times with slightly masked hostility” (29). According to these films, the safest path to American citizenship is through a marriage with a Catholic woman, through a business relationship with an Irishman, or through the adoption of a Christian baby (33). The most popular films are *Levy and Cohen—The Irish Comedians* (1903), *Cohen and Murphy* (1910), *Levi and McGuinness Running for Office* (1913), *Ireland and Israel* (1912), and *Abie’s Irish Rose* (1928). All of them present the interethnic marriage as a site for the experimentation with the citizenship, national identity, and values.

Since the history of Jews in the United States is the history of immigration, struggle, and adaptation, many films on American Jews take place in ghettos—mostly on the Lower East Side in New York City or in the Jewish quarter in Chicago (34). Such films trace the protagonist’s destruction in poverty, her/his escape from it, growth, and social ascent, as well as romantic relationships in the ghetto (34). The most representative examples are *Blood of the Poor* (1911), *A Child of the Ghetto* (1910), *Breaking Home Ties* (1922), *Hungry Hearts* (1922), and *Rose of the Tenements* (1926). The ghetto is portrayed as a space of Jewish interactions with each other, as their ethnic neighborhood and community in the new country, as well as a source of pauperism and constraints imposed by the objective living conditions and the elderly (34-42). The solution that young Jews often see for themselves is leaving the ghetto and struggling for successes and individual freedoms from the spaces beyond the ghetto.

Besides the silent films with serious themes, the early directors often made comedies. As Friedman points out, “Silent comedy was a genre of continuing characters—from Chaplin’s tramp to Ben, the Mack Sennett mutt—and Jews had their share of comedy series” (Friedman 42). Comedy series were particularly popular, and moguls produced many of them: “In addition to ‘The Cohens and The Kellys’ series with Charlie Murphy and George Sidney (1926, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1932, 1933), there were six 1914 ‘Izzy’ films with Max Davidson, five 1913 ‘Mike and Jake’ films with Max Asher and Harry MacCoy, and three Potash and Perlmutter films with Alexander Carr and George Sidney” (42-43). In the majority of these films, Jews are cast as funny characters, but in some of the features, careless humor slips into a form of racism (43-44). *A Bad Day for Levinsky* (1909), for instance, was criticized because “the malicious feelings expressed in the fun that one cannot help but believe holds up a certain people to scorn” (qtd. in Friedman 44). The Motion Picture World was disconcerted with *Oh, Sammy* (1913) and labeled it “a farce of grotesque Jewish noses” (qtd. in Friedman 44). Still, there are many films in this category that portray Jewish characters as humorous in a kind and benevolent way, and not out of hatred or prejudice. Films that portray the encounters of the immigrant families with their new environment are often full of humorous situations. Such films are *Cohen’s Dream of Coney Island* (1909), *Levi and Family at Coney Island* (1910), *Cohen at Coney Island* (1909), *Levitsky Sees the Parade* (1909), etc.

Though all of the aforementioned film categories have complex approaches to Jewishness, there are a number of films that openly deal with the theme of anti-Semitism. Two films from the silent period, *The Woman He Loved* (1927) and *Welcome Stranger* (1924), portray the struggle of Jewish individuals in their new society, which shuts its doors for them just because of their ethnicity (Friedman 45). In both of these films, after the Jewish characters prove

their good qualities, they are admitted to the Christian circles (45). In most of the cases, though, directors place the exploration of anti-Semitism in foreign countries (45-46). Russia is commonly the locale for anti-Semitic plots, and the pogroms of Russian Jews are the central theme of such films (45-46).

As Friedman convincingly argues, the directors' decisions to place anti-Semitic plots in foreign countries can be explained in a few ways. It is possible that early directors had stereotyped views of foreign societies and considered anti-Semitism more pertinent to other countries than the United States (46). It is also possible that Jewish moguls wanted to encourage Jewish immigration to the United States and thus insisted on portraying this society as safer than the others (46). If newcomers had to experience pauperism in the early stages of their acculturation, at least they did not have to be afraid of pogroms, happening all over Eastern Europe (46). Finally and most likely, though early directors and moguls experienced themselves anti-Semitism in the United States, they chose to transplant it somewhere else in order to avoid the dangers of attacking it bluntly in the United States and because the aesthetic limitations of the genre and inadequate budget for filming did not allow them to portray these issues fully and convincingly (46). Films portraying social injustice emerged in the 1930s, whereas films exposing American anti-Semitism emerged in the 1940s (46). The sound film enabled directors to depict the full breadth of social problems, targeting both the visual and the auditory abilities of their audiences. Furthermore, just as authors and directors in the 1950s used "Westerns and science-fiction films" to expose the "racism" and nationalism of the McCarthy era, moguls of the silent period criticized anti-Semitism from afar (46). Though these filmmakers did not attack American anti-Semitism explicitly, they did open a path for the forthcoming generations' exploration and exposure of this prejudice.

On the screen, Jewish actresses found their own ways of influencing the public perceptions of the Jewish woman, contributing to progressive American causes, and building the Jewish American popular culture. One of the most influential figures in the 1910s was Theda Bara (Theodosia Goodman, 1885-1955). Through her famous vamp roles, in which Bara was cast as a woman with dark hair and eyebrows, exotic clothes, and glittering jewelry, she became a symbol of uninhabited female sexuality. After Bara appeared as “The Vampire” in the Fox Film Corporation’s *A Fool There Was* (1914), at the end of 1915, this company proudly claimed that 162 newborn girls were named Theda since the release of the film (Hain 295). Furthermore, the corporation emphasized that all these babies were “white!” (qtd. in Hain 295). This fact highlights Fox’s ideological agenda in relation to Bara’s public image. Fox made 39 Bara films from 1915 to 1919 (295). In most of them Bara was “a calculating, manipulative woman whose wiles were frequently connected with her ambiguously ethnic appearance, exploited throughout her film career as Arab, Egyptian, Russian, Polynesian, Italian, Spanish, Mexican, or other ‘races’ that stood in contrast to the Anglo-Saxon heritage valorized at the time as the stock of ‘true’ Americans” (295). Through her vamp roles, Bara was cast as a dangerous femme fatale, who owing to her seductiveness and supernatural powers, outsmarts and debilitates white men. In the prime of the second wave of Jewish immigration and of eugenic and nativist organizations described in the introduction, Bara embodied the anxieties of the dominant social order, simultaneously propagating the female empowerment and resistance to patriarchal norms, just like the expanding American New Woman movement. While the New Woman organization often used the white woman as an icon in their campaigns, through her vamp films Bara introduced the image of a dark-complexioned woman fighting for progressive feminist causes.

The crucial contribution to the establishment of Bara's public image was William Fox's advertising even before the film was released (Hain 295). His press agents Johny Goldfrap and Al Selig helped him sell the image of Bara as a unique public woman through a great number of pictures and press releases (296). As Mark Hain explains: "A major part of that publicity, and of Bara's celebrity, depended on constructing her as an exotic curiosity—an erotic, Orientalist fantasy that differed significantly from the predominant representation of women in 1910s films, such as the heroines of D.W. Griffith's features, unquestionably 'pure' both sexually and racially" (295). Fox apparently envisioned Bara as an extraordinary, desirable, and voluptuous woman, who could bring a radically different female presence to the screen. As Hain explains: "Fox billed Bara as 'The Wickedest Woman in the World,' and much of the publicity focused on the romantic mystique of her ethnic heritage, describing her as having been 'born in the shadow of the sphinx,' the daughter of, variably, a French or Italian artist father and an Arabian dancing girl, an Egyptian princess, or a French actress mother" (296). Bara was cast as an exotic other, not just through her long black hair, shiny jewelry, extravagant dresses, and enchanting eyes with a lot of make-up, but also through "the unequivocal sexual allure of the 'vamp,' the predatory phallic woman who snares men and exploits their weaknesses" (296). Even though many were perplexed by her public image and considered it an attack on the dominant, Christian and patriarchal, social order, women, especially the working-class and immigrant women, found her an embodiment of resistance to male dominance and of sexual freedom (296-304).

As a vamp, Bara skillfully manipulated male sexual desires in order to feminize men. Being a vamp, she could not reproduce, which made her relatively approvable by society (300). It is not her uninhibited eroticism that bothered the dominant social order, but her threatening gender (300). Bara embodied many of the characteristics associated with the New Woman. As

Hain points out: “Not only was she distinctly removed from the roles of wife and mother, she also possessed characteristics that while unseemly in women, were admirable in men: self-control, self-interest, economic independence, deviousness, motivation, aggression, emotional insensitivity, invulnerability to romantic love, and above all, power” (300). As a vamp, Bara could be both a man and a woman. She could use men sexually and debilitate them, but she did that in order to destabilize the dominant social order and not out of lust (300). Her vamp agenda was geared towards the emancipation of women.

The early cinema significantly influenced the working-class and immigrant women. Drawing from Elizabeth and Stuart Ewen, Hain points out that the early silent film had an ideological role directed at Jewish women as well: it portrayed the challenges of the life in the tenements, simultaneously presenting the women’s goals and cravings as well as offering them suggestions for future lives (301-302). In a way, the femininity propagated through the early cinema annulled the femininity of the European Jewish heritage (301). Furthermore, the early cinema presented certain political organizations as worth joining, motivating immigrant women to become activists (301). According to the Ewens: “The concerns and experiences of immigrant daughters [...] led in some cases to active participation in the trade-union movement, political life, and involvement in the suffrage movement” (qtd. in Hain 301). Bara herself claimed that she had an influence on the women’s approach to feminism. According to an interview with Bara, published in the *Fox Exhibitor Bulletin* in 1917: “Women are my greatest fans because they see in my vampire the impersonal vengeance of all their unavenged wrongs... they have lacked either the courage or will power to redress their grievances. Even downtrodden wives write me to this effect. I am in fact a feministe” (qtd. in Hain 302-303). Even though Bara was associated with lasciviousness and promiscuity, she was also a symbol of gender empowerment. As such,

she had a tremendous influence on working-class and immigrant women, who, as the introduction has pointed out, became active participants in various progressive organizations.

As demonstrated above, Jewish immigrants considered certain theatrical genres as well as the silent film great entertainments but also promising fields of work in which they could prove themselves, contribute to their new culture, form their own aesthetic community in American society, and become prosperous. Through the Yiddish theater, the Yiddish vaudeville, and the silent film, Jewish immigrants controlled the pace of their assimilation to the United States, came to terms with themselves, with the old, and with the new, and opened the door to those who wanted to connect with them and with the flourishing Jewish American popular culture. Apparently, the tableau vivant as an independent genre was not a common occurrence on the Jewish stage, but the favorite Jewish entertainment in the early 1900s—the silent film—was initially based on the series of tableaux projected on the screen. With the increasing speed of life in American cities, with the advent of modernism, and with the inclusion of the people from the cultural margins in the activities going on in the cultural center, the fascinating moving pictures surpassed the living pictures, inviting Jewish immigrants to participate in their production. As Theda Bara proves, Jewish actresses excelled on the screen, ardently propagating progressive feminist causes and inviting Jewish and other women to fight for their sexual and gender freedoms. At the same time when the silent film was spreading its influence over Jewish and other American communities, the new educational and entertainment genre was emerging—the Jewish American novel. Abraham Cahan, an adamant critic of the profanity of vaudevilles and moving pictures, was also the founding father of the Jewish American novel with the publication of his *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), an account of the fictional Jewish man's immigration, adaptation, and aging in the United States. However, for the purposes of this epilogue, I will look

into the novels of Anzia Yeziarska, published in the 1920s, several years after David Levinsky was introduced to American readerships. Yeziarska's immigrant novels delineate the scopes of Jewish women's acculturation in the United States, their search for independence and individuality, and their constantly altering yet constantly present connections with the Old World.

Anzia Yeziarska's Novels on Jewish Immigrant Women's Quests for Identity

Unlike the already discussed non-Jewish novelists, who portray Jewish identities through tableaux vivants in order to call for certain organized actions or in order to set examples for non-Jewish progress, Jewish novelists in general, and Yeziarska in particular, depict the new immigrants' social ascent through their fictional accounts of acculturation in the new country. Yeziarska describes the immigrant women's growth, struggle, and successes through their everyday conversations and encounters with others, through their reflections on their European heritage, through their honest and passionate love for their new country, and through their willingness to become American. In other words, having experienced the immigration and acculturation herself, Yeziarska does not find tableaux vivants or any other performance genre an adequate mode of portraying the immigrant women's identities. In her works, Jewish women's identities are constantly recreated through the collisions and mergences of the inner and the outer, the old and the new, the traditional and the secular. Yeziarska's most influential novels are *Salome of the Tenements* (1922), *Bread Givers* (1925), and *Arrogant Beggar* (1927). All of them address the issue of acculturation in different ways, offering different solutions to the adjustment problems their heroines encounter.

Sonya Vrunsky of Yeziarska's *Salome of the Tenements* makes every effort to escape the ghetto and secure herself a place in the mainstream culture through her marriage with Protestant philanthropist John Manning. In order to seduce Manning, Sonya paints her poor premises in the tenements, engages a Fifth Avenue tailor to refresh her clothes, and asks a manipulative pawnbroker to furnish her apartment. She is determined to adopt the style of a modern American woman in order to evade the poverty and constraints of the ghetto. Yeziarska portrays the initial stage of Sonya and Manning's romantic relationship as something based on complementarity and passion, but as the time passes, both of them realize that they are not capable of living up to each other's expectations. Sonya is particularly offended by Manning's insistence on manners pertinent to his social circles as well as on the appreciation of his family traditions, which affects Sonya's initial notions of assimilation. In her moment of transformation, after an impassioned argument with Manning, Sonya looks at her reflection in the mirror, posing herself a question and concluding: " 'I, married to that empty, stupid higher-up, that self-righteous cold fish that calls himself a man? Never would I let the ashes of such a bloodless name smother me' " (153). The novel ends with Sonya's return to the Lower East Side, where she is courted by her old acquaintance Jackie Solomon, who is a successful fashion designer now and calls himself Jacques Hollins. Sonya falls in love with him, and the novel ends with the couple going to Paris. Through her frustrating marriage with Manning, Sonya realizes that she is more connected to her Jewish identity than she has initially thought. Through her romance with Jackie/Jacques, a ghetto boy who has secularized and succeeded in society, Sonya overcomes the constraints of the ghetto life, simultaneously cherishing a connection with the Jewish community.

While Sonya negotiates her acculturation through romance and marriage, Sara Smolinsky of *Bread Givers* does so through her relationship with her Orthodox Jewish father. Sara resents

her authoritarian father, who believes in arranged marriages and male dominance in the family. She rebelliously exclaims: “ ‘I’m going to live my own life. Nobody can stop me. I’m not from the old country. I’m American!’ ” (138). In order to gain independence, Sara goes to school, becomes a teacher, and marries the Jewish American principal of her school, Hugo Selig, a man who craves a reconnection with his family’s abandoned European heritage. Hugo convinces Sara to forgive her father and ask him to move in with them, since in this way they will be able to reestablish a relationship with the Old World. The ending suggests the possibility of Sara’s coming to terms with her Jewishness through the reconnection with her father.

Unlike Sara, Adele Lindner of *Arrogant Beggar* wants to become a domestic servant in order to escape from the constraining traditions of the ghetto and ends up reconnecting with her Jewish identity through her friendship with Muhmenkeh, an old Jewish woman. When Adele abandons the tenements and moves into Mrs. Hellman’s hostel and school for domestic servants, she is slighted by the proprietress’s cold manners. After she leaves Mrs. Hellman, she accepts a job as a dishwasher at a restaurant on the Lower East Side, where her crucial transformation begins. Adele works with Muhmenkeh, and through their meals and conversations, the protagonist reestablishes the connection with her Jewish identity. She finds “a new wonder over the old street” (99), opens a café, and quickly manages to turn it into both a literary salon and a gallery. By bonding with Muhmenkeh and pursuing her professional goals, Adele happily reconciles her tendency to overcome the rules of the ghetto with her re-born respect for her Jewish roots. Both Sara and Adele find their peace through bonds with older Jews, whose sense of ethnic heritage gives a new incentive to the young women’s search for independence and individuality.

Just as the Yiddish theater directors, vaudeville performers, and silent film makers, Yeziarska attempted to come to terms with herself in the United States and educate other women about acculturation through her works. Her novels do not contain the static, living pictures. Instead, they focus on the constant movements and changes in the Jewish women's acculturation. Yeziarska's novels resonate with the general twentieth-century shift towards speed, efficiency, and flux, all of which are manifest in the cultural moves from the living pictures, to the vaudeville, to the moving pictures. Just like the silent film, the immigrant novel became Jews' aesthetic space in the twentieth-century American culture and a site for their cultural agency, influence, and bonding with other Americans.

Looking back at Alcott, James, and Wharton, I conclude that these authors' portrayals of Jews reflected their ambivalence regarding the cultural power of the incoming Jewish immigrants. The presentations of Jews in Alcott's, James', and Wharton's novels are simultaneously philo- and anti-Semitic, and the authors set examples for desirable behavior through the silent performance genre—tableaux vivants—inscribing Jewish figures or figures who perform Jewishness with their own ideological messages. Through the silent performance genre, the authors show how Jewishness should be perceived and performed in the characters' everyday lives so they could achieve their personal and social goals. Tableaux vivants served the aforesaid authors' ends well until Jewish immigrants started speaking, acting, and writing for themselves, shifting the dynamic in the circulation of cultural power. Unlike Alcott, James, and Wharton, Yeziarska grounds definitions and redefinitions of Jewishness in various circumstances under which her heroines live, change, and grow. Yeziarska's heroines speak, suffer, fight, and succeed for themselves, setting examples for many Jewish immigrant women ready to step out of

the ghetto and enter the public sphere through the lives they live in the novels and not through the silent performance genre.

Notes

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1. Katz discusses Cohn's activism on pages 105-110.
 2. Katz's account of Cohn's tableaux is on pages 106-107.
 3. Everson analyzes the birth and the early stages of the silent film in his second chapter.
 4. Everson introduces the work of Porter and Griffith in his third chapter.
 5. For a discussion of *Judith*'s significance for the early silent film history, see Everson's fifth chapter.
 6. For a thorough discussion of *The Birth of the Nation* and its significance for the development of the silent film, see Everson's introduction (pages 5-8) and fifth chapter (pages 77-89).
 7. Ross's insightful analysis of the early movie theaters is on pages 16-19.
 8. For a brief discussion of the beginnings of the Yiddish theater and its state at the turn of the twentieth century, see Warnke, pages 24-26.
 9. Warnke introduces the avid proponents of the reformation of the Yiddish theater on pages 26-27.
 10. Warnke's reflections on Gordin's contribution to the Yiddish theater are on pages 27-29 and 33-34.
 11. For a discussion of the decline of the Yiddish vaudeville, see Warnke, pages 35-41.
 12. Thissen analyzes Steiner's "advertising schemes" on pages 37-40.

13. For a brief discussion of the role of the cinema in Jewish twentieth-century social life, see Merwin's introduction.

14. Friedman's first chapter analyzes the Jewish involvement with the silent film as well as different categories of the silent films that contain Jewish characters.

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