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Countering Literary Antisemitism: The Figure of the Jew in the Early Twentieth Century American Novel

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Abstract

This thesis aims to unpack the relationship between early twentieth century American writers and their Jewish characters. While the authors examined in this thesis are more different than similar, their novels all exploit the figure of the disparaged Jewish man. These distinguished authors employ antisemitism as a rhetorical device that allows them to convey a certain vision of history.

The figure of the Jewish man illustrates the fears of these authors about a future with more permissive social boundaries, where Jews can find acceptance amongst Protestants. This thesis explores the representation of the Jewish man in a variety of ways, from frighteningly accented immigrant to cheery family man.

The introduction focuses on a brief history of antisemitism in the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth century. While not a full history, the chapter traces the history that lies behind these representations.

Each of the three subsequent chapters examines a different aspect of these portrayals, culminating in the closest possibility of social acceptance that the Jew is offered. They examine the antisemitic stereotypes at play, the subtle slights, and the heavy meaning hiding behind delicate words as elements of literary narrative.

Combined, these readings present a complex reading of the Jewish man as a figure in early twentieth fiction who stands in for questions about the world to come.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all of the students who did not see themselves fairly represented in the American canon.

A Brief (Really Brief) History of Antisemitism in the United States

Authors of "the great American novel" are often given more respect than they deserve when it comes to their portrayals of characters who identify as "other." Edith Wharton, Willa Cather, Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald—all major writers of the early twentieth century—may be more notable for their differences than their similarities. But one perhaps surprising feature that their fiction shares is the figure of the disparaged Jewish man. In this study I focus on that figure and how antisemitism functions as a rhetorical device for these influential authors to convey a certain vision of history.[1]

The figure of the American Jew–and an accompanying antisemitism– have roots in a history older than America. I will not go into the long history of antisemitism, which reaches back at least two thousand years, but focus on the forms it takes in the United States. The fear and distrust surrounding this religious group stem from not only political motives, but from a dread of a world where white Protestant superiority cannot be maintained.

My focus on the Jewish man derives from his presence in the literature of this period; interestingly, the figure of the Jewish woman is largely absent. I argue that these literary portraits need to be recognized for their antisemitism, an antisemitism that both reflects and contributes to the formation of a dominant white Protestant masculinity. More specifically, I claim that the Jewish man is portrayed as a symbol of coming change. In order to understand such an important literary representation, we must first understand the storied history that led to such portrayals.

[1] I have chosen to write the word as antisemitism rather than anti-Semitism based on Anti-Defamation League (ADL) guidelines. The word Semitic was created to bind together a variety of languages that originated in the Middle East and that have linguistic similarities. Those who speak these languages otherwise have no shared heritage or history. There is no such thing as a Semitic peoplehood. In the mid-nineteenth century, Semite was also used as a racialized category in scientific racism. Therefore, to prevent further racializing the figure of the Jew, I shall use the terms "antisemitic" and "antisemitism."

A hallmark of United States history is distrust and dislike of the foreigner. This sentiment manifests itself towards every immigrant group arriving on these shores—except the white Protestant man whose dominating presence creates the baseline for social norms in the United States of America. The looming cloud of xenophobic distrust often ushers in acts of violence towards those outsiders. The history of Jewish immigration and large-scale Jewish life in the United States begins this way, as Jews begin to emigrate to the United States in massive waves in the 1830s. As the Jewish population grew so did Anti-Jewish sentiment.

Before the Jewish people began their journey to this new promised land, the Jewish population in America was likely less than 15,000 in a U.S.population of over 15 million.[2] These small pockets of Jewish life existed in large centers of trade, and Jews often worked in foreign trade or as stock brokers. They were part of the merchant class and were typically well-to-do and members of well-established groups. At that time American Jews largely were of Sephardic descent, originating from Spain and Portugal. Throughout America's Antebellum period (1783-1861) the Jewish population was decently well-assimilated and therefore had some form of social acceptance from their Protestant neighbors. However, this does not mean American attitudes towards this religious group were ever entirely agreeable. Abstract American conceptions about Jews were still rooted in negative stereotypes and cliches that had plagued European Jews for centuries.

> Until the 1840s at least, the average American seemed to think of Jews primarily as ancient patriarchs in flowing robes… Yet Christian orthodoxy also presented the Jews as rebels against God's purpose. The justice of their ruination supplied the text for many a sermon… The economic stereotype of a Jew as a businessman is more relevant to modern anti-Semitism, since Christian stereotypes faded into

[2] John Higham. "Social Discrimination Against Jews in America, 1830-1930." *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, vol. 47, no. 1, 1957, pp. 1–33.

> the background with the increasing secularization of society and the multiplication of contact with real live Jews. Discrimination, when it came, exploited secular rather than religious attitudes. It is worth noting, therefore, that the impression of Jews as aggressive businessmen had always been widespread in America, even in an age of biblical piety when most people had never seen a Jew (Higham, John, p 4-5).

To Northern European Americans, the Jew was at times a symbol of resourcefulness in trade, a trait understood to be very "American." At other times, however, he became the image of greed and cunning, a target of anger and the source of personal misfortune.

The negative associations assigned to the Jewish businessman derive from an older European stereotype: that of the Jewish moneylender. Such a figure may make its most famous appearance in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, in his character Shylock, and stems from medieval money-lending practices in Europe.[3] The connection between Jews and money lending left over from the Middle Ages were still sharp in people's minds. In the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church prohibited its subjects from charging interest on loans to avoid usury, a money lending practice where one lends at an unreasonably high interest rate. The Church's prohibition was then enforced by the state. However, Jews were not bound by this religious prohibition and so took on the role of lenders. Jews were permitted to be financial lenders to Christians but could not hold any other business relationship with them. Jews were banned from many other fields of work, therefore increasing the number of Jews who became moneylenders. This forced role as moneylender created the well-known stereotype of the Jewish banker, or the Jew surrounded by money. By the 1840's, the phrase "to Jew" had become a common part of American slang. "To Jew" was to cheat by sharp practice, another link to the omnipresent Shylock.[4] The frequency of these insults grew with a new wave of Jewish immigrants, this time from Germany,

[3] Interestingly, at the time of the play's publication, no Jews had been legally present in England since the passing of the Edict of Expulsion in 1290 by King Edward I and would not step foot in England again until 1657, so Shakespeare's portrayal would have been based on no direct acquaintance

[4] John Higham. "Social Discrimination Against Jews in America, 1830-1930." *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, vol. 47, no. 1, 1957, p 5.

arriving on America's shoreline in the 1840's. Portrayals of Jewish people in performance and storytelling grew more negative still.

As Jewish immigrants grew more successful, their experiences aligned with endemic "rags-to-riches" stories. John Higham documents this success:

> It seems highly unlikely, proportionately speaking, that in any other immigrant group so many men have ever risen so rapidly from rags to riches... The first-generation millionaires included the manufacturer Philip Heidelbach, the bankers Joseph Seligman, Lewis Seasongood, and Solomon Loeb, the railroad magnates Emanuel and Mayer Lehman, and a good many more.[5] The general body of American Jews participated in the same upward thrust; a survey of 10,000 Jewish families in 1890 showed that 7,000 of them had servants (Higham, John, 8).

Nonetheless, life for the Jew was no great fairytale. When they entered a new social class, it led to new social stereotypes. While they were indeed often wealthy and considered to be products of the so-called "American Dream," Jewish people were still perceived as being outsiders based on their defining differences in physical appearance and more notably, their manners. "While Americans increasingly emulated the cold reserve practised in England, a German (whether Jew or Christian) did not think he was intruding when he attempted to open a conversation with strangers" (Higham, 9). A new stereotype was born out of this social openness: German Jews could be identified by their new money status but lack of cultural elegance; they were social climbers in the eyes of the stiff-lipped upper-class American Christians, who were unlikely to welcome newcomers into their ranks.[6] Antisemitism enabled those who had been part of the well-established old-money upper-class to discriminate against those they viewed as gauche opportunists.

If the Antebellum period gave rise to the stereotype of the Jew as merchant and graceless social climber, the waves of immigration in the subsequent years produced a new set of stereotypes. Fears of

[5] Loeb was notably the grand-uncle of Harold Loeb, the man whom the figure of Robert Cohn in Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises.*

[6] This stereotype is most similar to Willa Cather's character Louie Marsellus from *The Professor's House*.

changing power structures in America further strengthened the notion that the Jew was a type of stranger. Notably, discrimination was based on the economic and social views of the Jew, not towards Judaism.[7] Antisemitism swelled throughout the war and persisted during the Reconstruction Era. A likely cause of this rise was the number of Ashkenazi Jewish immigrants who had made their way through Castle Clinton and other immigrant processing centers.[8] These Jews were of Ashkenazic descent and were mainly from poor and uneducated villages. New Jewish immigrants strongly outnumbered the small pockets of Sephardic Jews who had lived in America for over a century. New York City alone contained one fifth of the American Jewish population. Ashkenazi Jews continued to migrate in great numbers to the United States, escaping the European tsars who blamed the alien religionists for their own misfortunes. Pogroms arose with new popularity in Eastern Europe. The passage of Russia's 1882 May Laws, which limited where Jews could live and work, along with "the growing threat of pogroms and impoverishment" (Glazier, 28) shifted the center of the Jewish world from Europe to the United States. Between 1897 and 1917, the Jewish population of the United States grew from less than one million to more than three million.[9] Their ceaseless immigration led to increasing nativism in the United States.[10]

With this increase in population came new judgments. Jews were synonymous with dirtiness and dishonesty. This association with filth stems from the cramped housing that immigrant groups such as the Jews occupied once they arrived on America's gleaming shores. The neighborhoods that they occupied were often large pockets of crime and full of disease due to the close quarters people lived in. The phrase "dirty Jew" would later be picked up by the eugenics movement in their quest for white supremacy. No longer did Americans want those "huddled masses yearning to breathe free" (Lazarus,

[7] John Higham. "Social Discrimination Against Jews in America, 1830-1930." *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, vol. 47, no. 1, 1957. p 31.
[8] Ashkenazi Jews come from Eastern Europe.
[9] John Higham. "Social Discrimination Against Jews in America, 1830-1930." *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, vol. 47, no. 1, 1957, p 18.
[10] Michael Alexander. "*Jazz Age Jews."* Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2001, p. 5.

11) on their shores. Nativism would morph into the eugenics movement that dominated the pre-war period of the twentieth century. The Ashkenazi Jews appeared as alien and unkempt as any other sect of immigrant group and aroused strong feelings of distaste from white, Christian Americans.

The journeys made by a multitude of European immigrants across the ocean aroused new anxiety about what constituted the "white" race, an anxiety exacerbated by the eugenics movement. Eugenics is technically defined as the study of controlling breeding to increase the occurrence of desirable traits and decrease undesirable traits in a population. The Anglo-Saxon type was considered the superior race, one that excluded Jewish immigrants.[11] Part of this divide in who was believed to be "white" came from anti-Catholic and antisemitic sentiments, religious domination that blended with racial domination to create a hierarchy of discrimination. These biases complicated the historically Black–white binary of race in the United States. Immigration added a new layer to the country's ascriptive racial hierarchy. Eugenics is closely linked to scientific racism, as many Americans also held the belief that "personal and racial qualities were fixed by heredity" (Ludmerer, 59), an idea that was also encouraged by literature in the latter part of the nineteenth century. "New immigrants often existed between nonwhiteness and full inclusion as whites, not just between black and white" (Roediger, 13). The use of the term ethnic was often a way to categorize new immigrants who appeared as racially different.[12] Ethnicity became a way to understand changing societal structures in immigrant communities. Jews had a "difference defined by spirit or culture" (Roediger, 22) that excluded them from being considered as white as Protestant Americans.

As more and more immigrants came to America, "native" Americans despaired that these ethnic minorities would soon become the majority. If these groups continued to breed, those in power feared

[11] Kenneth M. Ludmerer. "Genetics, Eugenics, And the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, vol. 46, no. 1, 1972, pp. 59–81.
[12] Roediger, David R. *Working Toward Whiteness, How America's Immigrants Became White.* Basic Books, 2005. p. 19.

that the powerfully homogenous nature of white America would fall to its knees. These beliefs were mainly held by upper-class Protestants who feared an "unassimilable working class" and were very common.[13] When immigrants from Eastern Europe began to take jobs requiring unskilled labor during the Age of Industrialization, distaste for immigrants grew, emphasizing a major class struggle and the rising sentiment that there were inferior European races despite similar skin tones. Anti-immigrant sentiment grew as a result and the eugenics movement soon was championed by many.[14] Public discrimination increased in the years leading up to World War I. "Most schools established very small Jewish quotas, affecting everything from universities to hotels to country clubs" (Higham, 18). Colleges reformatted their admissions process, Columbia University even designed a psychological test reminiscent of that of the army to measure personal ability, and required one's religion, birthplace, and a photo on an application to weed out who they considered to be undesirables.[15] In 1913, Ellis Island began to use an "intelligence test," created by Henry Goddard, Lewis Terman, and Robert Yerkes who did not shy away from sharing their belief that "southeastern European immigrants, African Americans, American Indians and Mexicans" were unintelligent when contrasted with those originating from Northwest Europe.[16] This intelligence test promoted their theory, as more than eighty percent of those who took it were declared to be feebleminded.

The eugenics movement would eventually make its way into law, clearly influencing the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924. This act required that immigrants coming from European nations could not

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[13] Karen Brodkin. *How Jews Became White Folks: And What That Says About Race in America*. Rutgers University Press, 1998. p 28.

[14] As hatred grew for America's melting pot, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) rose once more in America after its initial disbanding in 1869. The KKK no longer solely focused on acts of violence towards Black Americans but now also against Catholics, Jewish people, communists, Asian Americans, labor unions, and anyone it deemed immoral. By 1924, the KKK had between 3 and 5 million active members. This political movement did not create such anti-immigrant sentiment all by itself, but it benefited from it and encouraged the idea of Nordic superiority and mobilized the masses to push for anti-immigration legislation.

[15] Karen Brodkin. *How Jews Became White Folks: And What That Says About Race in America*. Rutgers University Press, 1998. p 31.

[16] Karen Brodkin. *How Jews Became White Folks: And What That Says About Race in America*. Rutgers University Press, 1998. p 29.

exceed more than two percent of the total number of people from those countries already living in the U.S. as listed in the 1890 census.[17] The discrimination against Jews became so egregious that eventually the American Jewish Committee pressured the New York legislature to sign into law a civil rights bill that would forbid places of public accommodation from discriminating publicly against anyone based on race, creed, or color, eventually signed into law in 1913. Assisted by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), founded in 1913, similar bills were passed in other states as well. However, the passage of such bills, far from indicating the elimination of antisemitism, indicate its widespread presence.

By the end of World War I, nativist attitudes in America had come to a head in the political sphere. The war had aggressively promoted forms of nationalism and nativism under the guise of patriotism that could be traced back to the Progressive era. In quick succession the government passed a flurry of bills that made it more difficult to criticize the country's flaws.[18] Once the war had been won, Americans looked around to find laws such as the Espionage Act of 1917, a measure intended to block illegal interference with the war effort but could also be used to put an end to criticisms of war. In 1918 the Espionage Act was amended by what is known as the Sedition Act which was less subtle than its predecessor. This amendment aimed to curb freedom of speech in times of war when such speech reflected upon the government or the wartime effort badly. America was only to be celebrated. Who could criticize such glory except one who didn't appreciate all it had to offer? There was a feverish sentiment against "hyphenated Americans." While this nativism was first aimed at German-Americans, it soon was used as the basis for xenophobia across the country. There was a return to the traditional revulsion for the United States' status as a world power, and the country returned to its isolationist position that it had mostly held since its founding. Nativists who had been campaigning for immigration

[17] Kenneth M. Ludmerer. "Genetics, Eugenics, And the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, vol. 46, no. 1, 1972, p 61.
[18] Paul L. Murphy. "Sources and Nature of Intolerance in the 1920s." The Journal of American History, vol. 51, no. 1, 1964, pp. 60–76.

restrictions for decades fell upon this isolationist sentiment and accused all those who appeared different of being disloyal. Jews were particular targets.

> The most significant ideological attack on American Jewry has focused not on religion or on race but rather on political subversion. The International Jew, half banker and half Bolshevik, is seen as conspiring to seize control of the nation. This belief, foreshadowed during the Civil War and partially emergent in the 1890's, really crystallized around the time of the First World War. It should perhaps be called anti-Semitic nationalism, for it immolated the Jew on the altar of national loyalty (Higham, 31).

After World War I, Congress passed the Emergency Act of 1921, a temporary anti-immigration bill that "reduced European immigration to three percent of the foreign-born population" (Ngai, 12). This line in the sand was still not enough for nativists who wanted a promise that their country would forever look like them.

Antisemitism was no great secret in the Jazz Age, during which writers such as Ernest Hemingway, Willa Cather, and F. Scott. Fitzgerald made their mark on American culture. American industrialist Henry Ford purchased the weekly newspaper *The Dearborn Independent* in 1919 and used it to circulate claims that Jewish people were responsible for the First World War, along with other antisemitic libel.[19] Ford's smear campaign was unstoppable, reminiscing as it did on lost American values and Christian homogeneity.

> The paper attacked the modernist impulses of its time, inveighing against new cultural trends that Ford personally abhorred… what he believed was the disproportionate influence of Jews on politics, culture, entertainment, diplomacy, industrial capitalism, and the state. As it soon demonstrated, the paper's most important mission, which made it eternally inglorious, was to disseminate Ford's antisemitic beliefs (Woeste, 882).

At the height of the paper's popularity it had some 600,000 readers. Ford used 90 articles to share excerpts of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,* a fabricated text first distributed in Russia in 1905 that claimed to describe a plan for Jewish domination. The text was used to incite hatred in those already

[19] Michael Alexander. "*Jazz Age Jews."* Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2001, p. 16.

comfortable with antisemitism, such as Tsar Nicholas II of Russia.[20] Ford used the age-old tactic of finding a Jewish scape-goat to blame a country's problems on and gave antisemitism "a national platform."[21] These theories and stereotypes which circulated in popular American media assisted with the popularity of the eugenics movement, each strengthening the other.

In Oscar Handlin's article "American Views of the Jew At the Opening of the Twentieth Century," he writes that "physical appearance was a sign of national identity" (Handlin, 329). Popular Jewish stereotypes pushed by those in the media featured Jewish people with animal-like characteristics and often painted Jews as criminals or suspicious types. In his article "The Image Of The Jew in Our Fiction," Irving Fineman notes in Jewish characters written by the Gentiles a desperation to fit in, a "common aspiration: to leave their Jewish origins behind and to be received without discrimination in the gentile world" (Fineman, 20). This so-called aspirational goal comes from the nineteenth and twentieth century idea held by many Americans that the United States was a "melting pot" where immigrants would be molded into the shape of "Americans" without the shadow of personal cultural identity.

Jewish immigrants who kept identities that were decidedly unAmerican could not be an equal part of the country to which they now belonged, as stereotypes were used to distinguish them and made them outsiders. "As the number of Jews in the United States grew through the nineteenth century, they became familiar figures in every part of the country. From dealings with them emerged a distinct stereotype, the features of which were dictated by the condition of the Jews as immigrants" (Handlin, 325). Physical characteristics marked Jewish characters as decidedly "other."

> [The Jew] had by then been identified as a peddler, as an old clothes dealer, and as a pawn- broker; indeed the three-ball sign and the title "uncle" were synonymous

[20] Philip Graves, (August 16–18, 1921). "The Truth about the Protocols: A Literary Forgery." *The Times*. London. Archived from the original on August 9, 2003.
[21] Victoria Saker Woeste. "Insecure Equality: Louis Marshall, Henry Ford, and the Problem of Defamatory Antisemitism, 1920-1929." *The Journal of American History*, vol. 91, no. 3, 2004, p. 883.

> with him. Distinctive names also set him off; Isaacs or Cohen, Ikey, Jake, or Abie. His appearance was familiar too, pack on back, or holding a basket, or pushing a cart. His garments were either old and shiny with an inevitable black derby hat, or else they were ludicrously new and flashy. His hooked nose stood prominently forth from his bearded face and his accent was thick. Finally he was invariably concerned with money; the words put into his mouth dealt always with finance and reflected a stingy, grasping temperament (Handlin, 326).

Americans became quickly acquainted with this image of the Jewish man. In terms of personality traits, a malicious, or greedy nature was often mentioned. Jewish women could be described with the same large nose and thick accent but were rarely described at all in American works of fiction.[22] In Cynthia Griffen Wolf's "Introduction" to Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth,* she observes that Jews could also be marked by their distinct accents, which F. Scott Fitzgerald employs in his characterization of his Jewish gangster Meyer Wolfsheim in *The Great Gatsby,* further emphasizing their place in society as immigrants, not true Americans. "This stereotype [of the Jewish gangster] lent credence to the view that Jews participate whenever they can in antisocial activities, that they are predisposed to find ways of making money even illegally, that they undermine the American work ethic, that they do not engage in the legitimate pursuit of wealth" (Dobkowski, 171). Many of the period's dime novels presented the Jew as shady pawnbrokers, reinforcing ugly stereotypes in a time of major nativism.

By the time of the Progressive Era, the Jew was often used as a figure to fear, a metaphor for socio-political change. He "very often appeared as a representative of the modern bourgeoisie" (Knopp, 93). The Jew's rise in social class, tied to his new money status, was meant to represent a switch in power that white American writers disliked. "The Jew, in his blind pursuit of wealth and in his sharp business practices, epitomized the weaknesses of an aggressive capitalism that seemed to be propelling America towards the precipice" (Dobkowski, 177).

> The stereotype of the Jew was that of a "fairly thoroughgoing materialist, a physical coward, an opportunist in money matters, a bit of a wizard in peddling

[22] One exception would be the 1925 novel *Bread Givers*, written by Jewish-American author Anzia Yezierska.

> his pharmaceutica; . . . secretive in his living habits, servile in his relations with Christians, whom he abominated. For physical signposts he had an outlandish nose, an unpleasant odor, and frequently a speech impediment also. He was a literalist and stickler in debate and a trained Talmudist in his logic . . . His conversation was attended by much frenzied gesticulating ... He himself sat spider-like, in the center of an impressive commercial network. Other animal metaphors which described him were the hog, the dog, the rat, the vulture, the weasel, the fox, the toad, the serpent, and the wasp. As an ageless creature less sinned against than sinning, he hardly qualified for tragedy; on the other hand, his repulsive physiognomy, his eccentric habits, and his hostile motives inspired to suit him ideally for the purposes of the comic and the horrific (Knopp, 96).

The Jewish man was the Gentile writer's bogeyman, the phantom figure with which to frighten children and on which to blame the problems of the white masses. "Of the several Jewish stereotypes in Western literature, that of the 'villainous Jew' seems to predominate… The villainous Jew of literature is a synthesis of various elements drawn from many individual Jews; he is essentially a receptacle for a large number of evil characteristics that could, at one time or another, be attributed to individual Jews" (Knopp, 95). Physical descriptors often used to identify the Jew include a large, hooked nose, a dark, swarthy complexion, and beady eyes. "The Jew, when he appears, is always the exploiter, never the exploited, regardless of whether he covets money, social advantage, his neighbor's wife or a business coup. He is the ultimate symbol of predatoriness and dissoluteness" (Dobkowski, 176). Another popular Jewish stereotype is that of the schlemiel, the incompetent fool who is often the victim of his own misfortune. The schlemiel is a passive character who is unable to keep up with his wittier counterparts.[23] Roused by the threat of a more diverse future, these Jewish figures who were created in these models by white Gentile authors were used to express doubts about the future of America as a nation of immigrants. The upper class's "images [of the Jew] along with those of novelists Robert Herrick, Willa Cather, Henry James, and Edith Wharton, who also knew only the bounder Jew, reflected modern social disintegration and represented retreat from an industrial society growing increasingly impersonal"

[23] Knopp, Josephine Z. "Meyer Wolfsheim and Robert Cohn: A Study of a Jewish Type and Stereotype." *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1969, pp. 93-104.

(Dobkowski, 176). Later in the 1920s, literary portrayals of the Jew that were antisemitic in nature were meant to criticize the upper-class. When Edith Wharton sent a letter to F. Scott Fitzgerald to thank him for her copy of *The Great Gatsby,* she credited him with creating the *perfect* Jew.[24]

These early twentieth-century authors navigate the issue of Jewish representation in ways that showcase their own base fears. It is possible that the manifestations of antisemitism created by these authors may be subconscious reckonings in some regard, but their characterizations still helped to promote the nativist attitudes of the time that led to public antisemitism. Many of these authors were one another's close confidants, promoting each other's work and beliefs. Charles Scribner's Sons published Edith Wharton, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway, further linking their work. Wharton loved *The Great Gatsby* so much that she invited Fitzgerald to her home to discuss his writing and to have tea. In his beginnings, *The Great Gatsby* author wrote several letters to Willa Cather whom he greatly admired. It is a well-known fact that Fitzgerald and Hemingway not only knew one another but were friends and often rivals. Fitzgerald even sent Hemingway to his publisher, further endorsing the ideas promoted in *The Sun Also Rises.*

In this thesis I focus on some of the great literature of the early twentieth century, from authors who exhibit antisemitism in their work, thereby giving voice to a greater social problem in the United States. In the works of these canonical authors, the Jew is a criminal, a cuckold, and a social climber, desperate to crawl into the bed of the American family and create a more diverse world. The most frightening thing about the Jewish man in these works is his desire to join the white Protestant family and become "American."

[24] The emphasis belongs to Wharton.

I organize my study around this pattern, sequencing my readings not so much in terms of history as in terms of their degrees of access to the Protestant family. This was the future feared by Wharton, whose early Jew foreshadows the group's meteoric rise in station. In studying this pattern, I examine the definition of American masculinity and how the immigrant challenges or is used as an antonym for such an identity. Furthermore this thesis studies the Jewish man in relation to white American identity and white American characters, observing how such interactions play out and what they mean in the greater scheme of American history. In each chapter, the Jewish man inches closer to a possible acceptance, going from frightening immigrant in Fitzgerald's *Gatsby* to Willa Cather's family man.

Red Flags Beyond the Green Light:
The Problematic Portrayal of the Jewish Man in *The Great Gatsby*

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* has been celebrated as the Great American Novel for a century.[25] The 1925 novel is a critical examination of the American Dream in its attention to class divides, race, and the rise of a new-moneyed class. Fans fondly remember the twisted, failed romance between Daisy Buchanan and Jay Gatsby and the glamorous backdrop of the glittering Long Island Sound in between East Egg and West Egg. Less remembered is the frightening figure of Meyer Wolfsheim, the Jewish con man lurking in the background of all of Jay Gatsby's more colorful dealings. Meyer Wolfsheim is a foil to Jay Gatsby, his life running parallel–if not always visibly so–to that of the novel's protagonist. In fact, both operate under shady circumstances, and yet America allows one into its fold, while keeping the other man on the outskirts. Jay Gatsby, once James Gatz, signifies a Midwest America full of hopeful optimism and dreams of an American upper-class identity, while Wolfsheim conjures up the shady immigrant bringing crime to the shores of Long Island. In this doubling, we see Fitzgerald's contradictory representation of the iconic American "rags to riches" story. "*Gatsby* hears the 'foreign clamor' on the streets of New York and it's not exactly music to the novel's ears" writes Maureen Corrigan.[26] In Fitzgerald's great America, the immigrant is a sinister figure. Thus, *The Great Gatsby* is a contradiction of a novel where the representation of the Jewish immigrant Wolfsheim as someone to fear undoes the promise of social mobility and the figure of the self-made man.

The novel's contradictory attitudes about class mobility and social belonging–embodied in the paired figures of Gatsby and Wolfsheim–also get expressed in its geography. Geographical

[25] The Great American novel is a term for a novel written by an American that is thought to capture the spirit of America and America's national character.
[26] Maureen Corrigan. *So We Read On: How The Great Gatsby Came to Be and Why It Endures.* Back Bay Books, 2014. P. 92.

location structures the novel's insider/outsider binary, not only by separating "old" from "new" money, but also by stressing the low status of ethnic and religious diversity. "I lived at West Egg, the – well, the less fashionable of the two" (Fitzgerald, 5). Nick lives next door to Jay Gatsby in this less fashionable neighborhood. West Egg is less fashionable due to its racial makeup. Fitzgerald uses the word "sinister" to mark the "less fashionable" neighborhood, a word frequently connected to the figure of the Jewish immigrant.[27] While Gatsby himself is not likely Jewish, he descends into the masses, where he "dispensed starlight to casual moths" (Fitzgerald, 78). Gatsby's lavish parties, where no invitation is needed and the code of conduct is quite lax, contrast with the tense and overly formal East Egg dinners of the first chapter. Here the immigrant hordes descend. "They conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with an amusement park" (Fitzgerald, 41). This phrase makes obvious a lack of decorum on the part of Gatsby's guests, thereby emphasizing their social and economic diversity. Nick writes down the guest list at one such party, listing a variety of last names: Cheadles, Hornbeam, Christie, Cohen, Schwartze, O'Brien, Jewett. These names demonstrate the ethnic mix of guests that attend these glittering affairs. These West Egg parties are a version of a new future, flashy and loud, so different from the tense East Egg dinner that Daisy throws to welcome Nick.

Personal origin is one way in which Fitzgerald structures who belongs in his novel and who doesn't. Generational legacy and belonging matter to the characters of Fitzgerald's Jazz Age story, and the characters fear a world where it doesn't. Fitzgerald carefully notes family lineage, even going so far as to mention it on the third page of the novel in Nick, our narrator's, introduction "My family have been prominent, well-to-do people in this Middle Western city for three generations" (Fitzgerald, 3). Nick shares his family myth of noble peerage with the reader,

[27] Great Neck, also known as West Egg, was one of the only towns that allowed Jewish people to purchase homes.

explaining the lore they cling to emphasizes the importance of genealogy. This false claim of descendance from noble peerage, further signifies the appeal of storied family genealogy, despite the lie that it really is. In no way do the Carraways have noble blood. These ideas are made more prominent in a scene between Daisy, Tom and Nick. “We’re Nordics… we’ve produced all the things that go to make civilization,” (Fitzgerald, 13). Those whose origin is either uncertain or not approved, such as Gatsby and Wolfsheim, are subjected to more scrutiny. “Where is he from, I mean? And what does he do?” (Fitzgerald, 49). The questions that Nick asks regarding Gatsby further showcase the clear importance of family history in America. Heritage is key to acceptance. This is a fact that Gatsby knows, and attempts to structure to his advantage. “I am the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West – all dead now. I was brought up in America but educated at Oxford, because all my ancestors have been educated there for many years. It is a family tradition” (Fitzgerald, 65). Gatsby’s built-up identity relies on generational historical fantasy, words strung together to create a version of a life similar to those he surrounds himself with; Nick, and Tom and Daisy Buchanan are all Midwesterners. But Gatsby is not the man he claims that he is. “The truth,” Nick comments, “was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself” (Fitzgerald, 98). Gatsby struggles with keeping the elements of his story all together, telling Nick that his Middle West roots lie in San Francisco, blurring the image of respectability that he hopes to convey. “He hurried the phrase ‘educated at Oxford’ or swallowed it, or choked on it, as though it had bothered him before. And with this doubt his whole statement fell to pieces, and I wondered if there wasn’t something a little sinister about him, after all” (Fitzgerald, 65). Nick first recounts Gatsby’s appearance only as “a man of about my age.. An elegant young roughneck, a year or two above thirty” (Fitzgerald, 47-48). Later on at that first party, Nick gives the reader a more detailed description of a man who is

tanned with short hair. No attention is drawn to any physical features that may divide him from others. “I could see nothing sinister about him” (Fitzgerald, 50). However this indistinguishable nature is also frightening, as no party guest can directly place him. “No one swooned backward on Gatsby and no French bob touched Gatsby’s shoulder, and no singing quartets were formed with Gatsby’s head for one link” (Fitzgerald, 50).

Unlike Gatsby, who knows he needs to pass, the figure of Meyer Wolfsheim, the sinister Jewish figure of *The Great Gatsby,* is based on key antisemitic stereotypes used to bolster ideas of the Jew as ominous and an exotic outsider. “The villainous Jew of literature is a synthesis of various elements drawn from many individual Jews; he is essentially a receptacle for a large number of evil characteristics that could, at one time or another, be attributed to individual Jews,” writes Josephine Knopp.[28] Wolfsheim is deeply Orientalized, a caricature of popular tropes. “A small, flat-nosed Jew raised his large head and regarded me with two fine growths of hair which luxuriated in either nostril. After a moment I discovered his tiny eyes in the half-darkness” (Fitzgerald, 69). Beyond this mention of his being Jewish, his faith does not come into play. All the rest of his characterization is played off of stereotypes. “The Wolfsheim that Nick sees has a suggestion both of the exotic and the sinister” (Slater, 56). Wolfsheim’s decorative aspects further emphasize this frightening nature. The Jewish man draws Nick’s attention to his special cuff buttons, informing him that they are “finest specimens of human molars” (Fitzgerald, 72). The image of human teeth as decorations for one’s coat is horrific and foreboding, further solidifying Wolfsheim’s menacing character through his personal style. In no way does Wolfsheim want to pass as anything other than what he is: rather, he draws attention to his differences and weaponizes them. “Like Shakespeare’s Shylock and Edith Wharton’s villain

[28] Josephine Z. Knopp “Meyer Wolfsheim and Robert Cohn: A Study of a Jewish Type and Stereotype.” *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought,* vol. 10, no. 3, 1969, p. 95.

Simon Rosedale in *The House of Mirth*, Wolfsheim is, among other things, a money lender whose distinctive cuff buttons (as they're called in the novel) silently communicate the warning *Let the borrower beware!*" (Corrigan, 96). These buttons are a physical marker of the atrocities that set Wolfsheim apart from characters such as Nick. They warn readers of Wolfsheim's brutish ways. "[Wolfsheim's] the man who fixed the World Series" (Fitzgerald, 73).[29] Wolfsheim's manipulation is deeply unsettling. One immigrant is able to corrupt something as big as the World Series, a physical manifestation of American identity. "It never occurred to me that one man could start to play with the faith of fifty million people – with the single-mindedness of a burglar blowing a safe" (Fitzgerald, 73). Meyer Wolfsheim is a physical manifestation of the seedy immigrant underworld that hides below the gleaming opulence of 1920's New York.

Wolfsheim's diction cements his outsider status. "I understand you're looking for a business gonnegtion," he says to Nick (Fitzgerald, 70). Not only is Wolfsheim's phrasing ominous, but the word "connection's" distorted spelling reveals the accent of an immigrant outsider who can't blend into his surroundings. "The heavy accent, which marks Wolfsheim as a nativist's nightmare, an unassimilated outsider no doubt risen up from the 'Yiddish Quarter' of the Lower East Side" (Corrigan, 96). Elocution distinguishes the upper-class from the lower-class. Wolfsheim's accent is more of a brand than his criminal background. His very vocal cords betray him. "Gatsby took an arm of each of us and moved forward into the restaurant, whereupon Mr. Wolfsheim swallowed a new sentence he was starting and lapsed into a somnambulatory abstraction" (Fitzgerald, 69). While Nick deems himself progressive enough to break bread with a Jewish man, he's incapable of hiding his personal revulsion towards the man. As our narrator, the reader is thus guided by the limits of Nick's sympathy. "Nick may be

[29] "The portrait of Meyer Wolfsheim was inspired by the real-life figure of Arnold Rothstein, the New York Jewish racketeer known as 'the Brain' and 'the Big Bankroll' who was rumored to have fixed the 1919 World Series" (Corrigan, 95).

broad-minded enough to sit down to lunch at Gatsby's invitation with the likes of a Meyer Wolfsheim, but the novel also condones Nick's anti-Semitic shudder at Wolfsheim – a shudder that's "excused" by Wolfsheim's stagy Yiddish accent" (Corrigan, 18). This accent is a further way to differentiate the Jew from those who "belong" in America, making obvious his status as a lower-class new immigrant unable to speak the form of English expected in a person of good breeding. Gatsby understands this subtle othering, and in his childhood notebook, back when he was James Gatz, remembers to **"**practice elocution" (Fitzgerald, 173), in order to become more believable in his performance as Jay Gatsby.

Wolfsheim's making of Jay Gatsby represents how the Jewish man taints America. "We were so thick like that in everything," says Wolfsheim of his relation with Gatsby (Fitzgerald, 171). While Gatsby appears as a signifier of an American success story, he is polluted through the means by which he was made. The characters of Meyer Wolfsheim and Jay Gatsby are irrevocably linked, forcibly tying together their disquieting actions. "Only as the details of Wolfsheim's relationship with Jay Gatsby are revealed, does his full sinisterness become evident, as well as Gatsby's complete story" (Slater, 56). The differences between the two, however, are key to understanding the ways in which Gatsby is able to assimilate and Wolfsheim is not. Gatsby's physical features blur into the nondescript whiteness assumed by Nick and the other "Nordics" of the story. Unfortunately, this nondescript nature can't protect him forever. The association between the two men is largely what makes Gatsby so shady: "it is this adoption that transforms Gatsby from Gentile to Jew" (Pekarofski, 57). While Judaism is passed down matrilineally, this adopted stain on Gatsby's character forces him out of the box of Gentile. Even his casting aside of his given name, James Gatz, is a representation of his choice to leave behind his past. It is the Jewish man, Meyer Wolfsheim, who helps to build James Gatz into the figure of

Jay Gatsby. “I knew I had discovered a man of fine breeding after I talked with him for an hour” (Fitzgerald, 72). Wolfsheim is the man behind Gatsby’s beautiful shirts, large parties, and gleaming pool. “The picture of the innocent Gatsby is sharply contrasted with the portrait of the Jew villain as Wolfsheim's knife is now poised for the purpose of extortion” (Knopp, 98). The Jewish Wolfsheim knows how key appearance is to success in America and therefore how Gatsby’s appearance manufactures their worldly accomplishments. “Wolfsheim has shrewdly utilized respected American traditions and institutions for his own corrupt devices, an exotic man piloting a semi-protean man through mainstream America in a most sinister fashion” (Slater, 57). He has transformed Gatsby into his mirror image and therefore into a form of Jew that cannot be undone. “I made him,” (Fitzgerald, 171) Wolfsheim says with pride. Gatsby’s association with Wolfsheim stains his believability and therefore leads to his death.

Without his Jewish counterpart, Gatsby would have been celebrated for his achievement of the American Dream; however, the Jew that helped him succeed is what makes him lose everything. “Fitzgerald needed an evil manipulator; the villainous Jew served his purpose” (Knopp, 99). The figure of the Jew aligns with the materialization of Gatsby’s own personal dreams. The only way that Gatsby can fulfill his desire, to be good enough to reach Daisy, is through Wolfsheim. America’s Golden Boy has secrets linking him to the immigrant underbelly of New York. Gatsby’s guests constantly ruminate on who he is, suggesting he is a bootlegger, that he’d killed a man, or that he had once been a spy. “Who is this Gatsby anyhow?.. Some big bootlegger?” (Fitzgerald, 107). Tom is suspicious of Gatsby’s status. He interrogates Nick as he looks into the man intent on breaking his way into Tom’s marriage to Daisy, searching for any scandal he may use to smear Gatsby. The occupation of bootlegger is particularly notable as it was often a profession taken up by criminals who were Jewish.[30] Gatsby’s linkage with

[30] Fifty percent of all leading bootleggers during the Prohibition were Jewish.

bootlegging further makes him a vaguely ethnic stranger and accuses him not only of possible Jewishness but of consorting with such a distasteful crowd. Gatsby's otherness is notable and yet his wealth and ostensible whiteness allow him into the circles to which he craves access. His ability to semi-blend, however, distinguishes him, making him useful to Wolfsheim, who refuses to assimilate. Tom, guarding his Nordic bastion of East Egg, outs Gatsby in his connection with Wolfsheim: "He and this Wolfsheim bought up a lot of side-street drugstores here and in Chicago and sold grain alcohol over the counter. That's one of his little stunts. I picked him for a bootlegger the first time I saw him, and I wasn't far wrong" (Fitzgerald, 133). Tom gleefully ruins Gatsby when he tells Daisy of this association, not just for his criminal behavior, but because he does these things with a Jewish man. It's worth noting, though, that Gatsby is not the only person who engages in illicit behavior: Tom, for example, cheats on his wife with pride, and all of the novel's characters rely on bootleggers to some degree, as made apparent by the frequent scenes where alcohol makes an appearance. But Tom cheats with a Protestant woman, and those who drink and enjoy the rewards of such criminal behavior separate themselves from those who are different. It is the Jewish Wolfsheim who forces Gatsby to lose Daisy and the respect of his peers.

Jay Gatsby would have been the novel's unproblematic hero, a celebrated figure of social mobility; however, his willingness to consort with such "sinister faces, the faces of 'Wolfsheim's people,' (Fitzgerald, 133) is what brings him six feet under. When Gatsby dies, Wolfsheim abandons him, proving his villainous nature, unable to acknowledge the blood on his hands. "I cannot come down now as I am tied up in some very important business and cannot get mixed up in this now" (Fitzgerald, 166). The character of Meyer Wolfsheim is irredeemable. "When a man gets killed I never like to get mixed up in it in any way. I keep out" (Fitzgerald, 171). As Knopp

argues, Meyer Wolfsheim fulfills Fitzgerald's desired role of callous immigrant villain. Wolfsheim avoids Gatsby's funeral, leaving Nick, Owl Eyes, and Gatsby's father alone in the rain with the destroyed body of his creation. Gatsby is perhaps a cautionary tale for Americans to avoid involvement with those sinister immigrant figures who only bring death in their wake to those foolish enough to cling to their coat tails with their own dreams of personal glory and fulfillment. It will not end well.

"It's up to us, who are the dominant race, to watch out or these other races will have control of things" (Fitzgerald, 13) Tom says at the beginning of *The Great Gatsby.* Although by no means the novel's hero, Tom is the one who survives almost unscathed. While he loses his mistress Myrtle, in the end he still has Gatsby's prize, Daisy, the pinnacle of white upper-crust femininity in America. It is Gatsby, who tries to be more than he was, who falls behind into the dust. "[Gatsby] had come a long way to this blue lawn and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp at it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under night" (Fitzgerald, 180). However, while Gatsby dies, the Jew survives into the future. Meyer Wolfsheim may have launched Gatsby on his personal project to become the man he had desired to be, but after Gatsby's death, Wolfsheim can retreat back into the shadows and later continue this toxic cycle of man-making. Nothing can stop him from selecting his next victim. This furthers Fitzgerald's disturbing warning against solidarity with those sinister immigrant figures. It is the distinctly Nordic Americans like Tom and Nick who are left to pick up the pieces of America, signifying to whom Fitzgerald believes the nation of immigrants truly belongs.

To Breed or Not to Breed:
Jewish Men as Spurned Sexual and Romantic Partners

Edith Wharton's 1905 *The House of Mirth* and Ernest Hemingway's 1926 debut *The Sun Also Rises*, both offer up unflattering portrayals of Jewish men as failed contenders for the hearts of affluent and upper-class Gentile women. The two famed novelists place great emphasis on the importance of breeding when it comes to picking a mate, linking their views on ascribed hierarchies of social status to the blight of the immigrant as well as the deeply prevalent eugenics movement of the early twentieth century. The eugenics movement championed the idea of strong racial differences that also could define social class. The Jewish men in these novels hunt for ways to go beyond their Jewish identity, and rise with the elite, but both fail in one way or another.

> There is no resemblance between the two writers — genteel, aristocratic Mrs. Wharton and he-man Hemingway — except for their common and frankly unreasonable gentile contempt for the Jews they were portraying. And there is no resemblance between the images of those two Jews — suave Simon Rosedale and nervous Robert Cohn — except for their common aspiration: to leave their Jewish origins behind and to be received without discrimination in the gentile world — Rosedale by New York's Victorian high society at the turn of the century, and Cohn by the bohemian expatriates of Paris in the mid twenties, (Fineman, 20).

Irving Fineman's appraisal of both Wharton and Hemingway is notable for its examination of the Jewish man desperate to remake himself in the image of Gentile America. However, Fineman forgets to acknowledge the way they attempt that social ascent as failed lovers to Gentile women.

In the portrayal of these men as impossible suitors, Wharton and Hemingway also use their Jewish characters as foils for their non-Jewish male leads, Lawrence Selden and Jake Barnes respectively. In *The Sun Also Rises,* the relationship between Jake and Cohn is complicated by their status as foils. All of Cohn's successes, and therefore those of the Jew, are projections of Jake's own anxieties and personal failings in his writing and romantic life.

However, the flaws of both men disqualify them from receiving Brett's love. Lawrence Selden represents the white patrician masculinity threatened by the newly-moneyed Jew Simon Rosedale. "Cohn's lack of manliness, inability to comprehend the larger issues, maladroitness, and hen-pecked personality reflect Hemingway's fears of the disorderliness of a post-war, industrialized society-a society where those without the basic tenets of American manhood can be usurpers" (Wilentz, 189). If Lawrence Selden and Jake Barnes fail to get the heroine, they nonetheless remain steadfast in their embodiment of Gentile masculinity. The Jewish man, by contrast, in his very striving, underscores his deficiencies. The negative qualities of the Jews can only be represented in contrast with the good of Selden and Jake. Both of these men represent different forms of white masculinity that need protecting from the debasement of such imitators as Rosedale and Cohn. While Simon Rosedale and Robert Cohn end up in different positions at the end of their story arcs, both men are represented through a variety of physical and nonphysical attributes that can be associated with antisemitic stereotypes.

Simon Rosedale and Robert Cohn are aspiring contenders for the hearts of Lily Bart and Lady Brett Ashley respectively. Simon Rosedale is turned away until New York socialite Lily Bart has no more suitors and must rely on the Jewish man as a last resort. But at this point he rejects her, conceding that her reduced social status means she cannot assist him in his social ascent. Lady Ashley uses Robert Cohn as a sex object rather than a marital partner, but their relationship quickly crumbles to dust, her disdain for him growing with his love. To Brett, the Jewish man is an undesirable long-term partner. In the works of Wharton and Hemingway, the relationship between Jewish men and upper-class women offers a piece of social commentary concerning the rise of the new-money class, the death of a traditional idea of All-American masculinity, and what it truly means to have made it in America.

I

"What does the word Cohn mean?" (Hemingway, 102), Bill Gorton asks our narrator Jake Barnes, effectively blurring the line between fact and fiction.[31] In the introduction to *The Sun Also Rises,* Sean Hemingway, the author's grandson, comments on the novel's nature as a *roman à clef.* Robert Cohn stands in for Harold Loeb, an American author, and a Jewish man who spent time in Paris with Hemingway. Cohn is the only character in the novel who consistently goes by his surname, another stylistic choice that sets him apart from his companions. Loeb was a member of the Jewish Guggenheim family and an expatriate.[32] Like Cohn, he was a Princeton University graduate who turned to writing. Loeb's love affair with the married British socialite Lady Duff Twsyden is the foundation of Robert Cohn's relationship with Lady Brett Ashley. According to Sean Hemingway, the people upon whom his grandfather based his novel were none too pleased with their portrayals, one even commenting that the book should have instead been titled "Six Characters in Search of an Author —With a Gun Apiece" (Hemingway, xv).

While busy writing *The Sun Also Rises,* Hemingway reportedly told Kathleen "Kitty" Eaton Cannell, the model for the character of Frances Clyne, that Loeb would be the villain of his narrative.[33] [34] When the novel was published, Loeb was reportedly angry with Hemingway about his portrayal as Robert Cohn.[35] The depiction of Loeb is no great compliment. Perhaps

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[31] Wolfgang H. E. Rudat suggests in his article "Anti-Semitism in "*The Sun Also Rises"*: Traumas, Jealousies, and the Genesis of Cohn" that the word Cohn in French sounds similar to a common French slang term for a part of the female anatomy, and is in part why Hemingway chose the nomenclature. If this is true, it's interesting especially when paralleled with the figure of the Gentile eunuch Jake Barnes.

[32] The Guggenheim family was globally successful in the mining industry in the beginning of the twentieth century, They are also well-remembered for establishing the Guggenheim museums.

[33] Like in *The Sun Also Rises*, Loeb and Cannell were together until shortly before the affair between Twysden and Loeb.

[34] Carlos Baker. *Ernest Hemingway; A Life Story*. The Easton Press, Norwalk, CT, 1994. , p. 154.

[35] Hutchisson, James M. "Duff Twysden and The Sun Also Rises" *Ernest Hemingway: A New Life*, Penn State University Press, 2016, p. 81.

most telling is a response from Hemingway's friend and rival F. Scott Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald, who read early drafts of *The Sun Also Rises*, and "particularly loved the part where Frances Clyne eviscerates Robert Cohn – high society subject matter that was the focus of much of his own writing" (Hemingway, xix). Cohn's tongue lashing is a delight for those who wish the outsider to be taken down a peg.

The Sun Also Rises opens with an examination of Robert Cohn, both our narrator's foil and his foe**.** Jake obsesses over the other man's dissimilar nature. "Robert Cohn was once middleweight boxing champion of Princeton. Do not think that I am very much impressed by that as a boxing title, but it meant a lot to Cohn. He cared nothing for boxing, in fact he disliked it, but he learned it painfully and thoroughly to counteract the feeling of inferiority and shyness he had felt on being treated as a Jew at Princeton" (Hemingway, 3). This is how Hemingway begins his tale, not with the life of his narrator but with the story's antithetical and dislikeable Robert Cohn. Cohn has to fight and win in order to have a chance at being a semi equal. While Jake is able to admit the other man's achievement in boxing, he can't help mentioning the fact that Cohn's prowess stems from his desire to prove himself as an equal to his classmates. "No one had ever made him feel he was a Jew, and hence any different from anybody else, until he went to Princeton" (Hemingway, 3). Cohn is only able to perform such an accomplishment in order to counteract his supposed inadequacies at a mostly white and Gentile institution. He finds the sport distasteful beyond its necessity as a tool for his assimilation. Hemingway and his narrator get the last laugh at Cohn's flawed attempts at blending in. "I never met any one of his classmates who remembered him. They did not even remember that he was middleweight boxing champion" (Hemingway, 3). Cohn's achievement at Princeton that was notable enough for Jake to mention is one that his classmates don't even remember. While Jake ceaselessly criticizes the

Jewish man, Cohn, who is obviously otherwise friendless, calls the novel's narrator his best friend, entangling them in a relationship more toxic than that between Cohn and Brett.

While Jake's critical portrait of Cohn mainly focuses on the man's dubious efforts to achieve acceptance by mastering a sport he dislikes, the account also fixes on a stereotypical physical feature that, to the narrator, marks him as a Jew. "[Cohn] was so good [at boxing] that [his competitor] promptly overmatched him and got his nose permanently flattened. This increased Cohn's distaste for boxing, but it gave him a certain satisfaction of some strange sort, and it certainly improved his nose" (Hemingway, 3). The need to fight in order to fit in leaves both a physical and mental mark on Cohn. Jake's remark on the so-called improvement equates Jewishness with distastefulness. As Jake notes, Cohn himself had a "certain satisfaction of some strange sort" when his nose was broken (Hemingway, 3). Robert Cohn's flattened nose allows him to semi-assimilate, preventing his friends from the ugly blight of his Jewishness, and allowing for Cohn to ascend in the world without arousing suspicion. Furthermore, the crushed facial feature, broken in an act of performative violence, is symbolic of the sacrifices that Cohn must make in order to fit in with his antisemitic peers, beginning at Princeton where he first understood his unforgivable differences.

The conditions of Princeton are repeated in Cohn's whole relation to the fraternity of expatriates. However, the Princeton admissions committee has now been replaced by one Brett Ashley. Through his affair with the expatriate's admissions committee, Cohn is offered partial acceptance and is thus allowed to try his hand at being an insider. This affair between Cohn and Brett draws attention to the contradictions of the hypersexualized yet feminized Jewish man. In fact, Brett exacerbates both of these identifiers. Brett is the sexual aggressor in her relationships, a surprising position for a woman of the time period. "She went down to San Sebastian with

[Cohn]…she wanted to get out of town and she can't go anywhere alone. She said she thought it would be good for him" (Hemingway, 82). This control Brett has over Cohn's personal life further perpetuates his submissive and traditionally feminine identity. By whisking him away to use as her personal gigolo she further toys with his affection.

In Cohn's eyes, the love he perceives he has won from Brett is not only a personal but an explicitly masculine triumph. At last, the Jewish man has claimed a trophy of American excellence. But it is a dubious victory. Brett then feminizes Cohn by calling all the shots in their brief affair. Cohn is further feminized through his reaction to the end of their fling. "Cohn was crying. There he was, face down on the bed, crying" (Hemingway, 154). Brett's sexual aggression has broken him. Once disposed of by Brett, Cohn can't help but hang on, hoping that this affair will be what allows him into the folds of their group. However, Cohn's outsiderness is never fully forgiven; rather if possible, his semi-possession of Brett makes his differences more noticeable to the expatriates. "*Is* Robert Cohn going to follow Brett around like a steer all the time?" (Hemingway, 113) they moan. The simile here that compares Cohn to a steer is notable in its reference to Cohn as a hypersexualized and yet inadequate beast.[36] This allusion to his sexual prowess or lack thereof further objectifies and degrades the Jewish man in comparison with the believed paragons of masculinity who surround him. "But of course we know that it isn't Robert Cohn who is the 'steer'; it's Jake, so to speak. This is the supreme irony. Jake, who typifies all the traditional values of manhood, is unable to fulfill his greatest desire" (Wilentz, 191). Jake's injury is really a wound of white male authority. The insult of being forced to spend time with such an outsider grates on the nerves of her fiance, Mike Campbell, who repeatedly brings up the differences between himself and Cohn. He loathes having a Jew join their ranks and losing control over their social circle. "Brett's gone off with men. But they weren't ever Jews and they

[36] A castrated bovine creature.

didn’t come and hang about afterward” (Hemingway, 114). Mike constantly hypersexualizes Cohn in his critiques of the man, dehumanizing him and shaming him for his free love. The novel expects the reader to identify with Mike and sympathize with him. Cohn’s personal relationships are used to characterize him as an oversexualized being, good for nothing beyond sexual intercourse. “[Cohn] came down to San Sebastian where you weren’t wanted” (Hemingway, 113). Once again, the steer is brought back into Cohn’s characterization. Mike is enraged by the tainting of his social affairs and his own tainting by association. “Do you think you amount to something, Cohn? Do you think you belong here among us… Why don’t you see when you’re not wanted, Cohn? Go away. Go away, for God’s sake. Take that sad Jewish face away” (Hemingway, 142). Not only does Mike Campbell imply that Cohn is nothing more than a sex toy but he also doubts Cohn’s masculinity and his worth to the other members of their group.

Even after his liaisons with Brett, or maybe because of them, Cohn is still branded as an untoward stranger whose ruinous company brings about social unrest. The effect of the affair is Cohn’s attempts to integrate further. "Cohn's failure to realize his place in the American paradise, like Gatsby's, reveals a failure of the American dream more complex than Cohn's failure of assimilation might suggest" (Budick, 170). Robert Cohn will forever be unable to rise above his station. His status as a Jew links him to a lower social status and his compatriots forcibly remind him of this when he dares to attempt rebirth. “Cohn's Jewishness, niceness, and impercipience are all gendered traits in Hemingway's representation, traits that suggest Cohn's lack of the very epistemological masculinity that distinguishes Jake among the characters in the novel” (Onderdonk, 72). As analyzed by Karen Brodkin in her book *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America*, the feminization of the Jewish man was a popular way for authors to emphasize the strength of All-American Protestant male superiority in contrast

with that of the Jewish immigrant.[37] "Cohn the Jew, the alien, can only imitate the behavior of a "real" American man" (Onderdonk, 73). Not only is Mike Campbell suggesting that Cohn is nothing more than a sex toy but he also is doubting Cohn's masculinity and his worth to the other members of their group. "I said if she would go about with Jews and bull-fights and such people, she must expect trouble" (Hemingway, 162).

The figure of the Jew exemplifies both the social usurper and hypersexualized other who tries to acquire what belongs to the American man. The Jew is demonized for his desire to be a societal equal and for his efforts to rise up in the world. His capability to move social classes and access higher education threatens the ideals of masculinity represented in the character of Jake Barnes. Without these things to draw boundaries between different social groups, those in power will soon lose their hegemonic dominance. The expatriates of *The Sun Also Rises* consistently belabor the differences in status between themselves and people like Cohn. Their view regarding the role of society relies on the existence of an ingroup and an outgroup and emphasizes the key traits that separate these "breeds."

Cohn's affair with Brett challenges the dominance of Gentile rule that Jake relies on to feel like a success. After hearing of Brett's dalliance with Cohn, an obvious member of the outgroup, Bill and Jake are shocked. They struggle to comprehend her choice in a personal companion. "Why didn't she go off with some of her own people?" (Hemingway, 82). Brett's peers are apprehensive of this possible new demarcation of social boundaries. By dirtying her hands with men such as Robert Cohn, Brett sinks below her breeding. Robert Cohn's ability to entice such a woman directly threatens the status quo. The American Jew can be seen here as a form of social usurper. The very idea that Brett would choose an outsider over one of them

[37] While the story takes place in France, Hemingway consistently reminds his reader that Barnes is a corn-fed Kansas City native. Hemingway himself was from Illinois but briefly worked as a reporter for *The Kansas City Star*.

provokes outrage towards Cohn and brings their subconscious discrimination to the surface. “I was blind, unforgivably jealous of what had happened to him… I certainly did hate him. I do not think I ever really hated him until he had that little spell of superiority at lunch– that and when he went through all that barbering” (Hemingway, 80). Cohn’s momentary possession of such a woman further suggests that he has become “superior” to the Gentile male. “Cohn may thus be seen as a symbol of the apprehensions that mainstream Americans had about an alien immigrant population in the early 20th century” (Wilentz, 188). If women continue to fall for the Cohns of the world instead of the Jakes and the Bills, eventually that classification of man will die out.

The emphasis on Brett’s “own people” can also be related to the eugenics movement which championed forms of whiteness from which, at the time, Jewish people were excluded. Brett’s formality is intoxicating in its steeped ritualism and in the way it is brined in masculine approval, something for which Cohn yearns. “‘There’s a certain quality about her, a certain fineness… I don’t know how to describe the quality,’ Cohn said. ‘I suppose it’s breeding’” (Hemingway, 31). Brett’s beauty comes largely from her well-established bloodline. The theory of eugenics rears its ugly head once more in Hemingway’s writing**.** There is no form of outrage when Brett has a liaison with the count. The count is powerful, rich, titled, and incredibly macho, paralleling the form of masculinity represented by Jake. **“**He’s one of us, though. Oh, quite. No doubt. One can always tell” (Hemingway, 27). The count will always be considered a more proper choice than the unruly Jew who challenges the societal norms of idealized masculinity**.** There’s a form of unspoken understanding between these expatriates regarding what lines are appropriate to cross and which should remain unbroken. The issue the men have is not towards Brett and her tendency to have affairs but in her selected partner’s personal identity.

The Jewishness of Robert Cohn is often identified through traditionally antisemitic stereotypes as a way to define him as "other" and further represent him as a cumbersome stranger. Hemingway's antisemitism is first evident in the portrayal of the Jew's nose, a common physical stereotype representative of ethnic differences between the Jews and the Gentiles and used to caricature the former group.[38] Hemingway's Jew is further typecast by virtue of his financial situation, a familiar trope dating back to the Middle Ages. "Robert Cohn, through his father, of one of the richest Jewish families in New York, and through his mother one of the oldest" (Hemingway, 3). Cohn's positionality as a well-off and well-established Jewish person in America further enables him to slip into the lives of Jake and Brett Ashley almost seamlessly. While his establishment may be relative to that of old-money Northern European families, his family is well entrenched in America. There is no accent like that of Fitzgerald's Meyer Wolfsheim or notable physical differences that set him apart from the others at first glance, especially after his nose is disfigured. Nevertheless, Cohn's wealth is consistently a topic of conversation. Jake contrasts the wealth of the Cohn family with Cohn's imprudence with money in a way that demonstrates his decidedly stereotypical "Jewish" inability to utilize his money in an acceptable fashion.

> He was married five years, had three children, lost most of the fifty thousand dollars his father left him… In California he fell among literary people and as he still had a little of the fifty thousand left, in a short time he was backing a review of the Arts…. It was his money and he discovered he liked the authority of editing. He was sorry when the magazine became too expensive and he had to give it up (Hemingway, 4).

His wealth, by way of familial allowance, allows Cohn to live as he pleases. Yet his choice to accept an allowance from his mother further emasculates him. To the Gentiles of the novel, anyone who deals with money can be inferred to be a Jew. "[Brett] never has any money. She

[38] Later on, to stave off compliments, Brett critiques her nose as a detractor from her beauty.

gets five hundred quid a year and pays three hundred and fifty of it in interest to Jews… They're not really Jews. We just call them Jews" (Hemingway, 185). This casual antisemitism links moneylending to Hemingway's portrait of Cohn.

Robert Cohn's Jewishness is consistently added as a descriptor when it comes to critiquing his unfavorable qualities in order to further critique the Jew as a failure of traditional, idealized masculinity and as a foreigner. As expressed by Gay Wilentz, "Hemingway, known as a stylist who does not include superfluous words, would not have added "Jewish" as a descriptive adjective so many times without a purpose" (Wilentz, 188). The low invective style of insult is notably evident only against Cohn. The inclusion of the word "Jewish" identifies Cohn as an outsider time after time, further coupling his supposed negative traits with his personal identity. Every insult is like a boxing blow landed on him. It is fair to call him an unlikeable character, given that he is clingy, childish, and incapable of acting rationally. It is also fair to say that he is dislikeable *because* he is a Jew. When speaking of him, his comrades use epithets that emphasize his differences as a way to separate themselves from his noted flaws. All the qualities which Jake Barnes finds to be distasteful in his assumed friend are accredited to his positionality as a Jew. "He had a hard, Jewish, stubborn streak" (Hemingway, 9). Although the other characters in Hemingway's novel are equally stubborn, our narrator never outwardly mentions their stubbornness, nor is it attached to their personal identity.[39] This aligning of personal critique with Cohn's Jewish identity occurs again when Jake and Bill are discussing the insider knowledge that Cohn appears to have on the comings and goings of Brett Ashley after their affair. "Well, let him not get superior and Jewish" (Hemingway, 77). The Jew can never be superior in the eyes of

[39] It is worth mentioning that Bill Gorton is the most outwardly antisemitic and racist character in *The Sun Also Rises.* The majority of the novel's slurs regarding Black and Jewish people are used by him, with a few thrown into Barnes's narration.

those who promote themselves as his betters. They are relentless in their pursuit of ways to insert mentions of his lesser status wherever they can.

All the traits with which Hemingway brands Cohn are stereotypes no matter how subtle they seem. “He's sad and suffering, qualities alluded to as endemic to the race [of Jews], and he isn't even politic enough to realize that he is the perennial outsider in this expatriate in-group” (Wilentz, 188). Cohn’s “Jewish” characteristics inflame those with whom he surrounds himself. While Jake and the other expats of *The Sun Also Rises* share many of Cohn’s negative qualities, none are so needled as Cohn. “‘Say something pitiful.’ ‘Robert Cohn,’” (Hemingway, 92). The believably pitiful attitude of the outsider influences the lives with whom he surrounds himself. He is nothing more than a nuisance to Brett and her associates. “I hate his damned suffering” she says callously (Hemingway, 146). The suffering that she has helped cause is now an inconvenience to her life and the others cavorting around Pamplona. Jake even blames the bad manners of his peers on Cohn, the eternal Jewish scapegoat. “Cohn had a wonderful quality of bringing out the worst in anybody” (Hemingway, 79). When Mike brusquely requests that Cohn leave their party, disgusted by Cohn’s desire to fit in and by his palpable desire for Brett, he forcibly brings up the other man’s divergence from Gentile expectations. “Take that sad Jewish face away” (Hemingway 142). Cohn’s ignorance regarding the unwritten code of law that they all live by brands him as a misfit. Despite his partial entry into society, he cannot fully break his way in, his distaste for sublime masculine arts like bullfighting marking him as other. “Hemingway's promiscuous and pugnacious gentiles could not brook the adoption of those manners by Robert Cohn while criticizing him for his inability to ape their drunkenness" (Fineman, 23). His “stolen” manners are never able to fully mimic the way that his

contemporaries hold themselves and further bring his inadequacies to the forefront of their social gatherings.

The Jewish character Robert Cohn strongly indicates what Hemingway believes will become the future of American masculinity. “[Robert Cohn] is a symbol of this post-war environment in that his success comes from preying on the weakness of a society de-valued by the breakdown of pre-war values and ideals as well as industrialization" (Wilentz, 189). He illustrates the values scorned by a man like Hemingway, a man like Jake.[40] Cohn’s masculinity is constantly contrasted with that of Jake’s. While our narrator is celebrated as a paragon of idealized masculinity due to his status as a military veteran and war hero, Cohn is derided for his nearsightedness, his inability to have served in the army, and his perceived delicate sensibilities and personality. “Class, religion, race, ethnicity, nationality, aesthetics, epistemology–these differences are used instrumentally to establish the superiority of one version of gender, modern authorial masculinity, which Hemingway performs through Jake Barnes” (Onderdonk, 70). All of these things that Hemingway’s narrator critiques in the character of Cohn, and then contrasts with his own performance of such traits, are used to show preferential attitudes towards one form of being, the form of being taken by Jake. Todd Onderdonk’s examination of such solemn definitions of masculine superiority further highlights the parallels between Cohn and Barnes as models of past and present. As physical strength becomes devalued in contrast to business knowledge, it is likely that the Cohns of the world will become a larger and more powerful entity, while men like Ernest Hemingway and Jake Barnes will be pushed to the wayside.

> “Cohn, as representative of a devalued, outsider, immigrant society, refuses to accept a second-class position. He does not stay in his place and in that sense he challenges a social caste system weakened seriously by industrial development in the US and the war in Europe. [In *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* Hannah] Arendt notes that the Jews, "caught up in the general and insoluble conflicts of the time,

[40] After all, the novel is a *roman à clef*.

> could be blamed for them and finally be made to appear the hidden authors of all evils" (5). She goes on to say that after World War I certain anti-Semites put forth a rumor that the Jews caused the war (Arendt 5). Whether Hemingway was aware of this is unknown, but that was the climate which surrounded these post-war expatriates. Moreover, this sentiment can be easily applied to conflicts facing a newly industrialized America as well. Finally, since much of the focus of the novel is on how the "Great War" has crippled people physically and psychologically, it is not hard to see that Cohn, a Jew who did not fight for his country, might represent all that is wrong in this post-war society (Wilentz, 191).

Cohn's love of reading in lieu of performative violence such as bullfighting and wrestling draws a distinction against the stereotypically masculine traits that Hemingway employs in his crafting of Jake's sense of personal identity**.** The most aggressive moment of antisemitism in the novel, the use of a slur for Jewish people "k*ke" occurs at the strongest moment of performative violence at the bullfight where Cohn is sickened by the brutality. His failure as a man is represented through his inability to understand the masculine art of bullfighting.

Cohn's own attempts at violence backfire viciously against him. Attempting to mirror the confrontation styles of Mike and the other men, Cohn goes to confront the bullfighter and attempt to win Brett's heart once more. Instead, he loses his dignity. Even as Romero wants to keep fighting, Cohn can't. "Cohn leaned down to shake hands with the bull-fighter fellow… And the bullfighter chap hit him in the face again" (Hemingway, 161). Brett stays with the bull-fighter, drawn to his cut-up face and ferocity, while Cohn leaves Pamplona, finally acknowledging that real life is poles apart from the promise of *The Purple Land,* the novel that he moons over, hoping for a life like that of the story's protagonist.[41] Like his compatriot Moses, who Jake once compared him to, Cohn will never reach that promised land of perfect masculinity.

The figure of Robert Cohn represents a new world order, one in which the white man can't always be confident that he will win. While Cohn leaves Pamplona a failure, in no way can

[41] Alliteratively, *The Purple Land* is similar to the phrasing "The Promised Land" which Cohn is also desperate to get to.

we say with complete confidence that Jake has triumphed. Hemingway justifies his antisemitism as a way to protect traditional masculinity that he fears will fall to the wayside. The Jew is stuck in his place after a taste of social elevation while the Gentile, still holding onto his own influence, has had an experience of loss. “Cohn's story is more than a personal narrative. It is the story of the American dream and its failure. And it also reflects the story of the heroic volunteer in the war to end all wars, Jake Barnes. Cohn's romantic idealism and his faith in America articulate an American fantasy to which Jake, for all his protestations, is no stranger” (Budick, 168). Both men are scarred by their attempts to prove themselves as paragons of American identity, one physically and one mentally, by their attempts to survive an uncertain world that doesn’t care who falls. Neither one can resist the allure of trying to make it in such a desolate world, forcing them time and time again to be walloped by false promises of the American dream.

II

In Edith Wharton’s profound upper-crust tragedy *The House of Mirth,* the figure of the Jew is written to be the bogeyman for the upper-class Americans who populate her imagined worlds. His masculinity threatens the world of Lily Bart, who finds herself closer to the Jewish man than she would like. Unlike *The Sun Also Rises*, the novel is written in the third person and the narration focuses on the apple of the Jewish man’s eye – Miss Lily Bart, a faltering beauty and once the pinnacle of the New York aristocracy. Lily Bart’s decline is juxtaposed with the rise of the Jewish Simon Rosedale. As she burns out into oblivion, a sun collapsing into itself, his star continues to climb, proving that both cannot prevail at society’s heights.

The novel's heroine, Lily, is held in esteem largely for her gleaming whiteness, which places her at the top of the social ladder. Observed by Lawrence Selden, the Gentile paragon of perfect masculinity, in the first few pages of the novel, she is both exquisite and at risk, lionized for her breeding and distinct superiority over other women of lower birth, yet also beginning to show signs of wear: "Under her dark hat and veil she regained the girlish smoothness, the purity of tint, that she was beginning to lose after eleven years of late hours" (Wharton, 4). The high-bred novelist's description of her leading lady makes a distinct reference to her effulgent purity but also its decline, suggesting that the age of the white American Gentile is coming to an end. Her whiteness and therefore her racialized characteristics are what make Lily so special to the men with whom she surrounds herself. As her name suggests, Lily is a hothouse flower, a product of her society. She would be nothing without the culture that cushions her. Critic Jennie Kassanoff observes:

> As a figure for whiteness, class pedigree, Anglo-Saxon origin, and incipient nativism, Lily articulates a central set of early-twentieth-century patrician anxieties: that the ill-bred, the foreign, and the poor would overwhelm the native elite, that American culture would fall victim to the "vulgar" tastes of the masses, and that the country's oligarchy would fail to reproduce itself and would commit "race suicide" (Kassanoff, 61).

Kassanoff suggests that race is the defining factor in Lily Bart's success and decline. I argue that while an important factor, race must be juxtaposed with the modern era's changing social strata, where financial success is more easily found, challenging the boundaries of the social pyramid that Lily Bart relies on for her personal comfort. Wharton's heroine conveys her anxieties regarding her personal status and the changing ethnicities that now have the ability to reach American high society. "Lily is a hyperevolved specimen whose purity demands a life sheltered from the encroaching dinginess of American democracy" (Kassanoff, 63). Lily's position is too

lofty to feel attainable, as the American experiment grows more and more diverse, her position grows more and more perilous, foreshadowing her inevitable tumble.

Lily's status is inseparable from the male gaze that celebrates her – the gaze of men like Lawrence Selden. Wharton then contrasts this gaze with the immediate introduction of the side-long gaze of the Jewish Simon Rosedale. Lily is doomed to perish, her positionality is one of fading importance. As a physical manifestation of the exclusive high society, she cannot exist when society opens up to those it can no longer ignore. As Lawrence Selden admires the beauty, he focuses on the traits which distinguish her as pure, white, and expensive. "Her hand, polished as a bit of old ivory" (Wharton, 7). Early on, Wharton foreshadows the plight that eventually will befall her heroine in the early pages of her novel. Selden reflects, "She was so evidently the victim of the civilization which had produced her, that the links of her bracelet seemed like manacles chaining her to her fate" (Wharton, 7). Wharton knows that her world of Gentile supremacy will eventually fall, and thus, her heroine must fall with it.

The diverging portraits of manliness presented in Selden and Rosedale provide a lens with which to view changing perceptions of manhood in the early twentieth century. Interestingly, Lily's first depiction is through the eyes of a man viewed as a paragon of Gentile masculinity. Selden's meditations on the figure of Lily Bart are juxtaposed several pages later with those through the sidelong eyes of Simon Rosedale. Simon Rosedale's masculinity is perceived as overbearing and pushy in contrast to the championed subtlety of Lawrence Selden's characterization. Rosedale's masculinity and view is demeaning, revealing the degradation of Gentile manhood, as that is the form that he works to embody. Selden's attractiveness is racialized in alignment with his whiteness. As a patrician Gentile-figure like Lily, he is believed to be the best of his breed and therefore they seemingly belong together. "Everything about him

accorded with the fastidious element in her taste" (Wharton, 65). Selden is the obvious choice for a perfect partner in Wharton's eyes. Lily continually ruminates on the differences between the two men, waxing on about their different personal attributes, both physical and emotional. While Rosedale is first described as plump and of a "Jewish type" Selden possesses "keenly-modelled dark features which, in a land of amorphous types, gave him the air of belonging to a more specialized race" (Wharton, 65). This early nod to the eugenics movement links success and class with different racial groups. Hildegard Hoeller writes in "'The Impossible Rosedale'" 'Race' and the Reading of Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* that "Wharton introduces Rosedale as "of the blond Jewish type" (14) as if that were enough to invoke a complete image of Rosedale. She obviously expects the reader not only not to take offense but also to supply an image of Rosedale" (Hoeller, 18). These two physical types in Wharton's imagery also depict various versions of the masculine form, with Selden's dark features being the ideal and Rosedale's plump blondness contradicting desirable manhood. Lily desperately wants Selden's masculine approval. She feels real love for Selden who refuses to marry, and therefore, cannot reciprocate in the way that she hopes he will. Meanwhile, Rosedale, who hopes to please Lily, repulses her in his masculine appearance despite his financial success. "But the man behind [the millions] grew increasingly repugnant in the light of Selden's expected coming" (Wharton, 176). Rosedale appears repulsive in his dress and in his shape, further promoting the idea that the Jewish man is unappealing in all aspects as a partner.

Lawrence Selden portrays a fading form of masculinity that Lily Bart, and Edith Wharton, both admire. Selden's respectable background establishes his sense of belonging amongst his peers despite his lack of financial success. "Everything about him accorded with the fastidious element in her taste, even to the light irony with which he surveyed what seemed to

her most scared. She admired him most of all, perhaps, for being able to convey as distinct a sense of superiority as the richest man she had ever met" (Wharton, 65). As his paramour admires him for his sense of self, he admires her for her positionality as a piece of artwork. "She longed to be something more than a piece of sentient prettiness, a passing diversion to his eye and brain" (Wharton, 95). Despite his representation as a preferred masculine companion for Lily, through Selden's gaze she will never be more than a piece of art that he may covet. His fetishization of the woman turns her into a glorified decorative object. Lily, however, in hoping originally to exist in the ways that upper-class women of the time cavort in, relies on men to see her as art, glorious in her breeding and her decorative elements all used to attract a mate. For Selden, an upper-class masculine success, to see her this way suggests her success in traditional womanhood. Thus, to Lily, Selden, and the world which he lives in, signifies the appeal of her traditional feminine role in Gilded Age America.[42]

The Jewish Simon Rosedale's characterization is plagued by tropes cast onto the Jewish man as a representation of his masculine inadequacies. "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" (Wharton, 14). The bodily softness of Rosedale compromises his masculinity, identifying him as a feminized man. These small sidelong eyes, ratlike in their depiction, are a common trope used to critique someone's "Jewish" features.[43] To the old-money characters of the novel with whom Wharton aligns herself, the Jew's rise in society and acquisition of wealth is an unjust accumulation of financial power. Wharton's careful wording of "bric-a-brac" suggests that his gaze cheapens all it lands on, including Lily herself. The notation of Rosedale's blondeness emphasizes his ability to

[42] And when Lily violates this ideal through her descent into poverty, Selden pulls back.
[43] The appraising air Wharton gives her Jew is reminiscent of the European moneylender trope.

assimilate, to blend in, a trait that makes him a more dangerous enemy than some of the other Jews examined in these modernist classics. “Rosedale's blondiness was further evidence of his origins among those highly assimilated German Jews who were, at the turn of the century, a well-entrenched Jewish aristocracy, living on the upper West Side of Manhattan” (Fineman, 25). His clothes, while fashionable, are part of his costume of assimilation. Wharton describes such costuming as like upholstery in regards to the fit; suggesting that they are too tight and that these items of clothing turn him into furniture, both objectifying him and proving him reductive. Rosedale’s prowess at integration threatens the bloodlines so carefully kept up by New York socialites whose invitation he craves. This capability to integrate makes the addition of the word “Jewish” as a descriptor noteworthy. “Evidently his Jewishness, for the critics as well as the author, has some important key to his identity and to his role in the novel unrelated to his actual religious behavior” writes Irene C. Goldman.[44] In Goldman’s analysis, Wharton explicitly explains Rosedale’s inability to fit in as a product of his racialization. Simon Rosedale is further stereotyped through his grasping at social advancement through financial means. “He had his race’s accuracy in the appraisal of values, and to be seen walking down the platform at the crowded afternoon hour in the company of Miss Lily Bart would have been money in his pocket, as he himself might have phrased it” (Wharton, 15). His status is built, it is not something he would have likely been born with as Kassanoff suggests. Rosedale believes he can acquire anything with a large enough check, even Lily herself. “‘I’ve got the money,’ he continued, clearing his throat, ‘and what I want is the woman—and I mean to have her too” (Wharton, 175). Rosedale knows that money can be converted into social capital, but his willingness to discuss it makes him ugly in the eyes of his supposed peers. “He’s going to be rich enough to buy us all out

[44] Irene. C. Goldman. “The ‘Perfect’ Jew and ‘*The House of Mirth*’: A Study in Point of View.” *Modern Language Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, Modern Language Studies, 1993, p. 25.

one of these days... The man is mad to know the people who don't want to know him" (Wharton, 81) remarks Gus Trenor, vulgar in his own way but still racially superior to Rosedale.[45]

Simon Rosedale's Jewish-coded pushiness extends through all aspects of his life, repelling Lily to her core. "There was something in the quality of his geniality which chilled her own" (Wharton, 113). The Jewish man is consistently perceived as overly intimate in his relationship to the novel's heroine. Rosedale's tone is critiqued by Lily for having "the familiarity of a touch" (Wharton, 14). Rosedale's familiarity is apparent in his taking his ease in surroundings where Wharton's cast of characters believe that he doesn't belong. "Mr. Rosedale, who was slipping through the crowd with an air half obsequious, half obtrusive, as though, the moment his presence was recognized, it would swell to the dimensions of the room" (Wharton, 92). This racialized pushiness is especially notable due to the way it is contrasted with the forcible nature of men like Gus Trenor, who constantly attempts to exploit Lily for his own personal gain.

> Rosedale, who seems to Lily dangerous, socially ambitious, overly familiar, and too interested in money, is actually less of all of these things than are Lily's so-called friends….And as for familiarity, it is Gus Trenor, one of her own set, who imposes on her physically and socially, not Rosedale. It is Trenor, not Rosedale, who exhibits a distinctly ill-bred, sexually charged manner towards Lily in Rosedale's opera box and later comes close to raping her. And Selden, while purporting to love Lily, is always ready to believe the worst of her, while Rosedale knows that the behavior they accuse her of "ain't [her] style" (301). Rosedale acts at once as the scapegoat for and the emblem of the secret identities of society insiders (Goldman, 33).

Rosedale's otherness promotes itself as a way to cast him aside and villainize him when, in fact, those whom Lily considers the crème de la crème of society are really more hideous in behavior than Rosedale. "His manner showed a readiness to adapt itself to the intimacy of the occasion"

[45] Gus Trenor later tries to assault Lily but still keeps his place at the top of society. No one can topple the white patrician man.

(Wharton, 113). This adaptability presents itself as plastic and malleable, almost snakelike in a fashion, for Rosedale seemingly adapts his personality to fit in in different ways at different times.

Simon Rosedale is drawn to Lily Bart's hyperfeminine whiteness, her position in society, and her high breeding, all traits adored by the eugenicists of the day. His masculinity threatens the success of her good breeding. Rosedale's marital interest in Lily is largely to advance his own social standing, to ensconce himself permanently in his idealized social situation. As Lily herself observes, "Mr. Rosedale wants a wife who can establish him in the bosom of the Van Osburghs and Trenors" (Wharton, 239). Marriage to Simon Rosedale is a business proposal, an economic and social investment used to advance one's power. While Lily and the rest of the elite view marriage similarly, what makes Rosedale's proposal so shocking is his willingness to discuss marriage in such a manner. "I'm just giving you a plain business statement about the consequences. You're not very fond of me – *yet*– but you're fond of luxury, and style, and amusement… and what I propose to do is to provide for the good time and do the settling" (Wharton, 177). The transactional wording relates marriage to an act of financial prostitution: social acceptance for wealth. Rosedale is aware of his social blunder, admitting his outspoken manner sets him apart from the blue bloods:

> I didn't mean to give offense; excuse me if I've spoken too plainly. But why ain't you straight with me – why do you put up that kind of bluff?... As a girl gets older, and things keep moving along, why, before she knows it, the things she wants are liable to move past her and not come back (Wharton, 177).

Rosedale's proposal and the wording he uses has a conspicuous note of otherness. His language is far less proper than that of Selden's, using slang words such as "ain't" that make his flawed breeding obvious. This purposeful flawed dialogue expresses Wharton's own beliefs on the lower status of the Jewish man when compared with the vocalized elegance of the upper-class

Gentile. Lily thus rejects the Jewish Rosedale, “with a promptness of scorn” (Wharton, 262). Hoeller comments:

> Wharton's narrative focus on Lily's refusal to marry Rosedale or to accept his business offers shows the author's participation in such prejudices. In her creation of Rosedale's character Wharton, a member of the elite herself, expresses her own anxieties about the fluidity of social boundaries (Hoeller, 19).

By casting Rosedale aside, Lily thus shuns the changing new world order that floats more flexible social boundaries. She encases herself in the dying world of the old-money elite, effectively sealing her fate and entombing herself. “She had rejected Rosedale’s offer without conscious effort; her whole being had risen against it; and she did not yet perceive that, by the mere act of listening to him, she had learned to live with ideas which would once have been intolerable to her” (Wharton, 262). As Lily’s world expands, she falls further, signifying that she can’t exist in such a fluid social environment that would allow a Jewish man to rise to the top without the assistance of a white woman.

Rosedale’s rise to financial success and an esteemed place in society is contrasted with Lily’s decline and death. As he begins to fit into New York society, Lily loses her place, falling down the social pyramid until she begins to embody her deepest fears. Wharton stresses their contrasting trajectories in a scene after Lily’s visit to the chemist for sleeping drops. “It was Rosedale, fur-coated, glossy and prosperous – but why did she seem to see him so far off, and as if through a mist of splintered crystals?” (Wharton, 288). These splintered crystals through which Lily sees her former suitor are a metaphorical representation of the shattered heights from which she has plunged. She is destitute and alone, in desperate need of assistance, even from a Jewish man like Simon Rosedale who has made his way up in the world. “Even through the dark tumult of her thoughts, the clink of Mr. Rosedale’s millions had a faintly seductive note” (Wharton, 176). Lily’s desperation is signaled in her growing willingness to associate herself with Rosedale

despite the humiliation that it brings her. “The necessity of accepting this view of their past relation, and of meeting it in the key of pleasantry prevalent among her new friends was deeply humiliating to Lily” (Wharton, 240). However, as Rosedale becomes more successful, his “Jewish traits” are given greater emphasis; his wealth is flashier, his language is ruder.

> The more Rosedale becomes incorporated into the upper class of New York, the more we see that he, depicted in an anti-semitic fashion, incorporates this class and its ideology. Denying his last chance to become a sentimental hero by not marrying the then "worthless" Lily out of love, he symbolizes the realist character and the capitalist; his race becomes a metaphor for the world Lily, and we, the reader, have to leave behind (Hoeller, 20).

Once he has fully assimilated into upper-class society, Lily makes a last-ditch attempt to grasp the new world order through a business proposal: marriage to the Jew. “Circumstances were breaking down her dislike for Rosedale ”(Wharton, 300). The reader can understand that these circumstances are ones of total desperation. No longer can she cling to the echelon of the patrician class which has cast her aside. “What debt did she owe to a social order which had condemned and banished her without trial?” (Wharton, 300). Too little too late the Gentile woman tries to regain her crown.

The Jewish man is Lily’s last chance after rejection by Selden. Before Rosedale responds to her attempt at a proposal, he once again showcases the financial success that has given him the key to social acceptance. “He gave a short laugh, and drew out a gold cigarette-case, in which, with plump jewelled fingers, he groped for a gold-tipped cigarette” (Wharton, 254). This ostentatiously flashy wealth, when contrasted with Lily’s newfound poverty, draws attention to the way their life paths have diverged. The excess of gold is further evidence of the new-money future signified by Rosedale’s success. These differences in social status are obvious to both characters but only Rosedale can verbalize these changes, perhaps due to his vulgarity. “I’m more in love with you than I was this time last year; but I’ve got to face the fact that the situation

is changed" Rosedale admits to her (Wharton, 255). Once hungry for the power offered by the white woman, Rosedale now knows that her offerings are significantly diminished and would dim his rising star.

Rosedale's relation to Lily in the novel's final section becomes even clearer when contrasted with that of his foil Lawrence Selden. In need of assistance, Lily finds herself turning to each of the two men. Selden, a member of the social elite, while a friend for Lily, is continually distant in his affections. “The only way I can help you is by loving you” (Wharton, 138). Like Lily, Selden is a product of his environment, unable to foresee a world where he is not at the top. “Selden had twice been ready to stake his faith on Lily Bart; but the third trial had been too severe for his endurance” (Wharton, 320). He views Lily as a spectacle of white femininity. While considered Lily’s best match, he is unable to ever fully risk himself for her. Selden offers Lily verbal assistance but never anything of substance, leaving her on her own to fend off the dark side of society.

> Selden continued to stand near her, leaning against the mantelpiece. The tinge of constraint was beginning to be more distinctly perceptible under the friendly ease of his manner. His self-absorption had not allowed her to perceive it at first; but now that her consciousness was once more putting forth its eager feelers, she saw that her presence was becoming an embarrassment to him. Such a situation can be saved only by an immediate outrush of feeling; and on Selden’s side the determining impulse was still lacking (Wharton, 306).

As Lily’s situation grows more desperate, Selden grows less interested in being her white knight. “She saw herself forever shut out from Selden’s inmost self” (Wharton, 307). They are no longer class equals. He cannot offer her assistance up the ladder; rather he succumbs to its rigidity, acknowledging their distance. Finally Selden sees her clearly beyond the aesthetic pleasures he had once found in her silhouette. “When Selden sees Lily emerge alone from Gus Trenor's house late at night, when he learns that she joined the Duchess of Beltshire's loose crowd, when he sees

her apparent resolve to remain in the employ of Mrs. Hatch - that is, whenever she fails to live up to his "republic of the spirit" – he sees her." (Tyson, 6). Once beyond the world they once resided in together, Selden's eyes are opened to all sides of Lily and is shocked by what he sees. "Something in truth lay dead between them – the love she had killed in him and could no longer call to life" (Wharton, 309). Simon Rosedale, in contrast with Selden's verbal support, exudes a form of concern for Lily that is vulgar in its presentation but full of kindness when he discovers that she has left Mrs. Hatch's abode to attempt to make it on her own. "I know it's none of my business – you've let me understand that often enough; but things are worse with you now than they have been before, and you must see that you've got to accept help from somebody" (Wharton, 299) Rosedale tells her. Naturally his assistance is financial. Despite her gratitude, Lily rejects this assistance.

Lily's death signifies the end of the Age of the Anglo-Saxon. While lying in her bed, dying of an overdose of sleeping medication, she imagines that she is cradling a baby in her arms. This imagined child is a symbol of the new life she might bring forth that her death extinguishes. Her line of supreme breeding dies with her.

> Slowly the thought of the word faded and sleep began to enfold her. She struggled faintly against it, feeling she ought to keep awake on account of the baby; but even this feeling was gradually lost in an indistinct sense of drowsy peace, through which, of a sudden, a dark flush of loneliness and terror tore its way. She started up again, cold and trembling with the shock: for a moment she seemed to have lost her hold on the child. But no – she was mistaken – the tender pressure of its body was still close to hers: the recovered warmth flowed through her once more, she yielded to it, sank into it, and slept (Wharton, 323).

This passage highlights Wharton's insistence that as the immigrant man grows more powerful, the American regime will fall into ruins. The Gentile woman clinging to the babe further emphasizes the end of such important and cultured bloodlines that eugenicists adored. When Lily briefly wakes in a fit of cold and loneliness, the world feels hard, too hard to keep living in, and

she succumbs to the ease of death. The paragon of female patrician excellence gives in to an immigrant future. Too late, Selden reappears, ready to propose marriage, only to find the Protestant woman dead in a strange bed with no baby, her body growing colder by the minute, her white skin paler than ever. Consequently, the world moves on without her.

Lily's death, however, makes space for Rosedale's expansive future, a future only somewhat different from the future projected for Hemingway's Robert Cohn. Though neither man wins his bride, both offer different perspectives on Jewish men as failed contenders for the hearts of affluent and upper-class Gentile women. While Hemingway's Robert Cohn leaves Spain with a broken heart and a bruised sense of dignity, Simon Rosedale's star is on the rise, leaving the white woman behind. Both men occupy a realm of personal success despite their lack of romantic triumph, perhaps the only way for authors to fight back against changing worldviews that they long to keep at the forefront of the American mind. Hence, the Jewish man comes increasingly close to the world's future as a member of society beyond the shady alleys of crime occupied by Jewish characters like Meyer Wolfsheim of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. In consequence, the American Dream narrative remains in place, for both men move still closer to the rings of society which they covet a place in, and therefore can one day be considered equals.

The One Ring to Ruin Them All:
Louie Marsellus, the Jewish Man as a Husband and Member of the Family

Willa Cather's novel *The Professor's House* offers a portrait of an interwar American identity that directly reflects the nativist sentiments of its era. Written largely in 1924, the year in which the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act was passed, the novel is similarly bent on excluding outsiders and keeping America "American." The act limited the number of people immigrating to the United States through a quota based on national origin.[46] Like the legislation, the novel focuses on keeping the stranger from becoming part of the American family. Through Cather's use of categories of race to designate who belongs and who presents a danger, the novel depicts a losing battle against an outsider who represents the country's unwanted future. The qualities of that unwanted future—burgeoning capitalism and racial otherness—align with antisemitic stereotypes in a plot that traces a decline from an idealized American past. Cather's novel is divided into three broken segments featuring a similarly broken family, as the world moves on in ways that they can't keep up with, or even want to.[47] Many of these family characters fear the new emerging roles that capitalism and immigration play in society, and wish to remain in the fondly remembered days of old with the ghosts of their pasts, when white Gentile superiority was enough for them to succeed. One of the main themes of the novel, then, according to Walter Benn Michaels in "The Vanishing American," is who can and can't be allowed into the American family.

[46] The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 was mentioned earlier in the introduction.
[47] While not much is known about Cather's personal life due to the provision in her will which disallowed the publication of her personal letters, it is likely that her personal relationships and status as a white woman vastly influenced the work she produced in her lifetime, including *The Professor's House.* As Ian F. A. Bell writes in the article "Re-Writing America: Origin and Gender in Willa Cather's '*The Professor's House,*" personal origin, assimilation and diversity were issues that the world was focused on while Cather wrote her novel, and are themes apparent in her writing.

The two characters that most symbolize these changing versions of America are Tom Outland and Louie Marsellus. Notably, Marsellus is Jewish, while Outland is not. These two men are the past and present love interests for the St. Peter's eldest daughter Rosamond, and they feature different identities and relationships with the St. Peter clan regarding the past and future of America. Tom Outland, the dead war hero and all-around American, is unanimously beloved by the St. Peter clan, while Louie Marsellus is presented as a materialistic and flashy outsider who steals a future that doesn't belong to him. The relationship between Tom Outland and Louie Marsellus, and the way the Professor and his family relate to the two men, exemplifies and embodies this tug-of-war between past and future in Cather's America and represents what Cather views as positive and negative developments in the interwar American identity. Cather's presentation of Marsellus emphasizes her belief that America's future fails to honor the beauty of an American past and stresses the dangers of allowing an immigrant into the family.

Identity and origin play an important role in defining characters as interlopers or accepted members of society in *The Professor's House*, as does the emphasis on racialized forms of whiteness. As Cather introduces the reader to her Professor, she cannot help but mention his breeding, showcasing him as the type of American that *belongs* in a proudly nativist United States. "Canadian French on one side, and American farmers on the other" (Cather, 4). The novel's title cites the Professor's title, drawing attention to a professional status linked to a knowledge of the past. His vocational position further emphasizes the importance of the past, enabling him to remain in a bygone era. The Professor's personal origin, while not under his control, is nonetheless something he reinvents through his rechristening. "It was an old joke — the Professor's darkest secret. At the font he had been christened Napoleon Godfrey St. Peter… Godfrey had abbreviated his name in Kansas, and even his daughters didn't know what it had

been originally" (Cather, 143). By rebaptizing himself, the Professor recreates a form of his personal identity that removes that connection to his ancestors across the pond dating back to "the Grande Armee" (Cather, 143) and deleting an illusion to his immigrant past.

Just as the Professor scrubs his own origins of foreign associations, he brings a whitewashed perspective to his views of others. Nordic whiteness is a defining measure of respectability, beauty, and approval for the Professor. Cather highlights Nordic whiteness in the characters the Professor approves of or finds to be beautiful in his world. Such characters include his wife, Lillian St. Peter, who was "very fair, pink and gold" and his younger daughter Kathleen, "pale, with light hazel eyes… To her father there was something very charming in the curious shadows her wide cheekbones cast over her cheeks and in the spirited tilt of her head" (Cather, 26-27). These are the women who the Professor decides are pleasing to the eye. His other daughter Rosamond, however, who falls from grace after her marriage to Louie Marsellus, a Jewish man, is described as beautiful to all except her father. "Nearly everyone considered Rosamond brilliantly beautiful. Her father, though he was very proud of her, demurred from the general opinion" (Cather, 26). Despite the admittedly appealing features Rosamond possesses, her willingness to give up her position as a Christian superior for a Jewish man and her sacrifice of Tom Outland seems to make her less beautiful in her father's eyes.

The racialized whiteness at hand is notable throughout *The Professor's House* as a way to distinguish characters from one another and to help decide their worth to the Professor. Many of the novel's first depictions touch upon the color of a character's skin. When Tom Outland walks into the lives of the Professor and his family, the second thing that the Professor notices about him is "the very fair forehead" (Cather, 95). Tom subsequently becomes the apple of the Professor's eye. Long after his death, the Professor cannot help but to contrast him and his color

with that of his son-in-law Louie. When criticizing Louie in his remembrance of Tom, the Professor is compelled to bring color into his argument. “Some people don’t care for strong colour” (Cather, 37). The Professor repeatedly makes his feelings on the importance of breeding and coloring quite clear. While his dislike of those who deviate from his chosen ideals of race and whiteness is never fully expressed, the sentiment is evident in how he views whiteness in regard to acceptability. It is consistently made clear that Louie’s Jewishness, and therefore the color that he is given, is what divides the family on their feelings towards him.

The Professor cannot see any suitor as a perfect fit for his American family, viewing his sons-in-law Louie and Scott mainly through each of their flaws. No man aside from the magnificently white Tom Outland, who had grown up with the St. Peter girls, would be good enough in the eyes of the Professor.

> In *The Professor's House,* one's ancestors cannot be the members of one's family; this is why the defense of the family against ‘strangers’ like Louie Marsellus is bound to fail. The essence of the family is its inability to maintain the integrity to which the theorists of racial purity were committed (Michaels, 234).

Linking Outland to ancestral family lines further places him as a figure of an idealized American past for the St Peters. However, this racialization of Marsellus is complicated by his view of Outland as a sort of brother. “By claiming Tom as a brother, Louie marshals figurative uses of biologically based language against the racist literalists who would balk at his Jewishness” (Wilson, 152). While we never know what Tom may have thought of Louie, his position as a chosen brother repositions Louie in this racialized world as closer to “white” than the family would prefer.

Perhaps the most explicit revelation of the Professor’s racial views comes in a historic tableau he stages with his two sons-in-law. Though adjacent to the plot, it nonetheless

communicates in another register how he sees the racial and cultural conflict of his own era–and in his own family.

> He posed his two sons-in-law in a tapestry-hung tent, for a conference between Richard Plantagenet and the Saladin, before the walls of Jerusalem. Marsellus, in a green dressing-gown and turban, was seated at a table with a chart, his hands extended in reasonable, patient argument. The Plantagenet was standing, his plumed helmet in his hand, his square yellow head haughtily erect, his unthoughtful brows fiercely frowning, his lips curled and his fresh face full of arrogance. The tableau had received no special notice, and Mrs. St. Peter had said dryly that she was afraid nobody saw his little joke. But the Professor liked his picture, and he thought it quite fair to both the young men (Cather, 59-60).

Richard Plantagenet was a European Duke known for his work in various state offices in England, Ireland, and France as well as his failed attempt at taking the throne of England. Saladin was Egypt and Syria's first Sultan, best known for his time leading the Muslim campaign against the Roman Catholic Crusades. That the Professor casts his son-in-law as a Muslim reveals an Orientalist dimension to his view of Marsellus's Jewish identity. Edward Said, who coined the term Orientalism, observes how a "Sovereign Western Consciousness" creates an East of "otherness." In this case being a fictive figure of the Jew as Muslim. The contrast of the failed European against the more successful religious outsider is something to take note of when one reads the novel. The Professor's "little joke" holds a grain of truth regarding the past and future of the Gentile world. Marsellus as Saladin is ultimately more successful than Scott as the Plantagenet, both historically and in their actual lives. Because the Professor is unable to directly express his thoughts, he uses the portrait to make visible how he sees the two men. The further characterization of Marsellus-Saladin as patient and reasonable and Scott-Plantagenet as haughty, unthoughtful, and arrogant reveals the emotional dynamic in the relationship between Scott and Louie, and how the Professor views each of them in his family unit. Here the history professor evokes the historical past to give more depth to contemporary antisemitism and better

situate it in a world he understands. By locating both characters in such historical drama, he once again projects the past onto the present day and forces the members of his family to relive these moments with him.

Louie Marsellus is representative of the alien community that modernism promises, present in the family because of a wave of immigration that swept the nation in the 1870s and onward, and taking over the American suburbs, preying on those who "belong." He is the family outsider that the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 tries to prevent from entering the homestead. By marrying Rosamond, Marsellus does not insert himself into the family; instead, he takes her out of the family with him. In his words, "I came along, a stranger and carried off Rosie" (Cather, 148). This line echoes Shakespeare's *Othello*, which also deals with themes of jealousy, race, and otherness. "Your daughter (if you have not given her leave)/I say again, hath made a gross revolt,/Tying her duty, beauty, wit, and fortunes/In an extravagant and wheeling stranger" (Act 1 Scene 1, lines 132-134). This line arouses that same familial anxiety about the loss of an esteemed daughter**.** Cather's wording implies that Marsellus knows how the family views him and their marriage. He is fully aware of his status as "other" and the family's sense of Rosamond as now lost to his alien charms. Through their marriage, and the eventual child it will bring forth, Cather implies that the pure whiteness of the family line will be lost. Rosamond, in losing her status as a St. Peter and becoming a Marsellus, removes herself from the family and further makes clear the loss of the Northern European bloodlines which run through the country and in the home of the St Peters.

> For *The Professor's House* is also, as the title of Book One ("The Family") suggests, a family matter and one of its central concerns is with exactly who can and who can't belong to the Professor's family. Tom can: even before his engagement to the Professor's daughter, Rosie, he was "like an older brother" (132); marrying him would have been marrying someone who was already "almost a member of the family" (173). Louie can't: the Professor is amazed by and

> somewhat contemptuous of his wife's (atavistic, as if she were still committed to the melting pot) willingness "to adopt anyone so foreign into the family circle" (78), (Michaels, 223).

The family of Cather's novel is representative of the state of the American country she holds so dear. By decreeing who belongs, Cather not only critiques the melting pot attitudes held in her present-day America but mourns the passing of the anglicized United States into which she was born.

Tom Outland represents Cather's idealized version of America's storied past and her contempt for the materialistic attitude expressed by many in inter-war America. In the eyes of the St Peters, Tom Outland is the blueprint of the all-American man. His working-class background makes him approachable while still humble and emphasizes the American Dream ideals approved of by the Gentile Americans with whom Cather identifies. In the chapter "Tom Outland's Story," Tom relays his experiences in New Mexico on the mesa, where he works the land, and his exploration of its ancient indigenous cliff city**.** Outland continually expresses his contempt for those who live a life focused on commercial values. Much of his narration contemplates the beautiful simplicity of the natural world and is disdainful of those who don't understand its appeal. "The mesa then operates as an historical ideal as well as an aesthetic one, providing a past that can be juxtaposed to a degraded present as a model for social reorganization" (Wilson, 64). Notably, Tom Outland's appreciation for the mesa and the people who live there relies on a Eurocentric and nativist perspective.

Tom's largest critique of America's future stems from its obsession with capitalistic success. When Tom travels to Washington D.C. to showcase the ruins he's discovered on the Blue Mountain, leaving behind his trusted friend Rodney Blake to protect the mesa, he discovers that the men he's trying to appear in front of are slaves to the attractive promises of a

free-enterprise America.[48] This is the America in which Louie Marsellus will thrive. Not so Tom Outland: "I left Washington, at last, wiser than I came. I had no plans, I wanted nothing but to get back to the mesa and live a free life and breathe free air, and never, never again to see hundreds of little black-coated men pouring out of white buildings" (Cather, 213). Blake's efforts to procure for himself the kind of life celebrated by capitalism shock Tom on his return to New Mexico. When Tom comes back to the New Mexico mesa, he is disgusted by this sacrifice of what he had believed to be shared values. He separates from Blake and sets off on his own, ultimately landing in the Professor's garden, and so ends the story that he tells the Professor and which the Professor will remember the rest of his life.

By ending Tom Outland's life before he can be tainted by the promise of American capitalism or by immigration, Cather effectively preserves him as a symbol of a Golden Age. The reader is intended to adore the distantly remembered Tom and long for the simpler times that he embodies. "He had no time to communicate his discovery or to commercialize it [before being killed in the war]" (Cather, 30). His invention of the Outland vacuum and his patent keep his legacy safe from harm as his death prevents the later commercialization from being his flaw. "A hand like that, had he lived, must have been put to other uses… It would have had to 'manage' a great deal of money, to be the instrument of a woman who would grow always more extracting. He had escaped all that" (Cather, 236-237). The Professor views Tom's death as somewhat lucky. Selfishly, he himself can now remember Tom exactly as he pleases without any interference from the man himself and how he may have reacted to a changing America. "Dead, Tom belongs to [the Professor]. He can keep Tom's memory in his own fastidious way, apart from the public inheritors of Tom's wealth, Rosamund and Louie Marsellus" argues Loretta Wasserman in "The

[48] Notably, by trying to present artifacts he has no claim to, Outland undermines the indigenous people he believes he is attempting to preserve, a standard white savior complex that the reader is meant to root for.

Music of Time: Henri Bergson and Willa Cather" (234). Without Tom's own voice, the Professor can reinterpret his world through how he believes the younger man may have responded, using Tom to further the Professor's own secret beliefs. His death immortalizes him as the perfect figure of America's golden past. Through each character's different and separate remembrance of Tom, they each rewrite what he means to them and the family, effectively reshaping history, the past, and his origin.

Outland's story relies on an idea of "American values" and a love of an American history based on whiteness and the natural world, views that Cather feels are fading away from her America, and views paradoxically associated in this novel with indigenous peoples. It's worth noting that Tom does not simply *discover* indigenous ruins but asserts that he has found his own indigenous ancestry. When he and Rodney come upon a woman's mummified remains in Cliff City, he names her Mother Eve and claims her as his own.

> Tom's appropriation of Indian culture provides both himself and America with an imaginary origin. This grand gesture seeks to legitimize modern America, of course, as the descendant of a culture that in the mundane register of historical accuracy it could more truly be said to have systematically annihilated (Wilson, 68).

Tom thrives on his claim to indigeneity, where his ascribed whiteness decides what truly occurred back in the cavern with Mother Eve. Notably, he names her after the Judeo-Christian Old Testament's first woman. It is Tom Outland, the white man who decides her story and that of the indigenous people of the novel. His view surrounding indigenous people is wholly based on the claim he feels he has on indigeneity, as evidenced by his alleged descent from them. By claiming this alleged indigeneity, Tom is absolved of the crimes and injustices that white people have done to indigenous peoples.

> At least part of what it means, then, for Tom to claim descent from Indians is to claim exemption from the perils of assimilation and naturalization, perils that

> Cather insists upon by contrasting him with the man who would be his "brother" when he should be his "rival" (166), (Michaels, 223).

Through Outland's appropriation he lays claim to a world that he doesn't belong to and uses it to position himself above the world he resides in.

Tom Outland's claim to indigeneity is a false one that scorns the living reality of indigenous peoples. Notably, in his casual bigotry towards the indigenous peoples of his own era, he draws on the same stereotypes of effeminacy that are used to condemn Louie. His chosen world, wholly in the past, views Cather's present as undignified; he is ignorant of the origin of America, beyond the European settlers who colonized it in the fifteenth century. To him, indigenous people are just a relic of "ancient times" (Cather, 173).[49] Outlander's only mention of living indigenous people suggests innate disapproval of their lifestyle and suggests that indigenous men are more effeminate than the "approved of" American man.

> He mentions them only once to compare the men's "contemptible" habit of helping to shop for their wives' clothes to the practice of the pathetic bureaucrat Bixby; and the paradigm of a man who shops with women is, of course, Louie, who chooses all his wife's clothes; when the Professor receives the "cruellest" hurt "that flesh is heir to" (155) from his daughter, it is on a "shopping expedition" (281) with her to Chicago, an expedition that marks not only the fact that he has lost Rosamond to Louie but also that, in losing her to Louie, he has, like Rosamond herself, "become Louie" (86), (Michaels, 235).

The contrast here between Outland and the expected and idealized view of American masculinity and the "effeminate" nature of American "outsiders" is often emphasized in the characterization of Marsellus. Cather's characterization of Tom Outland as the golden standard is contrasted by the stark differences between him and his foil Louie Marsellus, who is used as a commentary on the type of man America should expect to be overrun by in the coming years.

Louie's generosity towards his wife is associated with his suggested femininity and "weaker characteristics" that further prove him as a foil for Tom. Louie's femininity acts as an

[49] Perhaps this is the type of America that Cather still longs for.

outlet for the imagined Jew of the 1920s. While Louie views it as a sign of affection to buy presents for Rosamond, characters like Scott and Kathleen (and perhaps Tom Outland if he had lived longer) regard the act with distaste. In her book *How Jews Became White Folks*, Karen Brodkin points out that such attitudes appear not just in the writings of Willa Cather, but also in American society at the turn-of-the-century. "Stereotypes invented in service of slavery and imperialism have been rediscovered and recycled to support domination over new groups of proletarians. Thus, nonwhite Asian and Jewish men came to be stereotyped as effeminate, more like "their" women than white men" (Brodkin, 84). Brodkin explores howJewish men were continually viewed as both "effeminate but lecherous" (Brodkin, 124). Cather doesn't imply Louie has a lecherous spirit, but she gives him a zest for fashion and shopping, things that are typically considered feminine. Louie takes a strong interest in dressing his wife. "He selects all my things for me" Rosamond says with pride (Cather, 67). Louie, in keeping with the stereotype of the American Jew, adopts a love language of gifts and expenditure. His affection for his wife is apparent in all he does, and yet he takes sublime delight in spoiling his bride. The Professor even notes Louie's excellent taste in women's clothing. Marsellus thrills in gifting his young wife with furs in flattering colors, and jewels to adorn her white throat. Louie is rejected by many of the men of the novel, while women adore him, further suggesting his link to a more feminine world.

Louie Marsellus represents what Cather fears to be America's future, an immigrant, a Jew, and a man who is vividly successful in his capitalist ventures. His largest threat to America comes from his ability to pass as white. As a decidedly "new-money" Jewish man, he embodies many of the antisemitic tropes of the time period, both in his physical appearance and in his attributes of character meant to differentiate him from the St Peters.[50]

[50] New money that many would argue he has not earned.

> Louie's eyes were vividly blue, like hot sapphires, but the rest of his face had little colour — he was a rather mackerel-tinted man. Only his eyes, and his quick, impetuous movements, gave out the zest for life with which he was always bubbling. There was nothing Semitic about his countenance except his nose—that took the lead. It was not at all an unpleasing feature, but it grew out of his face with masterful strength, well-rooted, like a vigorous oak-tree growing out of a hill-side (Cather, 32).

If not for Louie's nose, he would be able to "pass" for Gentile, making him a dangerous type of Jew. This dangerous Jew appears in many novels of the early twentieth century, and includes characters such as Edith Wharton's equally, if not more, successful Simon Rosedale in *The House of Mirth*, a man who embraces a society that has excluded him and grows more powerful than society itself. As part of Cather's project to mark his difference, the Professor's depiction of Louie's skin cannot simply be "pale;" that would allow him to be too close to approved whiteness. Instead Louie is relegated to "mackerel." Louie is further racialized by the Professor as "unusual and exotic" and as a foreign member of society.[51] However, his ability to mostly assimilate allows him many of the opportunities that would otherwise be barred for someone of his background. "In Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Cather, the only thing strangers want is to join the family. What is to be feared most is the foreigner's desire to become American" (Michaels, 224). Notably, in the early twentieth century, Jews were banned from many social settings in order to protect the upper-class from general association, as Louie Marsellus is from the fictional Arts and Letters club. Cather's choice of the words "well-rooted" are also something to note: Marsellus is not the traditional Jewish immigrant of the past like *The Great Gatsby*'s Meyer Wolfsheim, but instead is almost tumorous, unable to be removed from the family unit with his well-established roots.

Much like the Jews of early twentieth century America, the fictional Louie is excluded from many things that men are expected to take pleasure in, such as private social spaces. While

[51] Cather, Willa. *The Professor's House.* New York. Vintage Books, 1925. p. 64.

he is incapable of being removed from the family, he is not made welcome in many of the spaces that the family enjoys. His brother-in-law Scott takes special pleasure in keeping Louie out of the social spaces he frequents, such as the gentleman's club the Arts and Letters, as a way to mark his superiority. "I happen to know, Louie, that Scott blackballed you for the Arts and Letters," (Cather, 147) Rosamond tells her husband. Scott's jealousy surrounding Louie stems from his insecurities about his own personal success as a newspaperman. He can't accept the Jewish outsider who is more successful than he is. His anger blends together with his antisemitic tendencies to create an ugly concoction of emotion and strategy in order to hurt Marsellus. "Scott would blackball Marsellus if his name ever came to the vote [for a country club position]" (Cather, 66), says the Professor to Lillian when discussing the fraught relationship between the two men. While Louie himself may not view Scott with the same malice, the tension between the two men is palpable. The only way for Scott to get at Louie without hurting the members of the family who he deems acceptable is through exclusion based on racialized and religious status. This is once again emphasized through the Arts and Letters club that Louie attempts to join. The Professor knows that Louie will never be allowed to join such a brotherhood of man, and so suggests to Lillian that she keep him from even trying. "I wish you could keep Louie from letting his name go up for the Arts and Letters. It's not safe yet. He hasn't been here long enough" (Cather, 65). As a relative newcomer, his social opportunities are mired by his acknowledged differences. While the Professor intends to protect Louie's feelings in regards to the Arts and Letters, he further perpetuates this never-ending cycle of exclusion.

As the black sheep of the family, Marsellus is aware of the dislike that the St. Peters feels for him, but is unable to express his feelings on the matter in any way that would promote a change in action. Marsellus can only take the abuse. His position as an outsider makes him

unable to stand up to their slights directly, unable to risk his place in the family structure by confronting those they've deemed able to belong. A comment on culinary preferences stands in for other things: "The truth is that I like all Scott's dinners, it's he who doesn't like mine! He's the intolerant one…. And it's that way about lots of things" (Cather, 92). The family rarely shows any notice of Marsellus's generosity and other positive traits. Cather, however, gives Marsellus a kindness that goes beyond the traditional tropes pushed onto him, dividing her stance from that of her more aggressively antisemitic characters. His self-awareness along with how he responds to these insults makes him the most sympathetic character in the novel, perhaps in direct opposition to the animosity directed at him by many members of the family whom Cather narrates through. "He's too polite to *take* notice but he feels it. He's very sensitive, under a well-schooled impersonal manner" (Cather, 35) says Lillian about her son-in-law's exclusion from the family folds. To be an assimilated American Jew, Marsellus must act as though the slights against him slide off his back. Cather's choice of the term "well-schooled" suggests that this isn't the first time that he's been slighted either. Marsellus is stuck within the two-dimensional identity that being a Jew in 1920s America forces one to become through the eyes of others, knowing that his positionality complicates the total acceptance that he craves and that Tom Outland won so easily by simply stepping into the Professor's garden many years ago. In his 1897 essay *Strivings of the Negro People,* W. E. Du Bois comments on this dichotomous identity struggle as an American viewed as "other." "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity," Du Bois writes. Marsellus's inability to remain in America's Gentile past, a past that historically has not

been welcoming to the Jewish people, divides him from the St. Peter clan that he nonetheless claims as chosen family.

The St Peter's family are split by their views on Marsellus as a family member, with all except for Lillian and Rosamond seeing him as the avaricious figure of a Jewish stereotype. The Professor often places Marsellus as a sort of Shylock figure, catching him in poses that hint at the Professor's belief that Louie's life is based on wealth he can't claim. "In a corner, beside the steaming brass tea-kettle, sat Lillian and Louie, a little lacquer table between them, bending, it seemed, over a casket of jewels" (Cather, 61). Here Marsellus is depicted as the Jewish figure who takes the wealth he doesn't deserve, similar to the Shylock of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. "Like Tom, Louie has arrived in Hamilton'an extravagant and wheeling stranger' (the Professor's scornful allusion, p. 257) to bring the St. Peter family princely gifts. But St. Peter refuses the gifts, persisting in seeing Marsellus's wealth as a kind of robbery" (Wasserman, 237). Once again, Cather suggests that Marsellus is stealing wealth that belongs to the dead American hero Tom Outland, who would have never had the inclination to turn his patent into the dollars and cents that Kathleen scorns Marsellus for making. While the past is for golden longing, the present is the hard, commercialized shiny silver of the nickel and dime. To "[Professor] St. Peter, [Marsellus] is in several senses a usurper, one who in the act of seizure has corrupted that which he now possesses" (Pizer, 64). Memory of the past and the preservation of its values are clear and important themes in the eyes of Cather. Those who replace long-gone figures or dare challenge such set notions are viewed as dangerous or otherly. "Structurally, [*The Professor's House*] is all about discovering, recreating, preserving the historical or archeological past" (Wasserman, 232). In Cather's characterization of the Professor it is apparent that to him, preserving Outland means excluding Marsellus's offers of family. The Professor believes that he

must deny the legal son-in-law to properly honor the man he believes to be his true son. In refusing the gifts offered to him, the Professor is able to allow himself what he considers to be a proper honoring of Outland's memory. "And there can be no question of money between me and Tom Outland. I can't explain just how I feel about it, but it would somehow damage my recollections of him" (Cather, 50) states the Professor when the Marsellus family offers him financial support. By accepting the gifts that he believes Tom Outland would never have wanted his memory turned into, the Professor would have cheapened what the boy had meant to him. The dollars and cents of Outland has become, have allowed Louie Marsellus to push his way further into Tom Outland's memory. If the Professor had taken them for his personal gain then he too would have been pushed into the future with Marsellus.

The family is unable to remove the antisemitic lens through which they view Louie when they interact with him, a representation of their longing for the America of old and their frustrations with Louie's believed social climbing. Many of the St. Peters view Louie as undeserving of the life he leads. His wealth comes from his wife Rosamond, the heir to Tom Outland's vacuum patent. Marsellus's work allows him to create a profit off the patent and become considerably wealthier than the rest of the St. Peter clan. Still, the Professor acknowledges: "It was only Louie's time and technical knowledge that ever made Tom's discovery succeed commercially" (Cather, 48). Without Louie, there would be no success to Tom's patent, proving his worthwhile claim to the fortune. However, the family can't stand the fate of Tom's genius being turned into the future of American capitalism. "I can't bear it when [Louie] talks about Outland as his affair" (Cather, 36) fumes the Professor. Moreover, they cannot stand the idea of Marsellus deriving his success, as if parasitically, from Outland's invention. The Professor complains, "they've got everything he ought to have had, and the least

they can do is be quiet, and not convert his very bones into a personal asset. It all comes down to this, my dear: one likes the florid style, or one does not" (Cather 36). Interestingly, the use of the word florid, which as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* means: "highly ornate; showy, ostentatious." Once again the Professor critiques Louie in an antisemitic manner based on his new money status. This stance from the Professor continues the running theme of a nostalgia for a long-gone past, but also makes clear his distaste of the commercialization that Louie is meant to represent. Louie cannot break out of the mold of foreigner and interloper. Kathleen continues this critique when she compares Louie's view of Tom with her own, telling her father that Louie's view is based on money while hers is about the New Mexico mesa and memory. Kathleen and her husband Scott's view of Outland is highly territorial of a world that doesn't belong to them. One view is focused on the future of capitalism and one is about a world that no longer exists.

When speaking about Louie, Kathleen and Scott cannot resist using rhetoric that reminds them that their brother-in-law is an outsider. They loathe that he has become part of their family instead of their beloved Tom Outland and abhor his "unjust" claim to the life Outland could have had with them. Their internal bias against Louie colors their perception of the man, and of Rosamond by association, "the Marselluses have no mercy" Scott says to himself (Cather, 134). Scott's view of the Marselluses is filtered through the antisemitic tropes popular in the time period, further dissociating Jewish people from traditional Christian mercy.The St. Peters cannot accept that their family is being forced into the future and feel like they've lost those who had accepted Louie. The Professor reflects that "since Rosamond's marriage to Marsellus, both she and her mother had changed bewilderingly in some respects—changed and hardened. But Louie who had done the damage, had not damaged himself" (Cather, 140). In marrying Marsellus,

Rosamond has been ruined by association in the eyes of her family. Her mother Lillian has also been changed by this association, given her kindness to the wolf in sheep's clothing. The acceptance that Lillian and Rosamond extend to Marsellus makes them somewhat strangers to the Professor, Kathleen and Scott. The three insiders refuse to blame the Mother Mary figure Lillian, instead placing it on the outsider bound to them by law and his wife who brings him into the folds of family.

The growing divide between Rosamond and Kathleen invokes the family's more complicated rift between those who long for the past and those willing to move on and embrace America's unknown possibility as a nation of more than just Gentiles. To accept Louie is to accept the future, but a pronounced dislike of the man holds the family in the past. Kathleen's dislike of Louie colors her feelings towards her sister. Rosamond's acceptance of Louie makes her an even greater villain to family hegemony than he is. "[Rosamond's] become Louie. Indeed, she's worse than Louie. He and all that money have ruined her" (Cather, 71), Kitty comments spitefully about the older sister whom she once adored. Kitty believes that Louie has conned both Rosie and the family, even telling her father that if he had done something regarding Outland's patent after his death that there would be nothing for Louie to "come along and exploit, until he almost thinks it's his own idea" (Cather, 71). The antisemitic tinge to these comments is hard to ignore. By insinuating the American Jew is simply there to exploit the family out of their wealth, Kathleen continues the narrative of exclusion. There is no way for Louie to make up for her imagined slights. By hating Louie she must also hate the sister she then deems worse than the Jew. "All at once she seemed to be done with her sister. Her father believed she couldn't forgive Rosie's forgetting Tom so quickly" (Cather, 73). The Professor's understanding of the event is overly black and white. To him, the past and present must remain separate. For Rosie to move on

and marry, it must mean that she has forgotten Outland. However, it is clear that Rosamond is simply able to acknowledge both parts of her life in a way her father is unable to. In the same passage, the Professor suggests to Kathleen that if Rosamond has a grievance, it's because "you've been untactful about Louie" (Cather, 70). Kathleen herself admits that the schism between herself and Rosamond is in part due to the way she speaks about Louie behind his back. "Even if I have, why should she be so revengeful? Does she think nobody else calls him a Jew? I don't mind being called a Gentile" (Cather, 70). Kathleen's comment here is notable in its lack of understanding of her privilege. It is easy not to mind being called a Gentile. Being called a Jew, however, is different in their society, a tool used to keep people separate and to keep him out of the richest parts of familial and societal life. Louie's religion is used against him by Kathleen in order to keep him separate from those she deems acceptable. Kathleen believes that Rosamond's first loyalty should be to her blood and the past and not to her husband and the future of their life together. "Rosamond's engagement is… [from Kathleen's perspective]... the betrayal of a still-present and still-substantial entity [regarding Tom Outland]. Her short falling is that she was *not* willing to sleep with the dead" (Lucenti, 224). While she still wants to honor Tom through concrete action, Rosamond acknowledges that her life must move on. She is a young woman who can offer more to the world by moving with the times rather than staying in the past. Kathleen, however, refuses to move on beyond the past, much like her father.[52] By accepting modernity in the form of her sister's husband, she believes that all she remembers will be lost to the annals of time. Kathleen fails to comprehend how her actions against the Jew in their midst would create tensions in her relationship with Rosamond.

The stereotypes imposed on the figure of Louie Marsellus extend all the way to the simplest of moments, such as at a family dinner party, and are used to highlight the themes of

[52] Who notably prefers her to Rosamond.

familial exclusion which run through the novel. Food is often used as a way to bring people together, to set aside differences and break bread as a united group. Here, Cather manipulates a simple dinner party into a heartbreaking moment of exclusion. "It's Scott's dinner to-night. Your tastes are so different, I can't compromise. And this is his, from the cream soup to the frozen pudding" (Cather, 92). Taste and assimilation are often linked in symbolic scenes of literature. These foods are offered up to the reader as examples of Scott's All-American tastes, while Louie is pushed to the sidelines with tastes deemed too different to join in at dinner. Louie begs to be viewed as part of this American family. "But who said I didn't like cream soup and frozen pudding? … And are those *haricots verts* in the cream sauce? I thought so! And I like those, too" he protests (Cather, 92). Louie's use of French when discussing green beans (haricots verts) is another way that Cather flags him as a familial stranger. No matter how Louie insists that he too is American, he still cannot fully break into the family, doomed to forever be an outsider.

Cather further complicates her characterization of Louie Marsellus by giving him positive attributes that contrast with the stereotypes afforded to him. Marsellus is grateful for Outland's wealth and is proud of his benefactor, working to keep his name alive through the scholarships he sets up in his name, and memorials. Even his creation of the Outland House as his new home for himself and Rosamond is meant as a way to preserve Tom Outland, as a way to keep him in the family. By acknowledging Tom's patent is what gives Rosamond and therefore Louie the ability to create a home together, Louie attempts to respect Tom's memory. "The true memorializer of Tom is Louie, who allows the past to live in the present" (Wasserman, 237). By allowing Outland's name to exist in the present, Louie keeps Tom from fading entirely into the past, allowing his chosen brother to live through his work regarding his memory. This favorable sentiment of Cather's is not always shared by the family who often find him (perhaps purposely)

to be an oversimplified caricature of antisemitic tropes. “Marcellus, to St. Peter, is too much the ingratiating Jew who is too anxious to please” (Pizer, 64). The family’s dislike of their “ingratiating Jew” taints all the work that Louie puts in to become one of them, keeping him forever on the edge of their inner circle.

Willa Cather’s novel *The Professor’s House* is a love letter to a past it cannot claim as its own. Tom represents a flawed American past, blind to its reality and the problems that plague those who don’t look like he does. Tom relies on a preserved history, one most visible in his story of the mummified Mother Eve. He promises the St. Peter family mesas, a cultural history, origin stories, and people that are not his to give away or lay claim to. This is not his history. This is not the history of Willa Cather. Even so, this is the past that the St. Peters refuse to let go of in their fear of the modern world, where one doesn’t have to be a Gentile to thrive. The Professor, and much of his family, refuse to give up their grasp on their past or the history of Tom Outland, which can’t belong to anyone in its entirety. The novel fears the future that Louie Marsellus represents, as someone who doesn’t fit the mold of America’s past, but instead represents a melting pot future. The family and Cather alike dread the capitalist society that Louie promises through his commercialization of the Outland patent. Louie and Rosamond represent what the country’s future will look like as America becomes a more heterogeneous society that embraces more than just one perspective, a future that the majority of the St Peter family, and Cather cannot bear to face.

As the old fades into the sunset and the sun begins to rise on the twentieth century, there is a changing of the guard in America. After receiving word of a baby Marsellus on the way, the Professor falls into a deep depression. Marsellus’s children would be America’s future, something that eugenicists and Cather alike suggest is the downfall of the Gentile America

within which the Professor has experienced the successes of both his marriage and his work. Rosamond's gleaming whiteness is now permanently linked to the racialized otherness embodied by her husband and father of her child. Here, Cather links birth and death, suggesting that the extinction of the whiteness embraced by many of the St. Peter clan is coming sooner than expected. As the Professor wrestles with the knowledge of a grandchild who may bear the hooked nose of his Jewish father, he retreats back into his study in the old house, much like a tortoise into its shell. Even when choosing a place of lodging, he is unable to resist the thrall of bygone locations and memories. Whilst taking a nap on the ancient couch in his study, with only a dressmaker's mannequin, Tom's old blanket, and the old gas stove for company, he awakens to find the window shut and the room full of gas.

This is the Professor's crossroads moment. Will he let himself perish, and truly become part of the past? Or will he give in to the present, and get up, turn the gas off and choose to live? "But suppose he did not get up—? How far was a man required to exert himself against accident? How would such a case be decided under English law? He hadn't lifted his hand against himself — was he required to lift it for himself?" (Cather, 252). Cather keeps the Professor's choice a secret. There are no lines suggesting whether or not he actively tries to save himself. Perhaps he is too weak to stand. Perhaps he chooses to "go gentle into that good night" (Thomas, line 1). It is Augusta who pulls the Professor out of his study, forcing him to survive and prolonging the life of the white man. "You must have got up and tried to get to the door before you were overcome" (Cather, 254). Was it to lock the door and wait for death? Or was it to save himself? The reader remains unsure. "When he was confronted by accidental extinction, he had felt no will to resist, but had let chance take its way, as it had done with him so often… he did remember a crisis, a moment of acute, agonized strangulation" (Cather, 258).

This idea of the extinction of the white race does not belong only to Cather but also features prominently in Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, where the patrician heroine Lily Bart would sooner die than marry and breed with Simon Rosedale. It appears again in Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises,* where Jake Barnes falls victim to an unnamed war injury that is hinted to be sexual in nature. Due to Barnes's injury, the Jewish Robert Cohn is able to swoop in and seduce Barnes's lady love, the beautifully Gentile woman Lady Brett Ashley. All three of these Jewish men have gone beyond the traditional stereotypes that characterize F. Scott Fitzgerald's hideously Jewish Meyer Wolfsheim, whose grotesque characterization implies his marked status as a first-generation immigrant. This then makes their assimilation easier, making them a larger threat to the extinction of a solidly Protestant United States of America.

> For the culture of early twentieth-century America, life is too pleasant with one's comfortable home, new possessions, and long holidays to sense what has been lost, and there are no longer nefarious Shylock-like Jewish bankers to dramatize the evil of the forces in power but rather a cultivated and kind Louie Marcellus. So even St. Peter, after his near-death accident, decides to accept rather than bemoan his condition, and Marcellus the Jew remains in control of what had been Tom's and the Professor's world (Pizer, 64).

While the Professor lives to see another day in a rapidly changing world, his choice to withdraw and choose apathy further symbolizes the relinquishment of a nativist American Dream. Willa Cather's Jew is a risky figure in her novel. Louie Marsellus and his ability to pass in the U.S. is representative of the changing power structures that Willa Cather and her Professor seem to fear, reminding us that no one can truly avoid the future.

Ruminations on the Past and Future

Edith Wharton, Willa Cather, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway have long been canonized as American novelists of the early twentieth century. The worlds that they created function as a part of the mainstream American consciousness. So too has the antisemitic rhetoric that inflects their powerful novels.

Antisemitism is a common feature in American modernism, yet it is often pushed under the rug to protect the canonical status of these "greats." These antisemitic representations both reflect and contribute to the formation of a dominant white Protestant masculinity. This hateful stain has become part of American history, but in deference to aesthetic values, it is rarely examined in canonical literary texts. There is a reason these novels remain in print. However, that does not protect them from critique. In order to be called "great" we must acknowledge the pain that they have caused in their othering of the Jew.

What connects Wharton, Cather, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway, beyond their time period, is their ceaseless fear of what America's future holds. In their works, there is a strong sense that one era has come to an end and another era is beginning.Their work offers up ruminations on the world to come. In the preface to Willa Cather's 1936 essay collection *Not Under Forty*, the novelist wrote that "the world broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts." The novels of these four authors question what America's future will look like, including whether it will belong to the older Protestant elite or the immigrant Jew. In these works, the Jewish man represents a blighted future; his nose as curved as the roads being built, his accent a symbol of Emma Lazarus's "wretched refuse" (line 12), and his rising position as a member of the new social order is a suggestion of a world where those who strive to be great may succeed, perhaps a true manifestation of what the American Dream hopes to be.

These authors use the Jewish man to express their own fears about the future of their homeland. To Hemingway and Fitzgerald, and Wharton and Cather, the Jewish man is indicative of a larger societal problem, one that they cannot ever resolve. Their anxiety over the world's future relates to their contemplations of time and loss. The old world is lost to them and a threatening new one is coming. Through these published ruminations, they manipulate the Jew, perhaps in a subconscious fashion, and caricaturize him in a way that promotes the nativist mindset of the time period. The Jewish man is a threat to a nostalgic Protestant America, a world in which they have thrived and yet which claims to welcome all equally to its shores. What is this need to represent changes to old ideals as demonized otherness?

Meyer Wolfsheim, Robert Cohn, Simon Rosedale, and Louie Marsellus are tools that these authors wield to stir up anti-immigrant sensibilities. Their characterizations present them as pushy, unpleasant, and overtly intimate with those of a more acceptable Protestant background. But we also see the figure of the Jewish man assuming a variety of roles, ranging from demonic, accented criminal to nearly white family member in both mannerism and in feature. While possibly erased into whiteness, this evolving representation suggests a new form of future for the Jewish man.

For the future is not something from which we can hide. There is a glimpse of this future in the figure of Louie Marsellus, in moments where the Professor recognizes the good in his Jewish son-in-law. At times, Louie is seen more generously, beyond the size of his nose and his new-money status. There is much to trust in the man who loves his daughter so wholeheartedly. These glimpses suggest the acceptance that could come with time. In the Professor's recognition of his outsider son-in-law's virtues, rather than the qualities that have been demonized, we can catch sight of a possible future where diversity is welcomed rather than feared.

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