

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: AMERICAN GIRLS: NATION AND GENDER
IN JAMES, WHARTON, AND CATHER

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This dissertation examines the representations of the American girl in the works of Henry James, Edith Wharton, and Willa Cather in relation to the popular image of the American Girl at the turn of the century. During a process Alan Trachtenberg has termed “the incorporation of America,” the cultural image of the American Girl, among others, functioned in contributing to the standardization and unification of the norms of nation and gender. A close examination of the three writers’ representations of the American girl in this dissertation reveals the ways in which their awareness of complexity in the idea of girlhood in turn-of-the-century America leads to their critique and revision of the icon of the American Girl and makes their novels different both from the popular American Girl stories, where girls marry happily in the end, and from the ordinary New Woman novels, whose heroines seek their professions and remain single or in sisterhood. In addition, this dissertation investigates how the idea of “Americanness” is questioned in the three writers’

works, showing the ways in which the Jamesian idea of Americanness is presented as “foreignness” in the other writers.

Chapter one briefly examines several examples of girls represented in American literature from the Victorian era to the turn of the century, exploring how the idea of girlhood became more complicated and how popular culture nevertheless tried to pigeonhole them into one category, “the marriageable girl,” whose image serves to make stable the boundaries in terms of gender, race, and nation. Chapter two investigates how Henry James continues to revise his American girls, which shows his complex and shifting view of American young women and of American democracy. Chapter three explores how Edith Wharton challenges the popular image of the American Girl by playing with the typology and revealing the artificial nature of the American Girl in turn-of-the-century materialistic society. Chapter four examines how Willa Cather’s “not-American” girl stories challenge the ordinary American Girl stories and serve to present her idea of multicultural America.

AMERICAN GIRLS:
NATION AND GENDER IN JAMES, WHARTON, AND CATHER

By

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List of Abbreviations

- CN* *The Complete Notebooks of Henry James*
- LW* *Little Women*
- NS* Sarah Orne Jewett, *Novels and Stories*
- CB* *The Coast of Bohemia*
- NYE III, IV* *The Portrait of a Lady* (New York Edition III, IV)
- NYE XVIII* *Daisy Miller, Pandora, The Patagonia, and Other Tales* (New York Edition XVIII)
- CS* Henry James, *Complete Stories, 1884-1891*
- NYE XXII* *The Ambassadors* (New York Edition XXII)
- GB* *The Golden Bowl*
- HM* *The House of Mirth*
- AI* *The Age of Innocence*
- OP* *O Pioneers!*
- SL* *The Song of the Lark*
- MÁ* *My Ántonia*

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Introduction

The period after the Civil War can be characterized as a kind of rebirth of the nation for the American people. In addition to the need to unite the divided nation again, the United States experienced various social, political, and cultural upheavals in the period called the Gilded Age and in the following Progressive Era around the turn of the century. The United States expanded its frontier beyond its national border to the world at the same time a number of immigrants came into the country, and these dual movements that were related to the national boundary, both outward and inward, made it essential to re-define “America” and “American identity.” The situation is fully summarized by what Alan Trachtenberg calls “the incorporation of America,” namely the national project of “incorporation on cultural values and perceptions” in order to unify the country in the “decades of swift and thorough industrialization and urbanization” (3, 5, 7). The national enterprise of unification culminates at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, where “an ideal shape of an incorporated America appeared in the form of a White City” (Trachtenberg 8) and which Henry Adams found as “the first expression of American thought as a unity” (288). After this celebration of the Anglo-American white nation, the United States proceeded to develop a more imperialistic and expansionist movement.

During the incorporating movement throughout the Progressive Era, the nation saw various kinds of movements for advancement in terms of race, class, and gender; among them, “[t]he twenty years on either side of the turn of the twentieth century

were a period of fundamental change and expansion in the roles and opportunities open to American women” (Matthews 4). One of the features of the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition was the Women’s Building, which visually presented women’s progress.¹ In the Women’s Building, two murals were displayed—“The Primitive Woman” and “The Modern Woman”—symbolically representing the change in the position of women; while the former mural by Mary Louise Fairchild MacMonnies-Low illustrates women doing chores traditionally linked with women, such as nursing children and carrying jars, the latter by Mary Cassat shows female artists and young women picking fruits of knowledge.

One of the significant images related to a considerable degree with these two strands at the turn of the century—the incorporating movement of the nation and the change in gender roles—is that of the “American Girl,” which appeared in American culture approximately from the 1880s to 1920. Though America from the beginning had a cultural symbolism of the Virgin Land, the turn-of-the-century cultural imagination specifically constructs a female figure as a national image that serves to establish the norms of race, ethnicity, and gender.² The image of the American Girl, the figure made popular by Charles Dana Gibson’s illustrations (Figures 1, 2, 3) that appeared in the 1890s, was popular in various cultural media—in fine-art, magazines, and literature—where artists showed their images of the American girl which more or

¹ Also, the Board of Lady Managers participated in building the Women’s Building as well as the Children’s Building. For more about the Women’s Building at the World’s Columbian Exposition, see Jeanne Madeline Weimann.

² In fact, at the 1893 Chicago Exposition, people saw “the dominating sixty-foot statue by Daniel Chester French of a female figure representing the Republic presiding over the Court of Honor” (Trachtenberg 222).

less reveal their views of America as well as of the female.³ The American Girl is “singled out as the visual and literary form to represent the values of the nation and codify the fears and desires of its citizens” (Banta *Imaging* 2), and such an American Girl as the Gibson Girl—namely the young, tall, rich, white, unmarried, and radiantly beautiful American Girl—served as the ideal model of the progressive and materialistic society at the turn of the century until it was substituted by the image of the flapper in the 1920s.



Figure 1. “Mr. Gibson’s American Girl” by C. D. Gibson
(*Ladies’ Home Journal*, February 1903)

³ For more on C. D. Gibson, see Fairfax Downey.



Figure 2. A cover illustration by C. D. Gibson
(Ladies' Home Journal, April 1895)



Figure 3. “Design for Wall Paper” by C. D. Gibson
(The Gibson Girl and Her America 114)

Primarily, the image of the American Girl serves to define the American race. As a rapid increase of immigrants makes the American identity unstable, the American Girl is illustrated as Anglo-Saxon or Northern European, excluding the Southern European, the Jews, the Asians, and the African Americans.⁴ The point that the icon of the American Girl is to a large extent the ideal or the model that suppresses the reality can be found in the fact that most of the models of the popular image of the American Girl were poor, immigrant girls. The chief model of Gibson's American Girl was Minnie Clark, a beautiful Irish professional model; nevertheless, her Irishness is erased under the typology of the "American Girl."⁵ Frequently accompanied by illustrations by popular illustrators including Gibson, many popular novels on the American Girl were published, where writers present such qualities as freedom, independence, and innocence in the figure of the white, Anglo-Saxon American girl. Thus, the making of the icon of the American Girl functions for the Anglo-Saxons, who were threatened by the increase of immigrants, to define a "pure America." In the nationalistic and imperialistic discourse of the turn of the century, the American Girl is often accompanied by the discussion of evolutionary theory and the discourse of civilization. Howard Chandler Christy, a turn-of-the-century artist well-known for his drawings of girls, uses the language of evolution in his book titled *The American Girl* (1906), viewing the American Girl as "the evolution of the highest type of woman-kind the world has ever produced" (11). The icon of the American Girl, through the discourse of evolution which was accompanied by the dichotomy between barbarism and civilization, came to be represented as the symbol of the

⁴ For more, see Martha Banta *Imaging American Women*, Chapter 2.

⁵ For more, see David Jeremiah Slater, Chapter 2.

highest civilization in the world: “She is the culmination of mankind’s long struggle upward from his barbarism into civilization” (Christy 69-70).

As nationalism became stronger and the United States was gradually building itself into an empire, the icon of the American Girl came to be connected closely with the enterprise of nation building. Figure 4 is an illustration by Gibson published in *Life* magazine (the special issue for Independence Day) in 1892. A girl in white is standing straight up with the national banner at the top, and under her are the American masses with a vulgar-looking man, a millionaire, a clergyman, among others. There is a caption under the picture: “With ‘Life’s’ Fourth of July Compliments to the American Girl.” Also, in the issue of *Life* which dealt with the Chicago World Exposition in 1893 appeared an illustration (Figure 5) where girls are connected with the national enterprise. Again, a blessed girl in white is rising up, and behind her is the White City, the microcosm of the world which consists of various pavilions and buildings of different countries or states.

As the United States sought to become an empire, expanding its control to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines through the Spanish War in 1898, the image of the American Girl was more overtly connected with the nationalistic and imperialistic discourse. An illustration by Gibson, published in *Life* magazine in 1898, shows a tall goddess, “Columbia,” reaching out her hand to a child-like “Spain” (Figure 6). Participating in the turn-of-the-century imperialistic discourse, Christy demonstrates not only the unifying, incorporating view of the nation but also the imperialist idea, stating “the exodus of American Girls into foreign lands can at worst only hasten that Americanizing of the world” (125); and a popular writer, Richard

Harding Davis, wrote a novel in which the American Girl supports American expansionism. The icon of the American Girl is thus made into a symbol of leadership of American Civilization and Americanization. The image of the American Girl played a significant role again in evoking patriotic feelings at the time of World War I; in addition to numerous illustrations of “Columbia,” who leads American citizens into war, appearing on cover pages of magazines (Figure 7), American Girl posters encouraged American men to participate in the war (Figure 8). Thus, the icon of the American Girl created in turn-of-the-century mass culture serves to establish the standard of the American race and feminine beauty and also to consolidate American nationalism.



Figure 4. “With ‘Life’s’ Fourth of July Compliments to the American Girl”

by C. D. Gibson (*Life*, June 30, 1892)



Figure 5. "To the City of Chicago" by C. D. Gibson
(*Life*, May 11, 1893; Downey, *Portrait of an Era* 155)



Figure 6. "Come, Let Us Forgive and Forget" by C. D. Gibson
(*Life*, August 11, 1898)



Figure 7. “Somewhere in America” by C. D. Gibson (*Life*, June 8, 1916)



Figure 8. “Gee!! I wish I were a man, I’d join the Navy” by Howard Chandler Christy (1917). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Regarding the visual and literary image of the American Girl, Martha Banta's thorough study of the images of American women at the turn of the century and other works such as David Jeremiah Slater's study of the cultural creation of the American Girl and Lois W. Banner's book, *American Beauty*, among others, have examined the types of American Girl popular at the turn of the century and showed how the image of the American Girl is culturally constructed as the ideal feminine beauty and as the model of the materialistic, progressive, and Anglo-Saxon white America.⁶ In addition, chiefly focusing on the literary representations of the young female, Martha Patterson, in *Beyond the Gibson Girl*, reconsiders the icon of the modern women from a revisionist perspective, exploring how the WASP icon of the Gibson Girl is revised in non-white, non-native-born, and non-Christian writers' texts that show various types of modern women in terms of ethnicity, race, and region. This dissertation, then, aims to contribute to the development of these arguments by examining the literary representation of the American Girl—the intersection of the boundaries regarding nation and gender—in relation to another turn-of-the-century female image, the New Woman.

While the image of the American Girl is associated closely with the definition of America, it is also concerned in a complex way with another important aspect of turn-of-the-century America: the change in gender roles. As mentioned before, in the progressive era of America, an increasing number of women began to enter the public sphere, and such a change was accompanied by the appearance of the so-called “New Woman,” who, “rejecting conventional female roles and asserting their right to a

⁶ For more on visual images of the American Girl and the New Woman, see, for example, Carolyn Kitch and Ellen Wiley Todd.

career, to a public voice, to visible power, laid claim to the rights and privileges customarily accorded bourgeois men” (Smith-Rosenberg 176).⁷ They went to college, had a profession, and were frequently linked with the suffrage movement, the establishment of working girls’ clubs, and the increase of divorce. The women’s movement for progress was accelerated by suffrage campaigns, especially in an urban space.⁸ Two organizations founded in 1869—the more militant one, the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and the more accommodating one, the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), led by Lucy Stone—were united in 1890 as the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and acted energetically in an effort to acquire the right to vote, which finally succeeded in 1920. From around 1910, Greenwich Village in New York was especially one of the centers of radical movements. Also, in cities, middle-class women organized working girls’ clubs to help educate working girls, and between club members and sponsors developed “a cross-class sisterhood” (Murolo 7), where the bond of sisterhood surpassed the class boundary.⁹ According to Estelle Freedman, American feminism prior to 1920 tended to be based on separatism, and the turn-of-the-century feminist movement insisted on the consolidation of “a separate female sphere,” its major achievement “c[o]m[ing] less through gaining access to the male domains of politics and the professions than in the tangible form of building separate female institutions” (514). Furthermore, while

⁷ The first time the “New Woman” is referred to as such is in 1894, in two articles written by Sarah Grand and Ouida, respectively, “The New Aspect of the Woman Question” and “The New Woman,” but before that there had been a “New Woman” phenomenon, especially after the publication of Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* in 1883 (Ledger 2).

⁸ Regarding the history of suffrage and feminist movements, see, for example, Banner, *Women in Modern America*, Chapter 3.

⁹ For more on Girls’ Club at the turn of the century, see Priscilla Murolo.

the mid-nineteenth-century women's movements did not necessarily question the institution of marriage itself, the turn-of-the-century women's movements raised a question about the system of marriage and about female sexuality. Some middle-class women remained Victorian wives and got involved in social work at the same time, some got divorced, and some, "frequently remain[ing] single," were involved in "establish[ing] networks among women" (Todd xxvii, 2). Sharply contrasted with conventional heterosexual marriage, the sisterhood of New Women living together was frequently seen especially in urban areas, and was called "Boston marriage." Boston marriages were not uncommon in the literary field in the turn-of-the-century America; for example, Sarah Orne Jewett and Annie Fields; a British writer Vernon Lee and Clementina "Kit" Anstruther-Thomson; and Willa Cather and Edith Lewis. The Boston marriage—or strong female sisterhood—is "a late 19th-century version of the earlier romantic friendship modified by the women's new economic independence" (Faderman "Nineteenth-century" 33), and it was assumed to be natural and asexual until sexologists including Freud at the end of the nineteenth century called it "unnatural" and linked it with lesbianism.¹⁰

The New Woman and her sisterhood to a large extent aroused a fear in middle-class men with their potential threat to the heterosexual order, and the argument about the New Woman is often accompanied by the idea of androgyny.¹¹ Especially in British mass culture, the New Woman is often connected with sexual deviation, sometimes linked with dandyism (Figure 9). She is presented as less feminine, and

¹⁰ See also Faderman *Surpassing the Love of Men* 190-205. Faderman deals with the issue of the Boston Marriage in relation to Henry James's *The Bostonians*.

¹¹ Regarding the sisterhood of the New Woman and the issue of lesbianism, see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, the chapter titled "The New Woman as Androgyne: Social Disorder and Gender Crisis, 1870-1936."

often represented as being among her own sex (Figure 10). The New Woman serves to make boundaries in terms of class and gender unstable,¹² and “[m]en reacted passionately by ridiculing these New Women, prophesying that they would make themselves ill and destroy national life, insisting that they were rebelling against nature” (Bederman 14).

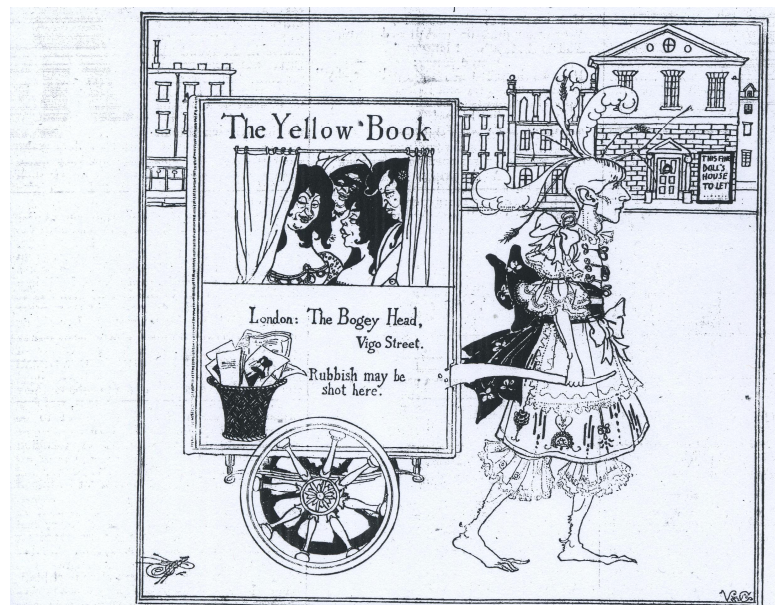


Figure 9. “Picture by Our Own Yellow-Booky Daubaway Weirdsley, intended as a Puzzle Picture to preface of Juvenile Poems, or as nothing in Particular”

(*Punch*, February 2, 1895)

¹² On the other hand, the boundary of race was not broken, so the situations were in fact more complicated with various gaps among the white, middle-class and others, though this dissertation focuses chiefly on the white, middle-class.



Figure 10. "The New Woman" (*Punch*, June 15, 1895)

While literary works on the American Girl became popular, those on New Women were published, too, both in England and America. In England, the appearance of the "New Woman"—or also called "Novissima," the "wild woman," and the "odd woman" among others—in the 1880s and the 1890s made an overt controversy; and in the literary field, the so-called "New Woman novels" became popular, written by such writers as Olive Schreiner, George Egerton, and Sarah Grand.¹³ In these "New Woman novels," writers portray heroines who reject conventional marriage and who instead choose to seek professions and an independent life. In America, such writers as Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Kate Chopin portrayed women who reject the traditional Victorian model of True

¹³ Critics have discussed the concept of the New Woman and the New Woman novels in England with a little reference to American novels. For example, see Ann L. Ardis, Iveta Jusová, and Sally Ledger.

Womanhood in such works as “The Yellow Wall-paper,” *Herland*, and *The Awakening*, the last of which also openly deals with female sexual desire, one of the essential topics in the New Woman novels.¹⁴

In relation to the progressive movement of women and the image of the New Woman, the American Girl’s position is fairly ambivalent, since in her figure the old and the new are mixed. In criticism about American women at the turn of the century, the American Girl has often been included in the category of the New Woman.¹⁵ Indeed, the American Girl at the turn of the century shows a new female type different from the Victorian model, which is vividly presented in Caroline Ticknor’s magazine article published in 1901, where Ticknor contrasts the Gibson Girl and the nineteenth-century Victorian model of the “Steel-engraving Lady.” While the only ambition of “the Steel-engraving lady” is “to bring life and joy and beauty into a household” (Ticknor 107), the Gibson Girl leaves the domestic sphere, goes to college, and becomes a “comrade” to men.¹⁶ On the other hand, the Gibson Girl—or

¹⁴ Recent critics of American literature have discussed the New Woman from the viewpoint of feminist or revisionist criticism. For example, Elizabeth Ammons, in *Conflicting Stories*, examines the works of the turn-of-the-century women writers, who she asserts had been neglected and who shared to a large extent the characteristics of New Women; namely, one third of them did not marry, most of them were childless, most of them cut themselves from the past (9).

¹⁵ In her study on non-WASP modern women in turn-of-the-century American literature in *Beyond the Gibson Girl*, Patterson views the Gibson Girl as the dominant type of New Woman, who is “white, well-educated, frequently single, and politically progressive” (16), and identifies the American Girl with the New Woman. Jean V. Matthews notes that “[a]s a type, the New Woman was young, well educated, probably a college graduate, independent of spirit, highly competent, and physically strong and fearless” and that “[t]he avatar of the New Woman was the so-called Gibson Girl, named for her creator, the artist Charles Dana Gibson, who began to draw her for *Life* magazine in the 1890s” (13).

¹⁶ Sally Mitchell examines the similar situation regarding young women in the turn-of-the-century England, discussing that there appeared a new cultural category of “girlhood”—“the new girl”—in England during the period approximately from 1880 to the First World War, who is different from her mother who was brought up in the Victorian period, “occupied a provisional free space” (3) and “has a degree of independence” (9). The British phenomenon

the popular image of the American Girl—still reflects the expectation of the community as they belong to the heterosexual system, do not raise their voices about women’s rights, and are to get married in the end. Hardly radical as she is, she is “rarely portrayed as a working or college woman” and is “never showed [. . .] as a settlement house or social worker” (Banner, *American Beauty* 156). Christy emphasizes in his book, *The American Girl* (1906), that the American Girl has “not been unsexed, she has not been transformed into the bachelor girl, nor yet into the short-haired suffragist” (106). The American Girl “ha[s] to be visibly feminine, thus eminently marriageable” (Banta *Imaging* 109). In the natural course of events, the books on the American Girl almost always end with her marriage, while, in the turn-of-the-century discourse of the New Womanhood, “[t]he Woman Question is the Marriage Question,” as New Woman novel writer Sarah Grand stated (“The New Aspect” 276).¹⁷ Christy ends his book with the image of the American Girl as the Bride, who, he says, “exchange[s] the independence of her girlhood for the more dignified if less free state” (154)¹⁸; also, popular American Girl stories by such writers as Richard Harding Davis most often end with the American Girl’s happy marriage. Because American girls married in the end, these image-makers regard

Mitchell focuses on can be applied to a large extent to the turn-of-the-century United States: young women began to go outside the house, to have higher education, to play tennis, and to ride bicycles. What is interesting, however, is that in the United States the girls are often called the “American Girl,” instead of the “new girl”; they are nationalized. In *The American Girl*, Christy reads the American Girl’s freedom and “the power of self-control” (23) as the distinctive nature of America. She is “the nation’s pride”; she is “Miss America” (Christy 62, 101). Here the issue of girlhood, or of gender, is transformed into the issue of nationhood, and, in this strategy, the young female’s independence and freedom are not regarded as problematic and dangerous because they are categorized as “American.”

¹⁷ In her another essay, “The Modern Girl,” Grand states that the “state of ignorance in marriageable women used to be called innocence” (706).

¹⁸ Also, the title of the final chapter of Alexander Black’s book on the American Girl titled *Miss America* is “And So They were Married.”

American girlhood as a temporary freedom outside her home—“a period of outing and fancy-free days [which] should intervene between graduation and the time when the responsibilities of life are assumed” (Christy 42). In this respect, in the turn-of-the-century discourse, the popular images of the American Girl partly represented the characteristics of the New Woman but at the same time served to domesticate them. If the New Woman challenges, destabilizes, transgresses, or subverts boundaries, the American Girl serves to define and stabilize them. Considering that the popularity of the American Girl covers almost the same period as the rise of women’s movements—the 1880s to 1920, the image of American Girl can be said to function politically as part of a strategy to show women’s increasing power and at the same time to repress it. Though they are not Victorian “little women” any more, they still belong to the conventional marriage plot where a girl is to be a wife/mother; and in this sense their being called “girl” is essential because a “girl” is expected to marry in the end, though the actual situation of turn-of-the-century girls was more complicated because a young woman “could reject marriage in pursuit of a career” (Faderman *Surpassing* 178).¹⁹

¹⁹ Indeed, at the textual level, there often is a certain distinction in the use of the words “woman” and “girl” in the late-nineteenth-century publications in America. For example, the second chapter of *Miss America* by Alexander Black, “The Twig,” consists of conversations between the writer and the “Professor,” who can be seen as a New Woman. She is “the educated woman” (24) and “knows the past like a book and the present like a man” (23). Stating that “I am simply a Person” (27), she insists on the equality between men and women, and does not intend to marry at all. Then, the Professor is called “a young woman” (23), never “a girl,” while the author uses the word “girl” and the “American Girl” frequently in other parts of the work. Certainly, there is a distinction between the “woman” and the “girl.” Also, in writings about the limitations of the female and about something related to the women’s movement, authors often use the word “woman” and almost never use the word “girl”; for example, *The Emancipation of Women* by J. Gibson (1894) and the *Women’s Journal* published by the American Woman Suffrage Association from 1870.

In addition, while the New Woman is sometimes connected to sexual deviancy, one of the most essential aspects of the American Girl is her virginal innocence. The feminine iconography of the nation was not a unique product of turn-of-the-century America; for example, France, whose ideal of liberty the United States had modeled, had the female allegory of the Republic, especially popular around the time of the revolution in 1789. The feminine body “worked to consolidate passionate attachments to home and homeland” and such iconographies as “Liberty, Republic and *La Patrie* (“the fatherland”))” resembling “antique goddesses” were created (Landes 2). The female iconography functioned in inviting “even women’s identification with the project of nationalism,” but, more importantly, it had a significant role in “the dynamic consolidation of a new national (hetero)sexual identity” (Landes 18, 22). Like late-eighteenth-century France, late-nineteenth-century America created the feminine iconography that modeled ancient goddesses such as Diana and Minerva. The difference between the two allegorical bodies of the nation, however, is that the French one was “the seductive body,” which was portrayed as nude or semi-nude, and aroused “the erotic dimension of modern patriotism” (Landes 22), while the American version is never sexual, but an innocent American “Girl.”²⁰ Also, one of the

²⁰ This gap can be largely attributed to the difference between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant; in the late-nineteenth-century United States, though Christianity did not have so much influence as before, the Protestant idea of morality regarding female sexuality still prevailed. In his famous essay “The Dynamo and the Virgin” (1900), Henry Adams also notes this difference: in America, the woman is made sexless and powerless while in France, the woman “still seem[s] potent, not merely as a sentiment, but as a force” (321). In Europe, “neither Diana of the Ephesians nor any of the Oriental goddesses was worshipped for her beauty,” he declares, “She was goddess because of her force; she was the animated dynamo; she was reproduction—the greatest and most mysterious of all energies; all she needed was to be fecund” (321). On the other hand, “American art, like the American language and American education, was as far as possible sexless” and “the monthly-magazine-made American female had not a feature that would have been recognized by Adam”(322, 321). Using the phrase “the monthly-magazine-made American female,” Adams points out the

most popular young female images in the turn-of-the-century England was that of Salome, whose sexual power threatens the male (Figure 11).²¹ Alternatively, a number of covers of American periodicals offer pictures of the American Girl by various illustrators (Figure 12), most of which stand “in her crystalline, virginal state” (Banta *Imaging* 109), and even when writers and illustrators show the power of the female over the male, they seldom show it as a sexual decadence. Gail Bederman, discussing the turn-of-the-century middle-class men’s attempt to build manliness, provides a view to connect the discourse of civilization with the issues of gender and of race. The change in economy and the increase in the numbers of working class, immigrant men and progressive women in the late nineteenth century came to undermine middle-class men’s manliness, and middle-class men, in order to restore their manliness, developed the discourse of civilization which connects “both male dominance and white supremacy to a Darwinist version of Protestant millennialism” (Bederman 25).²² The highly feminine and innocent icon of the American Girl served to stabilize not only the boundary of race and ethnicity but of gender—in one sense making stable the “separate spheres”—and largely contributed to this enterprise of building a white, male American Civilization.

Thus, the point is essential that the popular image of the American Girl at the turn of the century presents not a girl child but exclusively a young woman at the

sexless and thus powerless nature of the American Girl.

²¹ Bram Dijkstra explores the development of misogyny in Europe and America at the turn of the century by examining various literary and visual works as well as scientific writings.

²² According to Bederman, the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition vividly shows “how ‘civilization’ built hegemonic male power out of white supremacy and evolutionary millennialism—as well as how feminist and antiracist challenges to that power could be mounted” (31).



Figure 11. “The Peacock Skirt,” an illustration for *Salome*,
by Aubrey Beardsley (1893)



Figure 12. A cover from *The Ladies Home Journal*
by Albert Lynch (August 1895)

marriageable age, namely the new cultural category of “girlhood”—“no longer a child, not yet a (sexual) adult” (Mitchell 3). As is hinted in Christy’s nationalistic and rather paternalistic description of the American Girl, the ambiguity regarding the “American Girl” is closely connected with the transitional nature of “girlhood.” The turn-of-the-century idea of girlhood is contrasted vividly with that of the mid-nineteenth-century, Victorian culture. While the Victorian idea of girlhood premises the coming marriage and motherhood, the social change toward the turn of the century complicates the idea of girlhood and offers girls various options other than the one of miniaturized domestic mother. The option for turn-of-the-century girls was not one but plural; and “girlhood” at the turn of the century is the period when girls have to, or are able to, make a choice—whether they marry or not, whether they have a heterosexual marriage or a Boston marriage, whether they have professions or not, and whether they become “American” or not. In this respect, the icon of the American Girl as a custodian of boundaries is undermined, since American “girlhood” itself can be seen as something unstable, transitional, and hardly homogeneous. The matter, moreover, becomes fairly complex since the options are not necessarily binary—whether she becomes a traditional, domestic wife/mother or a New Woman who challenges the traditional idea of marriage; or whether she becomes American or not—but rather complicated; that is, the two options, to varying degrees, are not clearly separated, and, in this respect, the category of “girl” functions as a site where various boundaries are negotiated.

This dissertation, then, will examine how this complexity in American girlhood is explored in literary representations of the American girl in the works of three

writers around the turn of the century—Henry James, Edith Wharton, and Willa Cather—investigating the ways in which these writers’ American girls react to the popular typology of the American Girl and to the ideology it embodies, and the ways in which their girls raise questions about the idea of nation as well as that of gender. While various writers deal with the representation of girls or women at the turn of the century, this dissertation focuses particularly on three writers who present images of girls in close relation to the idea of nation in the cosmopolitan situation and in close relation to the complex situation about girls’ “choices.” On the one hand, the image of the American Girl formed in the popular culture embodies the standard of beauty as well as that of nation, and functions to define and observe the boundaries of gender, race, and nation; on the other hand, the “girls” represented by these writers are marked by an ambivalence that reveals the instability of the standard, serving to raise a question about the very boundaries that were culturally (or socially) formed.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I will briefly examine several examples of girls represented in American literature from the Victorian era to the turn of the century, indicating how the idea of girlhood became more and more complicated, namely, how girls come to have multiple options and how popular culture nevertheless tried to pigeonhole them into one category, “the marriageable girl,” whose image serves to make stable the boundaries in terms of gender, race, and nation. The following three chapters will explore the ways the texts of three writers, who frequently set girls at the center of their fiction, make the pattern of the “happy marriage” unstable in the American Girl stories and also raise a question about the idea of America. In making the point that their girls serve to show their ideas of

“Americanness,” the writers share something with popular novelists, who use the icon of the American Girl to deal with the issue of nation; however, the ideas of “Americanness” embodied by their girls are different from the ones represented by the popular icon of the American Girl. Also, their “American girls” are more complicated than their sisters in popular fiction in terms of gender. The three writers’ works often juxtapose two options for girls—to be a conventional wife/mother or to be a New Woman, to have a heterosexual marriage or to have a Boston marriage—in ways that create tension and make the issue remain open. Their works about American girls do not follow in a completely positive way the pattern of the American Girl stories, where girls live in a heterosexual society and marry happily in the end; and yet, they are not totally synonymous with the New Woman novels, whose heroines seek their profession and remain single or in sisterhood. Different from the popular fiction about the American Girl or from the New Woman novels, the three writers’ texts do not get completely committed to either the heterosexual marriage or the Boston marriage, leaving open the issue of choice of the girls. Their American girls serve to reveal the complexity and instability of boundaries which the turn-of-the-century America’s cultural/political “incorporating” enterprise ostensibly succeeded in erasing.

The second chapter will deal with Henry James’s revision of his American girls. Though James’s creation of Daisy Miller became one of the most powerful triggers for the image-making of the American Girl in turn-of-the-century popular culture,²³ his American girls are continuously revised so that they reflect but do not

²³ Also, after the publication of “Daisy Miller,” a number of manuals were published for young girls around the turn of the century, where Daisy is mentioned as a negative example.

simply follow the contemporary icon of the American Girl. Though criticism of James's American girls has tended to focus on his earlier American heroines such as Daisy Miller and Isabel Archer, the innocent and independent American girls who embody Tocquevillian democracy,²⁴ it is worth noting how James changes—or revises—the image of his American girls. Also, while critics have thoroughly discussed the connection between James's portraits of American girls and his deceased cousin Minnie Temple, I will instead examine the connections James's American girls have with the culturally constructed icon of the American Girl at the turn of the century. After briefly examining his earlier American girls, the chapter will focus on “Pandora” (1884) and *The Bostonians* (1886), which are set in the United States and were written just after James went back to America in the early 1880s. In these “very American tale[s]” (CN 20), James's portraits of the American girls are considerably changed, reflecting more the contemporary social and cultural context in America and revealing his awareness of the change in women's roles. In *The Bostonians*, a tension is created between heterosexual marriage and Boston marriage (or the discourse of the American Girl story and that of the New Woman), and the idea of American democracy is investigated in a different way from James's previous works. The last section of this chapter examines *The Golden Bowl* (1904), which can be regarded as another “very American tale” by James, investigating how

For more about these manner manuals for American girls, see Slater Chapter 3.

²⁴ For example, Patterson separates James's earlier American girls from the image of the New Woman: “the image of the New Woman has too often been conflated with the significantly different vision of the 1880s American Girl, which Henry James and William Dean Howells imagined. Both Daisy Miller and Penelope Lapham are more naïve and ‘pert’ than the savvy, statuesque New Woman in the marketplace” (15). Patterson, however, does not refer to the change in James's American Girl in his later career, for example his American girl's involvement with the New Womanhood in *The Bostonians*.

his representation of the American girl serves to raise a question about the idea of the American civilization.

The third chapter will focus on Edith Wharton's critical representations of the American girl, discussing chiefly *The House of Mirth* (1905) and briefly *The Age of Innocence* (1920). Wharton's American girls are most closely related to the culturally constructed icon of the American Girl, with which Wharton plays in the novels whose settings are closely connected to her own girlhood, Old New York, where she was trained to be an American Girl. As critics have discussed, the issue of gender, or the limitation of American women, is situated at the center of Wharton's works, and the idea of feminism found in Wharton's works is complicated, since Wharton distances herself from the women's political movement in her life while her novels function as a critique of the fantasy of the ideal female constructed by society. *The House of Mirth* (1905) presents a tension between the American Girl and the New Woman in Lily's relationship with Gerty and her "Girls' Club," where Wharton seems half unconsciously or secretly to explore the potential option for the American girl to be a New Woman who lives for her sisterhood instead of seeking a conventional marriage. The chapter also examines briefly *The Age of Innocence* (1920), where Wharton's exploration of the American girl and the New Woman continued to be found in quite a different way from *The House of Mirth*.

The fourth chapter focuses on Willa Cather's "not-American" girl stories, exploring the ways in which her "not-American" girl stories revise the ordinary American Girl stories, presenting her idea of multicultural America. The chapter first examines some short stories and earlier novels, investigating how Cather's girls

deviate from the model of the American Girl, and how her “not-American” girl successfully transcends the boundary in terms of nation and gender as well as presents a modernized version both of the American Girl plot and the New Woman plot. Then, this chapter will deal with *My Ántonia* (1918), which, with a framed structure, highlights the idea of figure-making and shows two pairs of portraits, where not only two options for girls coexist but also the idea of New Womanhood is explored. From Jim’s romantic portrait of a Bohemian girl Ántonia, who becomes the Earth Mother, emerges another (self) portrait of Lena, a New Woman. In addition, Ántonia is contrasted not only with Lena but also with Mrs. Jim Burden, a childless wife and an active feminist, whose portrait reflects the idea of radical New Womanhood found in Greenwich Village, where Cather lived when she wrote *My Ántonia* and where active women’s movements developed. Cather, contrasting two kinds of “Bohemia” represented by Ántonia and Mrs. Burden, seems to show a negative reaction to the radical social movement which was active in Greenwich Village, the American Bohemia.

Chiefly focusing on the gender aspect of the American Girl, I will also examine how the idea of “Americanness” is questioned in the three writers’ works, showing how the Jamesian idea of Americanness is presented by the image of “foreignness” in the other writers. As manuals for girls with “anti-Daisy Millerism” become popular and the standardized images of the American Girl permeate the popular culture around the turn of the century, James’s romantic idea of the American Girl, who is morally innocent and more “a child of nature” than the model of civilization, appears more complexly in Wharton’s and Cather’s works, where two ideas of “America”

create a tension. In the figure of Lily are mixed the Jamesian idea of the American girl, based on innocence and morality, and the Gibson type of American girl, the product of the Gilded Age; in the materialistic, progressive society, Lily's yearning for freedom, which would be at the center of James's American Girl, is regarded as "foreign." Then, while the Jamesian ideal of America is shown as the "foreignness" of the American girl in Wharton's novels, Cather shows it in her "not-American" girls in what Randolph Bourne called the "Trans-national America."

Taken together, the "American girl" novels of the three writers complexly create tension and raise questions about girls' choices that are never solved. While the powerful image of the American Girl in popular culture serves to standardize and stabilize boundaries, the three writers' "American girls" make various boundaries unstable and reveal the complexity and instability which is seemingly suppressed by what Trachtenberg calls "the incorporation of America."

Chapter One: No More “Little Women”

In nineteenth-century Victorian culture, the idea of girlhood is connected directly with motherhood. Victorian texts tend to present a girl as a miniaturized woman by “constructing the girl as an idealized woman in waiting” (Dawson 68), and illustrate the “girl’s journey from marriageable to married, maiden to matron” (Vallone 2). The Victorian idea of girlhood premises the coming marriage and motherhood, and girlhood in Victorian novels tends to refer to younger ages than in the works at the turn of the century. For example, Ellen Montgomery in Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World* (1850), orphaned as a little girl, learns domestic work and the virtue of self-denial, and, following the lessons of her dead mother and the Humphreys, becomes a good Christian wife (Figure 13).²⁵ In a Victorian model of girlhood, there is little gap between childhood and girlhood, and childhood/girlhood—or the period of a “little woman”—is closely connected with the cult of True Womanhood. On the other hand, there is no necessary transformation from a girl to a wife/mother in the later nineteenth century; the case becomes more complicated as a girl comes to have possibilities either to become a wife/mother (or True Woman) in the traditional sense or to become a New Woman. In the following pages, I will briefly examine the increasing variety of girls’ options by looking at some examples

²⁵ Also, it is interesting that at the end of the novel Warner shows quite a nationalist idea through Ellen—an American child. In Scotland, the Lindsays—her “parents”—try to separate Ellen from the American way of life and she resists, insisting on the greatness of Washington and the American idea of freedom. In that the American girl embodies the nationalist discourse, Ellen can be linked with the American Girl at the turn of the century; at the same time, however, the virtue for a girl/woman emphasized in this novel is not self-reliance but rather self-denial and domesticity.

presented in post-Civil War American literature.



Figure 13. An illustration for *The Wide, Wide World*

1. *Little Women* (1868-69) and options for girls

Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, which was published just after the Civil War, can be seen as a transitional novel in a significant way. The novel deals with four sisters' transitions from girlhood to womanhood, and four girls as "little women" show four options for girls—to be a Victorian, domestic wife/mother (Meg), a New Woman who has an occupation and possibly remains single (Jo), a Victorian self-denying and dying child (Beth), and an American Girl who travels abroad, enjoys a social life, and marries in the end (Amy). Alcott's characterizations of four sisters reveal that the idea of girlhood in the later nineteenth century no longer refers only to a "miniaturized woman/mother" but to something more varied.

One of the major issues of the novel is that Alcott makes Jo "an experimental

heroine through whom Alcott can explore the tensions of female experience in nineteenth-century America [. . .] between being a dutiful member of woman's sphere and being an independent, self-reliant woman" (Estes and Lant 568). Almost throughout the novel, Jo is portrayed as a girl who does not fit the norm of a Victorian girl expected to marry and become a True Woman. When Laurie proposes marriage, she declines, saying, "I don't believe I shall ever marry; I'm happy as I am, and love my liberty too well to be in any hurry to give it up for any mortal man" (*LW* 287). At the same time, however, Jo is conscious of her gender role—or the limitations of her gender. When Laurie proposes to Jo to escape together after the quarrel with his grandfather in Part 1, Jo tells him she cannot because she is a "girl": "If I was a boy, we'd run away together, and have a capital time; but as I'm a miserable girl, I must be proper, and stop at home" (*LW* 168). In the end, then, she changes her mind and decides she would like to marry, saying, "An old maid—that's what I'm to be. A literary spinster, with a pen for a spouse" (*LW* 342). Finally, she "should *so* like to be a mother to" the students of the school which Professor Bhaer and Jo will build (*LW* 374); Jo, who has the most masculine name of the sisters and who was once "the man of the family now [that] papa is away" (*LW* 14), becomes in the end "Mother Bhaer" at "a happy, home-like place for boys" (*LW* 376). Jo marries and ceases to be a single, professional writer—namely a New Woman. As Angela M. Estes and Kathleen Margaret Lant argue, Alcott might "realiz[e] the dangers for a woman of nineteenth-century America in advocating such potentially liberating attitudes too openly" (566).

At the same time, it is worth noting that Jo presents not only the possibility of becoming a New Woman but also the potential replacement of marriage by a strong

sisterhood—or a potential Boston marriage. Jo is not only unwilling to marry herself but quite dissatisfied with the idea of Meg’s marriage. In Part 1, Jo occasionally laments Meg’s becoming a “woman”; for example, “Jo bent over her work to hide the trembling of her lips; for lately she had felt that Margaret was fast getting to be a woman” (*LW* 126). She cannot happily accept the fact that Meg and John love each other, and is quite shocked to see the couple after her aunt failed to dissuade Meg to marry John: “it certainly *was* a shock to behold the aforesaid enemy serenely sitting on the sofa, with the strong-minded sister enthroned upon his knee, and wearing an expression of the most abject submission” (*LW* 183). In the last happy picture of the family gathering at Christmas at the end of Part 1, only Jo is not completely happy: “‘It never can be the same again. I’ve lost my dearest friend,’ sighed Jo” (*LW* 184).

Indeed, Jo shows her strong—rather too strong—feeling of sisterhood with Meg; she says, “You’d laugh to see Meg head the table, and try to be motherish. She gets prettier every day, and I’m in love with her sometimes” (*LW* 138); then, “I just wish I could marry Meg myself, and keep her safe in the family” (*LW* 161). Her strong feeling toward her sister is not necessarily homosexual love but rather a sort of strong sisterhood, for in another part Jo shows her desire for Meg’s marriage to Laurie: “I understand, mother, and quite agree; but I’m disappointed about Meg, for I’d planned to have her marry Teddy by and by, and sit in the lap of luxury all her days” (*LW* 162). Jo’s relationship with her sister shows the possibility peculiar to the turn-of-the-century girls, namely, the possibility that the strong sisterhood—or the Boston marriage—may replace the heterosexual marriage. Refusing to get married, Jo seeks her everlasting sisterhood with Meg in Part 1; then, in Part 2 her relationship

with Beth is repetitively foregrounded. It is highly significant that it is just after Beth dies that Jo comes to desire marriage. In the novel, Alcott juxtaposes heterosexual marriage and a strong sisterhood as equal options for girls. Though the ending shows a rather conventional picture for girls, Alcott is fully aware of the modern variety of girls' futures and of girls' possibilities not only to become a New Woman but to have a strong sisterhood that would replace and possibly threaten heterosexual marriage.

2. A girl becoming a New Woman: *A Country Doctor* (1884)

While girls in *Little Women* show new possibilities for girls though following the conventional pattern of marriage in the end, the girl in Sarah Orne Jewett's *A Country Doctor* chooses not to marry but to be a lady doctor, namely, a New Woman. Jewett is fully aware of the concern peculiar to the turn-of-the-century girl and raises a question about whether a girl becomes a traditional wife/mother or a New Woman, juxtaposing two options for her heroine.

Being an orphan and brought up by Dr. Leslie, Nan Prince gradually makes up her mind to become a woman doctor, and her decision to be a doctor is repeatedly described as her rejection of marriage. Whether she gets married or becomes a woman doctor is regarded as an either-or question, and Jewett clearly juxtaposes two options. In Dunport, all the people tell Nan to quit studying and marry, and indeed Nan's strong will to be a doctor is briefly weakened by her relationship with George Gerry:

Her old ambitions were torn away from her one by one, and in their place came the hardly-desired satisfactions of love and marriage, and

home-making and housekeeping, the dear, womanly, sheltered fashions of life, toward which she had been thankful to see her friends go hand in hand, making themselves a complete happiness which nothing else could match. (*NS* 343-4)

But after getting the letter from Dr. Leslie, Nan returns to her former state of mind, and decides to go back to Dr. Leslie's in Oldfields.

The tea scene in Chapter 18 dramatically shows the gap between Nan and people in Dunport, between the new and the old in terms of gender role. Mrs. Fraley, who is upset to hear that Nan is studying medicine, plays the part of embodying the traditional Victorian idea of girlhood/womanhood: "'In my time,' Mrs. Fraley continued, 'it was thought proper for young women to show an interest in household affairs. When I was married it was not asked whether I was acquainted with dissecting-rooms'" (*NS* 325). She repeatedly insists that "a woman's place [i]s at home, and that a strong-minded woman [i]s out of place, and unwelcome everywhere" (*NS* 326). To Mrs. Fraley and to Dunport, "a young man's position is very different from a girl's" and it is impossible for "a refined girl who bears an honorable and respected name to think of being a woman doctor"; in other words, it is "quite unnatural" (*NS* 327). Jewett's use of the word "unnatural" here is very meaningful, considering that the contrast of "natural" and "unnatural" was a widespread expression at the turn of the century in discussing the gender norm. To Mrs. Fraley's argument, then, Nan retorts that she "do[es] not wish to be married, and do[es] not think it right" for her (*NS* 328). She presents a positive view about "people who are eager for reforms" and who "have to fight against opposition and ignorance"

(*NS* 326), and opposes conventional stereotypes of gender role: “It is no use to treat all the boys and girls as if nature had meant them for the same business and scholarship, and try to put them through the same drill, for that is sure to mislead and confuse all those who are not perfectly sure of what they want” (*NS* 326). Vividly contrasted with Mrs. Fraley’s daughter Eunice, who is a traditional “little woman” (*NS* 322), Nan breaks the conventional notion of womanhood. It is right that Mrs. Martin says, “you’ve made o’ yourself” (*NS* 368); Nan is a self-made woman.

Moreover, Jewett connects Nan’s becoming a doctor (and a New Woman) with the discourse of nation. Miss Prince, Nan’s aunt, who strongly objects to Nan’s becoming a doctor, is described as “a proud and stately woman of the old New England type: more colonial than American perhaps, and quite provincial in her traditions and prejudices” (*NS* 273). In contrast, Dr. Leslie, who supports Nan’s decision to be a doctor, is illustrated as independent: “Separated as he was from the groups of men and women who are responsible for what we call the opinion of society, and independent himself of any fettering conventionalities, he had grown careless of what anybody might say” (*NS* 262). Considering that Miss Prince is regarded as “more colonial than American,” Dr. Leslie can be seen in a way as “more American than colonial.” Whether Nan chooses to marry or to become a doctor is parallel to whether she chooses Miss Prince or Dr. Leslie, and, by choosing the latter, Nan becomes “more American than colonial.” Thus, Jewett adopts such very American ideas as “independence” and “self-made” in illustrating a girl who becomes a New Woman.

Celebrating Nan’s decision to be a doctor, the novel presents a possibility of

changes in gender norms. For example, Dr. Leslie tells his friend that he “do[es]n’t care whether it’s a man’s work or a woman’s work” (*NS* 215). His friend Dr. Ferris further says that “the feminine intellect is the higher” (*NS* 218), and encourages Dr. Leslie to “push your [his] little girl ahead if she has the real fitness” (*NS* 217). Nevertheless, Jewett does not make her heroine’s decision totally subversive. While Nan chooses not to follow the conventional pattern for a girl, her choice to become a New Woman is illustrated as exceptional. Nan admits that marriage is “a natural condition of life, which permits a man to follow certain public careers, and forbids them to a woman” (*NS* 329), and emphasizes that her decision is not generally the right one for women: “I won’t attempt to say that the study of medicine is a proper vocation for women, only that I believe more and more every year that it is the proper study for me” (*NS* 328). Dr. Leslie tells Mrs. Graham that “Nan is not the sort of girl who will be likely to marry” (*NS* 234). He continues, saying that “[w]hen a man or woman has that sort of self-dependence and unnatural self-reliance, it shows itself very early” and that he “believe[s] that it is a mistake for such a woman to marry” (*NS* 234). Because of her “unnatural self-reliance,” Nan is supposed to be free from “the business of housekeeping and what is called a woman’s natural work” (*NS* 234). To Mrs. Graham’s question, “don’t you think that a married life is happiest?” (*NS* 234), then, Dr. Leslie both admits and denies, saying Nan’s case is exceptional and “a rule is sometimes very cruel for its exceptions” (*NS* 235). Again, Dr. Leslie tells his friend Dr. Ferris that Nan “is n’t like the usual village school-girl,” which is repeated when the narrator shows that Nan’s friends at school know “that she [i]s not a commonplace girl” (*NS* 212, 249). It is “her own individuality” (*NS* 212) that leads

Nan to the life of a New Woman. Thus, Jewett creates a heroine who chooses an unconventional way of life though she does not necessarily subvert the conventional idea about gender roles nor attempt to be radical.

In noting the transitional nature of this novel, it is also significant that, though Nan is regarded as “self-made,” the novel shows some power beyond an individual’s: God. Nan mentions the name of God in discussing whether the occupation of doctor is good for women: “God would not give us the same talents if what were right for men were wrong for women” (NS 327). Nan views her own choice as her vocation: “‘If He meant I should be a doctor,’ the girl told herself, ‘the best thing I can do is to try to be a good one’” (NS 270). As the power of God and Christianity prevail in the story, *The County Doctor* may not be completely modern but is transitional; however, it still can be seen as considerably modern in presenting a girl who becomes a New Woman.

3. The American Girl Abroad and the turn-of-the-century icon of the American Girl

As America saw social and economic changes in the late nineteenth century, many daughters of the nouveau-riche went abroad to see the world, and various popular writers wrote about the “American Girl Abroad.”²⁶ Sarah A. Wadsworth, in “Innocence Abroad: Henry James and the Re-Invention of the American Woman Abroad,” challenges the view that had been generally accepted that Henry James is the inventor of the American Girl abroad. Wadsworth points out that many writers

²⁶ Yuko Matsukawa discusses the image of the American Girl traveling in Europe and the cultural conflict between the New World and the Old World in the works written by several writers including Constance Fenimore Woolson, Frances Hodgson Burnett, and Henry James among others.

before James, especially female travel writers, had written about the American girls abroad and compares “Daisy Miller” with one of the “American Girl Abroad” stories by Mary Murdoch Mason, *Mae Madden: A Story* (1876). Though the backgrounds and the plots of *Mae Madden* and “Daisy Miller” have something in common, there are marked differences between them. The girlhood represented in *Mae Madden* is closer to that in the Victorian novels; there, girlhood is rather equal to childhood. *Mae Madden* is a more Victorian—or a transitional—tale also in that, though Mae is partly a “flirt” and restless as Daisy is, she is different from Daisy Miller in that she always knows that she is wrong. She “blushed” (*Mae Madden* 43) when looked at by an Italian man, and she feels embarrassed when she gets too familiar with Bero: “[. . .] there suddenly swept over her the knowledge that this new friend, this sympathizing soul, was an unknown man, and that she was a girl. What had she done? What could she do? Confusion and embarrassment suddenly overtook her” (*Mae Madden* 47). Finally, the biggest difference is that Mae Madden marries in the end. Mae, who was a wild child, promises to become a model Victorian woman: “I am going to grow, if I can, unselfish and sympathetic, and perhaps, who knows, wise, and any way good” (*Mae Madden* 176). Unselfishness and sympathy are very typical Victorian virtues for womanhood, and, in this sense, the girlhood represented by Mae can be seen as a variation of Victorian girlhood.

What is important, however, is that Mae’s marriage is deeply linked with nationalist discourse. When Norman Mann comes to Sorrento and finds her with Bero, the two men are sharply compared and the superiority of the American man is underlined: “He [Norman] stood as firm and hard and still as a New England rock,

while the Italian swayed lithely as he pulled the oars, with the curve and motion of a sliding, slippery stream” (*Mae Madden* 168). To Norman, who stands “erect, with folded arms and head bared,” Mae cries, “Take me home,” and after leaving Bero and learning of each other’s feelings Norman lifts her “in the strong, manly arms” (*Mae Madden* 167, 169, 184). The image of manly Norman Mann—which is clearly symbolized in his name itself—is similar to the Gibson Man, who is to be created in turn-of-the-century culture as an ideal match for the Gibson Girl. *Mae Madden* ends when Mae, an American girl who was interested in Italy and wanted to be Italianized, finally realizes that she loves an American man and chooses him as a husband, serving to create a nationalistic discourse.

The nationalistic ending of the “happy marriage” of the American Girl and the American Man continued to form the pattern of the American Girl stories. *A Fair Barbarian* (1881) by Frances Hodgson Burnett portrays an American Girl abroad named Octavia Basset, who visits her English aunt living in a small country town Slowbridge. Octavia is “the most extraordinary-looking, young lady” and her dress is “so very stylish that it [i]s quite startling in its effect” for town people (*A Fair Barbarian* 9). Not only Octavia’s dress but her open and independent behavior surprises and shocks them. She does not care for the convention of the traditional society and freely goes out with a young gentleman as Daisy Miller does. In the end, however, Octavia’s fiancé Jack arrives from America to pick her up and the story ends with the “happy marriage.” Jack is “a tall, bronzed young man” called “the finest fellow in the West” (*A Fair Barbarian* 254), and said to possess silver mines and have even “done something in diamonds, in Brazil” (*A Fair Barbarian* 257). Like Mr.

Mann in “Mae Madden,” Jack is described as a masculine man who embodies the American dream in the discourse of the Progressive Era; and the marriage between the American Girl and “Mr. Mann” serves in a stronger way to promote a nationalistic discourse of progressive America.

At the turn of the century, the icon of the American Girl I mentioned in the Introduction was created in various media, and the American Girl in popular fiction, often accompanied by illustrations, played an essential role in showing the pattern of the “happy marriage” and also in inspiring imperialistic nationalism. One of the best-selling writers at the turn of the century and a friend of Charles Dana Gibson and of Theodore Roosevelt, Richard Harding Davis, serves to expand the image of the American Girl in the nationalist discourse. *The Princess Aline* (1895) is a story of an American painter, Morton Carlton, who seeks the love of a German aristocratic beauty Princess Aline, follows her to Europe, but finally chooses his American companion traveler Miss Edith Morris as a wife. In this novel, the American girl presented by Davis resonates with the image of the Gibson Girl. At the scene of the ball, when Carlton realizes his feelings toward Miss Morris, she is described as “a taller, fairer, and more radiant personage” (*The Princess Aline* 145), accompanied by an illustration by Gibson (Figure 14). At the end of the novel, then, Princess Aline tells her sisters that Carlton has become engaged with “that beautiful American girl” (*The Princess Aline* 161), which underlines the contrast between the European Lady and the American Girl, and the marriage celebrates American democracy over European aristocracy.

In *Soldiers of Fortune* (1897), Davis uses a similar pattern to *The Princess*



"IN THE QUEEN'S GARDEN"

Figure 14. An illustration for *The Princess Aline* by C.D. Gibson

Aline in a more nationalistic and imperialistic tone. Set in a South America dominated by Spain, the novel has a style similar to Western novels. The hero, Clay, who has gotten involved in many railroad constructions in the American West and Mexico and who has served with distinction in several imperial wars between England and France in Africa, helps with the investment of American capital into mines in the South America. The plot is similar to *The Princess Aline*: Clay, who seeks a girl of high society, Alice, ends up being attracted to and engaged with her sister Hope, who admires Clay's job and willingly goes to the mines with the engineers, as contrasted with Alice, who cannot get out of the Victorian sense of class. While Hope is characterized as a comrade, she is also a lover and, when they go to the ball, is described with the Gibson-girl characteristics: "they saw Hope standing in the

doorway, radiant and smiling. She wore a white frock that reached to the ground, and that left her arms and shoulders bare. Her hair was dressed high upon her head, and she was pulling vigorously at a pair of long, tan-colored gloves" (*Soldiers of Fortune*, 153). The figure of Hope here may remind readers of that of the goddess in Figure 6; in fact, Hope plays the role of the leader of American civilization. She admires and encourages America's taking over Spain in South America. The ending of the novel shows Clay and Hope, a newly engaged couple on the ship to New York, looking beyond the sea at the African Continent, and the narrator suggests that they will get involved in the development of Mexico or Peru (Figure 15). Thus, the American Girl in popular fiction, often accompanied by illustrations by artists like Gibson, serves to encourage the American nationalist/imperialist movement as well as the heterosexual marriage plot with a masculine American man.



Figure 15. An illustration for *Soldiers of Fortune* by C.D. Gibson

4. William Dean Howells and the American Girl

While recognizing the complicated situation regarding girls, William Dean Howells basically shares the idea of the American Girl in popular culture. In *The Coast of Bohemia*, published in 1893, Howells writes about a girl who tries to become an artist. Cornelia Saunders goes to New York to be an art student at the Synthesis of Art Studies, where she makes friends with her fellow art student, Charmian, who wants to live a Bohemian life. She also meets an artist Ludlow, who once advised Cornelia's mother not to let her study art, and comes to love him. Despite some misunderstanding and trouble, they finally get married.

Different from Richard Harding Davis, Howells is to a certain extent aware of the limited opportunities for girls. When asked for advice on Cornelia's future, Ludlow, admitting her talent, advises her not to try to be an artist but to be "happily married" (CB 49), because she is a girl. "Nothing is commoner than the talent and beauty of American girls," he says; then he continues, "But they'd better trust to their beauty" (CB 26). Meanwhile, Cornelia shares Jo March's lament over the limitations of girls, saying, "I guess if a girl wants to turn out an artist she'd better start by being a boy" (CB 48). She is anxious to be an artist, not a "woman artist," and Mrs. Burton sympathetically supports her wish. In this respect, Howells can be seen to have sympathy for a girl's becoming a New Woman; however, Howells, especially in the latter half of the novel, makes the story not a story of a girl's self-making but a love story, and puts an emphasis on the love plot. Indeed, the picture which Cornelia submits to the Exhibition at Ludlow's suggestion is rejected in the end; just after that, the love plot between Cornelia and Ludlow proceeds and they get married. This shift,

though not highlighted, seems significant, revealing Howells' basic commitment to the popular American Girl story, which expects a girl to marry. Also, in the "Introductory Sketch," where Howells makes "the book" speak for itself, "the book" reveals the writing process of this novel, which it says "represent[s] a phase of our droll American civilization" (*CB* vi). "The book" describes Howells' creation of Cornelia as follows: "When you looked over those hapless works of art at the Pymantoning County Fair, you thought, 'What a good thing it would be to have a nice village girl, with a real but limited gift, go from here to study art in New York! And get in love there! And married!'" (*CB* iv). Howells to a large extent followed the popular plot of the American Girl who enjoys her freedom and independence and then marries in the end. Though Howells is conscious of girls' situations enough to raise a question about "whether Cornelia [i]s right in giving up her art for him" (*CB* 304), the problem is easily solved, for Ludlow, unlike most male artists, encourages her not to cease to study art after marriage.

One thing to note in the novel, however, is the strong sense of sisterhood of Charmian toward Cornelia. On first meeting Cornelia, Charmian asks her, "do you care if I like *you*—very, *very* much?" (*CB* 93). Later again, after confessing that Cornelia's pride "fascinated me [her] at the first glance," Charmian asks her, "Do you mind my being fascinated with you?" (*CB* 96). When Cornelia and Ludlow have some misunderstandings and Cornelia is afraid of their breaking up, Charmian comforts her and proposes that they—Charmian and Cornelia—get together:

"Now—*now*—we can live for each other, Cornelia. You will outlive this. You will be terribly changed, of course; and perhaps your health

may be affected; but I shall always be with you from this on. I have loved you more truly than he ever did, if he can throw you over for a little thing like that. If I were a man I should exult to ignore such a thing. Oh, if men could only be what girls would be if they were men! But now you must begin to forget him from this instant—to put him out of your mind—your life.” (*CB* 311)

Here Charmian suggests what Jo March does: the possibility of replacing the heterosexual marriage by the Boston Marriage. Charmian continues: “I can arrange it with mama to be with you; and if I can’t I shall just simply abandon her, and we will take a little flat like two newspaper girls that I heard of, and live together” (*CB* 312). Her mention of two girls living together reveals that it is not too uncommon in the turn-of-the-century America (especially in cities) that two girls live together. In the end, however, this proposal is cancelled, and the heterosexual marriage prevails. Also, Howells does not make Charmian problematic and she is not portrayed as dangerous. She never discourages but rather encourages Cornelia to see Ludlow, and she does not have much talent for art; she is a model, not an artist, for portraits that Ludlow and Cornelia paint.

While Howells shares the idea of girlhood with the contemporary popular discourse, he partly shows a negative view of the relationship between the American Girl and imperialistic propaganda. In “Editha” (1905), an American girl, Editha, patriotically wants her lover George to be a war hero when the Spanish war starts, and George, who thought the war was wrong and who did not want to go to war, decides to enter the army. Shortly, however, Editha gets shocked by the news that George was

killed in the war, and George's mother, whom Editha visits to take care of, rejects her. The last scene of the story shows a female artist in New York, a friend of Editha, telling Editha that she was right because George fought for the country, which makes Editha "beg[i]n to live again in the ideal" ("Editha" 224). One of the illustrations for this story shows the very image of the American Girl in a white dress popular at the turn of the century (Figure 16). Howells, using the typology of the American Girl, shows a negative attitude toward the imperialistic expansionism in America embodied by her and at the same time reveals his fear of the expansive power of the female, in contrast to Davis's emphasis on American masculinity.



Figure 16. An illustration for "Editha"

Taken together, a brief examination of fictional representations of girls in several literary works reveals that the idea of girlhood had changed and came to be

represented in a more complicated way in the late nineteenth century. Girlhood—a transitional period between childhood and womanhood—became less fixed and more complicated and, in this situation, the icon of the American Girl and the American Girl plot, which ends with her marriage to “Mr. Mann,” serves to codify the standard in terms of gender and nation. In the following chapters, I will closely examine the representations of the American girls in the works of James, Wharton, and Cather, discussing how their stories resist the “ordinary” American Girl plot shown by such popular writers as Davis and how their works create a tension in terms of nation and gender in their representations of the American girl.

Chapter Two: Henry James's Revisions of His American Girls

"He observed that in the new contingent there were many young girls, and he remembered what a lady in Dresden had once said to him—that America was a country of girls."
("Pandora" 818)

In Henry James's novels, the issues of gender and nation are closely intertwined as the difference in gender is often compared to that in nation, which is linked to "James's conviction that American womanhood [i]s somehow supremely the representative national fact" (Eakin 13). James's ideas of America as well as of American womanhood, however, are different from those constructed in the late-nineteenth-century American culture, where "James learned early that being demonstrably 'masculine' in America was mainly associated with the making of money" (Banta "Men" 23) and "the American man has abandoned both the woman and civilization for business" (Fowler 11-12). James separated himself from the dominant idea of the American male and situated himself between America and Europe, between the masculine and the feminine.²⁷ Standing at a peculiar "in-

²⁷ Critics have suggested that James felt inferior to American men, which perhaps led him to feel feminized, at least to a certain extent. First, the condition of the writer in the late nineteenth century industrial and progressive America was itself effeminized and perhaps "expatriated" for James, in that it was a life so alien to the mercantile character of American life. In his early years, James deplored the American lack of culture, and he continued to recognize that deficiency in the considerations offered in *The American Scene* (1905). By that point, President Theodore Roosevelt was insisting on strenuous men in America, and James "was neither recognizably masculine nor American" (Banta "Men" 23). More importantly, his sense of his inferiority or remoteness from the American businessman was linked with what appeared as an insecure masculinity when compared to his brother William. In their childhood, William saw Henry as "too much of a sissy to play with boys like himself," and, on the other hand, Henry "expresses clearly what he has always wanted to be—his elder brother" (Edel 245, 18). William almost always severely criticized his brother's novels, and "said that writing was an 'abnormality,' that is, not quite an active, manly, healthy way of existence" (Edel 162). What William meant by "an active, manly, healthy way of life" is

between” position, Henry James has two perspectives at the same time. Roosevelt had a “relentlessly single-sex perspective” (Banta “Men” 29) and a nativist American perspective, but James had a kind of “double-sex” perspective as well as a “multi-national” perspective, which influences his revisions of the American girl. James’s American girl stories do not follow the pattern of the popular “American Girl” plot, where the American Girl has a happy marriage with an American Man and the union serves to inspire American nationalism. He fully shows his awareness of the plight of a girl/woman, especially in relation to marriage, at the same time that James distances himself from making his American girl a radical New Woman, who rejects or subverts marriage. This complex attitude reveals James’s ambivalent investigation about the American girl’s choices.

In this chapter, I will examine how James’s American girl is revised in relation to his complex investigation of a girl as well as America and in relation to his shifting view of American democracy. After briefly dealing with his Tocquevillian American girls in his earlier works, the main part of this chapter will focus on texts written after his return to America in the early 1880s, which seems to have influenced the change in James’s American girl. I will focus in particular on the “American tales” published in the 1880s, “Pandora” and *The Bostonians*, and examine how unstable James’s American girl becomes in relation to the “woman” issue and also how complexly James raises a question about American democracy. The last part of this chapter deals with his later works, especially *The Golden Bowl* (1904), another “American” story,

closely related to the progressive, masculine, nation-building enterprise—the “strenuous life” presented by Roosevelt. While William—a “manly” philosopher, husband and father—lived in America, Henry remained in Europe for most of his life (though he kept his American citizenship until his last year of life); and his attraction to the sophisticated civilization in Europe is continuously juxtaposed with his ambivalent yearning for his native country.

and explores how James's American girl is represented as well as how the novel explores a different vision of American civilization from the one of the Gilded Age.

1. James's Tocquevillian American girls

As Lauren Weiner aptly states, Henry James "is the most Tocquevillian of American authors" (34). In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville notes the peculiar freedom and high morality of unmarried young women in America, seeing them as among the most characteristic aspects of American democracy. "In the United States, Protestant doctrines combine with a very free constitution and a very democratic social state," Tocqueville notes, "nowhere else is a girl left so soon or so entirely to look after herself" (684). Comparing the American girl with her counterpart in Europe and especially in Catholic countries, Tocqueville discusses how American girls are "much more in control of their behavior" and have considerable "purity of moral behavior" (684, 685), but European girls "are often given a cautious, reserved, and almost cloistered education, as they would have received in aristocratic times" (685). As Weiner and others have noted, Tocqueville's idea of the American girl is largely reflected in James's American girl, someone independent, self-controlled and with a "pure" morality which his European characters cannot quite understand and which European girls lack in his novels. Daisy Miller ignores the counsel of her mother and of women in society, and she surprises people with a free, independent behavior that nonetheless never betrays her moral innocence. The idea of Tocquevillian democracy is partly shared by those writers who wrote such American Girl stories as I have presented in Chapter One. In such stories, American girls enjoy

freedom and exercise self-control, and yet they still retain their innocence—and the writers emphasize these characteristics as aspects of the American girls’ power or Americanness. These marks in James have won him a reputation as primary image-maker of the American Girl and indeed the American woman. That claim is partly true in that he does create a young female figure who expresses American democracy in Tocquevillian terms. Nevertheless, in important ways he deviates from, or at least significantly varies, what had become something of a stereotype.

Unlike other writers of popular American Girl stories, James asks, “[w]hat is the cost to the woman herself of the relatively free conditions in which she develops” (Weiner 35). In earlier works such as “Daisy Miller” and *The Portrait of a Lady*, James emphasizes that the American girl is recklessly free and independent to a dangerous extent. Daisy Miller dies of malaria—bad air—in Rome because she lacks “guidance” (Weiner 38). In *The Portrait of a Lady*, an American girl, Isabel, has more freedom to “choose” than the European girl Pansy, but James questions the cost of Isabel’s freedom to choose. Both she and Daisy can be seen as martyrs to the American girl’s freedom and independence.

Another essential difference is James’s awareness of what becomes of the American girl after marriage. “In America,” Tocqueville argues, “a woman’s independence is irretrievably lost in the ties of marriage. If a young woman is less restricted there than anywhere else, as a wife she submits to narrower duties. The former enjoys a place of liberty and pleasure in her father’s house, the latter, in her husband’s home, lives in almost cloistered surroundings” (686). Those popular American Girl stories I mentioned in Chapter One almost always end with the “happy

marriage” between the American Girl and the American Man, and they hardly show the married life of the former American girl. In contrast, most of James’s American girl stories do not end with the “happy marriage”; instead, with considerable insight into women’s situation, he presents the American girl’s plight in married life. James contrasts not only an American girl and a European girl but an American woman and a European woman after marriage; Isabel loses control and power after marriage and finds herself enclosed in “the house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation” (*NYE* IV: 196) while such Europeanized women as Madame de Vionnet remain potent managers and manipulators of life.

Fully aware of the insecurity of the American girl, James’s stories about the American girl resist the pattern of the popular American Girl story, where the American Girl finally marries “Mr. Mann.” In “Daisy Miller,” Winterbourne, the point-of-view character, is an American in Europe who has a sense of loss about his American identity: “He felt that he had lived at Geneva so long that he had lost a good deal; he had become dishabituated to the American tone” (“Daisy” I: 684). He is regarded as “grave” (“Daisy” I: 696), “stiff” (“Daisy” II: 56), and “more like a German” (“Daisy” I: 682) by Daisy, and his American identity is undermined as he is repeatedly asked by Daisy if he is “a ‘real American’” (“Daisy” I: 682, 687). His American identity remains ambiguous and rather relative, situated in-between, which serves to underline the “Americanness” of Daisy. Winterbourne cannot understand Daisy, and “Daisy Miller” ends not with the American Girl’s marriage but with her death; indeed, the death of Daisy, who is buried in Rome with the image of “the most innocent” (“Daisy” II: 67), effectively functions in turning her into the icon of

Americanness, as her death allows her image to remain timeless as a “young, pretty, free, and innocent” American girl. James does not only reject the pattern of the American Girl plot but also makes Daisy remain an American “Girl,” preventing her from becoming an American woman who is to lose her freedom in exchange of marriage.²⁸ When James made this story into a play in 1882, he made Daisy and Winterbourne get married to meet the audiences’ taste (Edel 276), and this compromising change clearly underlines the gap between the taste in popular culture and that of James.

Different from Winterbourne, Ralph Touchett in *The Portrait of a Lady*, who is also an American in Europe, fully understands the American girl Isabel.²⁹ After being educated both in America and England, Ralph, a successor of Gardencourt, becomes “English enough” and still American enough: “[h]is outward conformity to the manners that surrounded him was none the less the mask of a mind that greatly enjoyed its independence, on which nothing long imposed itself, and which, naturally inclined to adventure and irony, indulged in a boundless liberty of appreciation” (*NYE* III: 49). He has an American soul covered by a dying European body, and he in a sense chooses Isabel, who has “the independent spirit of the American girl” (*NYE* III: 215), as his substitute to meet his own romantic American soul.

Isabel Archer—whose name links her with the image of Diana, the virgin hunter—loves liberty above all, and, wishing to see life by her own eyes, believes in

²⁸ Later in his career, James portrays another American girl who dies in the end, Milly Theale, in *The Wings of the Dove*. In fact, Milly, a rich, free, and reckless American girl, is dying throughout the novel as she approaches the marriageable age. Certainly, marriage is a kind of death for the American “Girl.”

²⁹ Dana Luciano suggests that Ralph presents “the ‘third-sex’ model,” combining male and female elements (200), which leads to his identification with Isabel.

American girls' freedom and independence though she at the same time fears them. In Ralph's eyes, Isabel embodies "America"; Ralph "amuse[s] himself with calling her 'Columbia,' and accusing her of a patriotism so fervid that it scorched. He drew a caricature of her in which she was represented as a very pretty young woman, dressed, on the lines of the prevailing fashion, in the folds of the national banner" (*NYE* III: 83). Appreciating American girls' freedom and independence, Isabel tries to enjoy the transitional period of "girlhood" as much as possible and does not simply follow the conventional pattern. Though Isabel does not necessarily detest Casper Goodwood—the American Man—she keeps postponing her potential marriage with him. Not pursuing a conventional marriage plot, Isabel believes "that a woman ought to be able to live to herself, in the absence of exceptional flimsiness, and that it was perfectly possible to be happy without the society of a more or less coarse-minded person of another sex" (*NYE* III: 71). Asked by Ralph why she rejects Lord Warburton's proposal, she declares, "I don't see what harm there is in my wishing not to tie myself. I don't want to begin life by marrying. There are other things a woman can do" (*NYE* III: 212). For her, Henrietta is "chiefly a proof that a woman might suffice to herself and be happy" (*NYE* III: 71).

Different from her suitors, Ralph understands why Isabel prefers to postpone her marriage, and helps her become rich enough to accomplish her "wis[h] to be free," to prevent her from "hav[ing] to marry for a support" (*NYE* III: 261). After a huge inheritance of money makes Isabel a rich American Girl, which ironically makes her "fall a victim" (*NYE* III: 265). Isabel chose Osmond because he shows "a non-traditional or even anti-traditional masculinity from a woman's point of view"

(Person *Henry James* 94). And yet, Isabel becomes an American wife, who has no power and freedom; when Osmond prohibits her to go to England to see Ralph at his deathbed, she fully understands that “[m]arriage mean[s] that in such a case as this, when one ha[s] to choose, one cho[o]se as a matter of course for one’s husband” (*NYE* IV: 361). Though Henrietta advises her to get divorced, Isabel, as a former American girl, declares that she must take responsibility for her choice because she “was perfectly free” when she made it (*NYE* IV: 284). In this novel, James presents the American girl’s vulnerability, which is partly shared by Ralph. When Mr. Touchett worries that Isabel “may fall a victim to the fortune-hunters” by getting the enormous amount of money (*NYE* III: 265), Ralph denies his father’s apprehension. It is not only Isabel but Ralph who romantically misjudges Isabel’s—or the American girl’s—judgment, and, in the end, they are “looking at the truth together” (*NYE* IV: 414) in a room in Gardencourt.³⁰ Considering that *The Portrait of a Lady* begins with Ralph’s meeting Isabel as a girl from America and ends with his death, it can be seen as a story of Ralph as well as of Isabel, who embodies the Tocquevillian idea of America, which Ralph seeks.

Creating a vivid contrast with Isabel, who is the American girl that failed in marriage, Henrietta Stackpole is situated at a peculiar position in the novel. Henrietta is illustrated as a typical New Woman, working as a professional journalist. She is “in

³⁰ Interestingly, as William T. Stafford notes, not only Isabel but also Madame Merle is a “failed American woman” (120). Madame Merle is a former American Girl, and, while Isabel is described as “dressed [. . .] in the folds of the national banner” (*NYE* III: 83), Madame Merle tells her, “I was born under the shadow of the national banner” (*NYE* III: 248). She herself made a mistake in her “choice” in the past because of her innocence/ignorance and had a miserable married life. What makes her different from Isabel is that she changed herself into a European lady, who is a mistress and has manipulating power; and yet, she still has American morality in repenting that she wronged Isabel (while Osmond is indifferent) and finally goes back to America.

the van of progress, and ha[s] clear-cut views on most subjects” (*NYE* III: 70); indeed, she is powerful, confident, and settled. While Isabel does not know “where you’re [she is] drifting,” Henrietta knows that she is “drifting to a big position—that of the Queen of American Journalism” (*NYE* III: 235, 237). James makes Henrietta a New Womanish girl who breaks social boundaries and conventional social roles; at the same time, it is significant that he does not make her reject the institution of marriage. For her, Isabel’s mistake is not the fact she married but the person she chose to marry. Being as much an Americanist as Randolph in “Daisy Miller” (she expresses “the opinion that American hotels [a]re the best in the world” [*NYE* III: 134]), Henrietta paradoxically contributes to the American Girl discourse; she tries to stop Isabel’s being Europeanized, and encourages Isabel to marry Casper Goodwood, a genuine American “Mr. Mann.” While she can be regarded as a New Woman in that she is independent and has a profession, she hardly gets involved in women’s movements; on the contrary, she declares that American women are “the companions of freemen” (*NYE* III: 134). In the end, Henrietta herself marries—what is more, marries an English gentleman. Elise Miller, who focuses on the function of Henrietta—who is at the same time a caricature of a “liberated, career woman” (21) and “a kind of marriage broker” (17) and is at the same time masculine and feminine with the feminine form of “Henry”—suggests that Henrietta “enables James’s text to challenge the either/or dilemmas presented to Isabel” and reads Henrietta’s marriage as giving “a balance of self and society, private and public, subjective and objective, feminine and masculine, past and future” (25). Indeed, Henrietta’s marriage is quite different from Isabel’s. While Isabel has fear in her freedom in choice and loses

control and power after marriage, Henrietta is in full control in her marriage. Though she tells Isabel that “a woman has to change a good deal to marry” (*NYE* IV: 400), she does not change as much as she claims, remaining “a woman of my [her] modern type” (*NYE* IV: 401). In this sense, she is not so much a “girl,” who is insecure, as a “woman,” who is already settled and secure. She is the optimistic and comical embodiment of American democracy while Isabel shows both its celebration and insecurity.

Moreover, raising questions about European institutions such as aristocracy, Henrietta presents a different picture of “America” or “American democracy” from what Isabel does. Once Isabel tells Ralph that “there’s something of the ‘people’ in” Henrietta, and explains that she views her as the embodiment of democracy: “She knows a great deal, and I know enough to feel that she’s a kind of emanation of the great democracy—of the continent, the country, the nation. I don’t say that she sums it all up, that would be too much to ask of her. But she suggests it; she vividly figures it” (*NYE* III: 130). The democracy in Henrietta refers to the absence of class hierarchy, as well as of gender difference; coming to Europe, she is curious about aristocratic life and denounces class hierarchy, which surprises and amuses English gentlemen as well as upsets anti-Americanist Americans such as Mrs. Touchett and Osmond. Mrs. Touchett gives negative comments on Henrietta: “I don’t like Miss Stackpole—everything about her displeases me; she talks so much too loud and looks at one as if one wanted to look at *her*—which one does n’t. I’m sure she has lived all her life in a boarding-house, and I detest the manners and the liberties of such places. [. . .] Miss Stackpole knows I detest boarding-house civilisation, and she detests me

for detesting it, because she thinks it the highest in the world” (*NYE* III: 133). Also, Osmond “really must object to that newspaper-woman”; he thinks of her as “the most vulgar of women, and he had also pronounced her the most abandoned” (*NYE* IV: 138, 139). The idea of American democracy presented in Henrietta is linked with what Mrs. Touchett and Osmond calls “boarding-house civilization” and vulgarity—namely, the popularization of culture. Here is shown another aspect of turn-of-the-century American democracy, which is to be examined more thoroughly in *The Bostonians*.

Taken together, James is attracted to the idea of freedom and independence in the American girl—one of the symbols of American democracy which Tocqueville examined—at the same time he fears it becoming a danger for girls and also fears it being lost after marriage. James’s American girl stories do not follow the pattern of the popular “American Girl” plot, where the American Girl has a “happy marriage” with an American Man and the union serves to inspire American nationalism. Different from the popular image of the American Girl, who embodies the monolithic standard of America, James’s American girls rather reveal their insecurity instead of security and their instability instead of stability, and disclose their vulnerability which is juxtaposed with their democratic freedom. Then, how do James’s representations of the American girl change, especially in relation to the contemporary discourse of nationalism, imperialism, and feminism?

2. The revision of Daisy Miller in “Pandora” (1884)

James’s return to the United States in 1881 was pivotal in his revisions of

American girls. He saw various social and political changes in the country, and, in the frequently cited statements in his notebook in 1883, he wrote that he would next get involved in “a very *American* tale”: “I wished to write a very *American* tale, a tale very characteristic of our social conditions and I asked myself what was the most salient and peculiar point in our social life. The answer was: the situation of women, the decline of the sentiment of sex, the agitation on their behalf” (CN 20). While the “very American tale” James mentions here refers to *The Bostonians*, it is also worth noting that James wrote another American tale about the American Girl after he revisited the United States: “Pandora” (1884). Though this tale has not been much discussed, it is significant in that the heroine is in fact the metafictionally revised version of Daisy Miller.

Almost at the same time that he wrote his idea about *The Bostonians*, James scribbled a couple of sentences in his notebook which was to be developed into “Pandora”: “‘The self-made girl’—a very good subject for a short story. Very modern, very local; much might be done” (CN 22). Then, in the following year, James came back to this idea of a “self-made girl”: “I don’t see why I shouldn’t do the ‘self-made girl,’ whom I noted here last winter, in a way to make her a rival to DM [Daisy Miller]” (CN 24). He continued to design the story, which is to be set in Washington, DC, where James stayed the year before, and in the story he “might even *do* Henry Adams and his wife” (CN 24), whose patriotic characteristics are reflected in the figures of Mr. and Mrs. Bonnycastle.

While “Daisy Miller” has a point-of-view character, Winterbourne, who is a

Europeanized American and who reenounters America through Daisy, “Pandora” has a German character, Count Otto Vogelstein, through whose eyes the scenes are described. The story begins with his voyage from Germany to America on the *Donau*, where he observes many American travelers as well as European emigrants on board and where he meets Pandora Day, an American girl from “a small town in the interior of the American continent” (“Pandora” 823). In this tale, Mrs. Dangerfield plays the role of Aunt Costello in “Daisy Miller,” warning Vogelstein not to get familiar with the Days because they don’t belong to “the discriminating class” (“Pandora” 823). Vogelstein, observing Pandora and her unfashionable family, parts with them without getting very familiar with them. Two years after his landing in America, Vogelstein happens to meet Pandora again at the Bonnycastle’s party. Mrs. Bonnycastle describes Pandora as “a great beauty and a great success” (“Pandora” 840) in a quite nationalistic way and Vogelstein is surprised to see Pandora talk casually with the President of the United States. Vogelstein gets more interested in Pandora as he often meets her, and even imagines his potential marriage to her. His expectation is ironically betrayed when he finally learns that Pandora has been engaged for years. The tale ends with Vogelstein’s telling Mrs. Bonnycastle about Pandora’s marriage to Mr. Bellamy, an American gentleman from Utica, who, largely due to Pandora’s appeal to the President, has gotten the position of Minister of Holland.

Portraying the “new type” (“Pandora” 831) of American Girl, James comically and self-consciously revises “Daisy Miller” in “Pandora.” Vogelstein learns about America through “a Tauchnitz novel by an American author” (“Pandora” 819) and the book turns out gradually to be “Daisy Miller.” Compared with “Daisy Miller,”

“Pandora” shows that James becomes more conscious about the building of the nation and the role of the American Girl as the symbol of nation. At the party at the Bonnycastles, Vogelstein wonders who—or what—Pandora is, and the Bonnycastles explain she is a “self-made girl”: “‘My dear Vogelstein, she is the latest, freshest fruit of our great American evolution. She is the self-made girl!’ Vogelstein gazed a moment. ‘The fruit of the great American Revolution?’” (“Pandora” 850). The misunderstanding of Vogelstein, principally comical as it is, serves to display two ideas of the American girl as an icon. The first one, referred to by Mr. Bonnycastle, resonates with the popular theory of evolution in the late nineteenth century, and the second one refers to the revolutionary idea about American identity. Furthermore, Mrs. Bonnycastle disagrees with her husband’s idea that Pandora is self-made. In her opinion, Pandora “isn’t self-made at all”; instead, “[w]e all help to make her, we take such an interest in her” (“Pandora” 851). The aspect that Pandora might be made by the society is significant because James’s American girl tends to be characterized by her not belonging to—or not conforming to—the society. Certainly, Pandora is not cast out from the society like Daisy Miller. Pandora enters and climbs up to the top of the society within two years (Mrs. Dangerfield, who warned Vogelstein not to communicate with Pandora on board, now visits Pandora herself). Pandora is invited to the party of the Bonnycastles, who “ha[ve] taken upon themselves the responsibilities of an active patriotism” (“Pandora” 838), and is given a chance to meet the President and to join the imperialist movement of the nation. Thus, Pandora belongs to the society, and, moreover, embodies the progressive movement of American society. Certainly, she is the “rival” (CN 24) of Daisy Miller; while Daisy

is uncultivated, Pandora is self-cultivated; while Daisy is cast out from the society, Pandora is located at its center; while Daisy dies, Pandora does not.

After all, what distinguishes “Pandora” most from “Daisy Miller” and other works of James is its ending of “happy marriage” between the American girl and a successful American business man. Vogelstein, who is attracted by Pandora but fears the possibility of his marriage to her, gets to know that Pandora has been engaged for a long time with “one of the leading gentlemen of Utica” (“Pandora” 862), and as the ship from Mount Vernon approaches Washington, DC, Vogelstein sees Mr. Bellamy, Pandora’s fiancé, standing out among the crowd at the port: “The gentleman before him was tall, good-looking, well-dressed; evidently he would stand well not only at Utica, but, judging from the way he had planted himself on the dock, in any position which circumstances might compel him to take up. He was about forty years old; he had a black moustache and a business-like eye” (“Pandora” 863). In a sense, Pandora marries “Mr. Mann” in *Mae Madden*, who stands “firm and hard and still” (*Mae Madden* 168) on the shore when the boat with Mae and the Italian Bero comes toward it. Moreover, the portrait the narrator of “Pandora” describes through the eyes of Vogelstein is just like the figure of the Gibson Man, who is to be created to make a pair with the Gibson Girl in the 1890s.

What is essential is that, unlike the usual cases in James’s works, the couple successfully gets married, and they are both Americans. As Weiner aptly argues, “this quality seems to have depended on his doing something notably un-Jamesian, namely, having the heroine pick the right mate” (45). But why did James unusually end “Pandora” with the title character’s marriage with “the right mate,” an American

businessman? Bellamy is what Daisy would call a “real American” and is a successful businessman in the discourse of expansionism. In other words, Bellamy stands at the side of Theodore Roosevelt or William James, representing what Henry James never was or could be. The marriage of Pandora and Bellamy symbolizes the national and democratic power of America that expands to the world in the progressive era, which James seems to regard as partly attractive but also partly fearful.

The distance of James himself from Pandora and from America in the story can be found in the fact that the point-of-view character of this story is no longer a Europeanized American but a genuine European gentleman. Different from Winterbourne, who is an American but is said to be “like a German” (“Daisy” I: 682) by Daisy, Vogelstein is a German, and, what’s more, a very traditional and rather nationalist German. Vogelstein’s fear of his potential marriage to Pandora shows the mixture of his nativist respect for his “blood” and his conservative idea about gender roles. He thinks, “Was he to be sacrificed on the altar of the American girl—an altar at which those other poor fellows had poured out some of the bluest blood in Germany” (“Pandora” 855). Vogelstein “preferred that his success should be his own” and “it would not be agreeable to him to have the air of being pushed by his wife” (“Pandora” 855); thus “he could hardly admit to himself that this was what fate had in reserve for him—to be propelled in his career by a young lady who would perhaps attempt to talk to the Kaiser as he had heard her the other night talk to the President” (“Pandora” 855). So, in the figure of the American girl Pandora, two arguments—one related to nationality and the other related to gender—are entangled,

and the power of girls in America is underlined through the eyes of a traditionalist European. Making the point-of-view character a very traditional European gentleman not only serves to make the story comical and to underline the gap between the understanding of Vogelstein (or the limitations of his understanding) and the reality; at the same time, it suggests the ambivalence of James's own standing and his distance from the America to which he came back. Pandora lacks such naivety as Daisy Miller has. She is cleverer and never dies. If Daisy Miller is in a way a romantic icon of the American girl, Pandora Day is a deromanticized icon, who is based more on James's actual observation of the contemporary America of the time. Certainly, both Daisy Miller and Pandora Day embody the Tocquevillian democracy of America in that "[i]n an unmarried state, she [i]s freer to develop herself than her European counterpart" (Weiner 33); however, Pandora is rather like a settled woman inside despite the perfect appearance of the American Girl, no longer possessing the naivety and vulnerability of such an American girl as Daisy. Indeed, Pandora is not as much celebrated as Daisy, illustrated as a little too powerful and frightening. It is partly true that "[t]he self-made girl is satisfied with the moral and intellectual status of women in America and makes no complaint about their political inferiority" (Weiner 46) in "Pandora"; nevertheless, Pandora Day does not seem politically "inferior." Certainly, Pandora does not have actual political power and the best she can do is to ask the President to nominate her fiancé to be an ambassador; however, the fact that Bellamy does become an ambassador in Holland underlines Pandora's "political" power, though not essentially public, and Bellamy even seems to be just an

agent of Pandora's expanding power. The story ends with Vogelstein's "remark that there was now ground for a new induction as to the self-made girl" ("Pandora" 864).

Considering James's awareness of the increase of girls' power, it is essential to note the name of the heroine, Pandora. In his notebook, James emphasizes the importance of her name: "The thing must have the name of the girl (like D. M.) for its title—carefully selected" (CN 25). The name he "carefully selected," then, was "Pandora." In a famous Hesiodian myth, Pandora is the symbol of Beauty and all-gifted, though she "brought upon the world illness and vice by opening a fateful vessel the contents of which, with the exception of Hope, immediately flew away" (Panofsky 7).³¹ The all-giftedness and danger are thus juxtaposed in the image of Pandora; and James, in selecting this name "carefully," presents the dual nature of the American Girl in the progressive era.

James's ambivalent attitude toward the America of his time can be found in the contrast of two American places in "Pandora": the Capitol and Mount Vernon. First, James's portrait of Washington, DC, characterizes the city as an artificial White City under the City Beautiful Movement, which in many ways anticipates the White City at the 1893 Chicago Exposition. Central to Washington, DC, is the Capitol, "the great white edifice" ("Pandora" 853), which has a "queer and endless interior, through labyrinths of white, bare passages, into legislative and judicial halls" ("Pandora" 853-54). Vogelstein finds that "[i]n the lower House there were certain bedaubed walls, in the basest style of imitation, which made him feel faintly sick" ("Pandora" 854). The

³¹ Moreover, James might know that Pandora has been connected in some ways with Eve, as the first woman, as is seen in the famous fact that "the parallel between Pandora and Eve was a favorite motif of Milton's" (Panofsky 64). For the thorough information about the history of symbolism and iconography of Pandora, see Dora and Erwin Panofsky *Pandora's Box: The Changing Aspects of a Mythical Symbol*.

negative feeling of Vogelstein toward this “imitated city” may be shared to a large extent by James himself, who visited Washington, DC, for the first time in 1881 and found it “false classic, white marble, iron, stucco” though “it had a grand air” (Edel 272).

While the capital city is linked with newness and artificiality, the old city of Alexandria is connected with the past, reminding readers of two wars essential in the history of America, the Civil War and the Revolutionary War. As Vogelstein and Pandora sail down to Mount Vernon with others, Pandora tells him about her memories of the days during the Civil War:

The two turned round together to contemplate Alexandria, which for Pandora, as she declared, was a revelation of old Virginia. She told Vogelstein that she was always hearing about it during the civil war, years before. Little girl as she had been at the time, she remembered all the names that were on people’s lips during those years of reiteration.

This historic spot had a certain picturesqueness of decay, a reference to older things, to a dramatic past. (“Pandora” 855-56)

The stark contrast between two “Washington”s—the new, artificial white city of Washington, DC, and the old, historical home of George Washington, surrounded by nature—suggests the duality in James’s idea of America: the American civilization and American nature. While portraying an ironical picture of the modern, progressive America, which is symbolized by the construction of the white city, James still seems to believe in the American revolutionary ideals. At Mount Vernon, Vogelstein feels that “the home of Washington was after all really *gemüthlich*,” and Pandora “was

even more interested in Mount Vernon [. . .] than she had been in the Capitol” (“Pandora” 856). While James deprives Pandora of her relationship with her parents in terms of her success in the society, he connects her with national, historical ancestors. Mrs. Steuben tells Vogelstein that Pandora belongs to “one of the first families” and “[h]er great-grand-father was in the Revolution” (“Pandora” 849). Pandora’s American revolutionary connection is underlined again when Vogelstein links her with George Washington: “And it occurred to Vogelstein that perhaps, after all, Washington would have liked her manner, which was wonderfully *fresh and natural*” (“Pandora” 857 emphasis added).

James’s attitude toward the American revolutionary tradition, however, seems to become less positive when he revises “Pandora” for the New York Edition after he went back to America after 20 years’ absence.³² “The man with the beard” who is “an ideal cicerone for American shrines” (“Pandora” 857) in the 1885 version is replaced with “a big slow genial vulgar heavily-bearded man” (*NYE XVIII*: 158) in the New York Edition. As Charles Vandersee aptly suggests, “James’s revisions here stress the vulgarity in America’s ostentatious veneration of the past” (102), and this change can be attributed to the nationalist movement in the 1890s and early 1900s. As the national origin came to be glorified in the project of incorporating the nation, James

³² “Pandora” was first published in the New York Sun in 1884, then in *The Author of Beltraffio* (Boston, 1885) and in *Stories Revived* (London, 1885) with a little revision, and its more substantially revised version was published as the New York Edition. The version used in this dissertation is the London version. Charles Vandersee, closely examining the revision of “Pandora,” regards the revisions in earlier versions as “minor” and of “little significance” (94); however, there are still noteworthy changes. For example, Pandora is portrayed in the Sun version and the Boston version as “a great beauty and a great belle” while in the London version she is described as “a great beauty and a great success” (Vandersee 94). In the London version, what is highlighted is not only Pandora’s feminine beauty but also her “success,” the very American quality in the progressive era.

might have become conscious of his own commitment to the idea, which might have led to the revision of “Pandora.” Indeed, between the 1885 text and the 1909 text, there are significant changes in James’s treatment of the nation; the imperialist aspect of the nation at the turn of the century is reflected in James’s ironical use of the phrase “the great Republic,” instead of “the United States,” three times in the 1905 text. Furthermore, the American Girl herself is made more powerful in the later text. When Vogelstein hears about Pandora’s engagement from Mrs. Bonnycastle, the latter tells him that American girls have been engaged since “[t]he time before she had made herself—when she lived at home” in the 1885 version (“Pandora” 860), and “[t]he time before she had made herself—when she lived *unconscious of her powers*” in the 1909 version (*NYE* XVIII 162, emphasis added). In the 1909 version, both the nation and the American Girl are described as more powerful than in the original text.

The next story situated after “Pandora” in *The Author of Beltraffio* (Boston, 1885) is “Georgina’s Reasons,” where James illustrates another powerful girl, though in a different sense. Georgina is “a tall, fair girl” (*CS* 1) and is compared to “the Empress Josephine” because she is “remarkably imperial” (*CS* 3). While “Pandora” follows the style of the American Girl stories which end with the heroine’s marriage to the right man, “Georgina’s Reasons” breaks and threatens the pattern by raising the problem of bigamy. Georgina secretly gets married to her lover Raymond Benyon, who is in the navy and goes abroad for years; after several years, Benyon finds that Georgina has become Mrs. Roy and that still he cannot divorce Georgina. In this story, James makes the American Girl very powerful and intelligent so that she has complete control over her lover; on the story level, Georgina is called “a monster”

(CS 19) and “a very bad girl” (CS 22). At the same time, however, James shows the “reasons” why Georgina takes such an action. Asked by Mrs. Portico why she keeps her marriage secret, Georgina points out the inequality in the situation: “If he wasn’t in the navy it would be different; but to go through everything,—I mean everything that making our marriage known would bring upon me: the scolding and the exposure and the ridicule, the scenes at home—to go through it all just for the idea, and yet be alone here, just as I was before, without my husband after all, with none of the good of him” (CS 18). Later again, when Benyon, who thinks Georgina deprives him of his freedom, comes to accuse her, Georgina says, “I leave you your liberty,” and asks him instead if he knows how she was “freezing up into a stark old maid” (CS 59).

Taken together, James, after returning to America in the early 1880s, revises his American girl so that she comes to be more powerful than his earlier girls and so that the idea of America she embodies is something different from the one shown in his earlier works. He presents the threat of girls’ getting enormous power, though he is still acutely aware of the limitations of the female. Also, in the American girl in “Pandora” are juxtaposed two ideas of America—the new, artificial American civilization and American nature linked with the old, American revolutionary tradition. His ambivalent investigation of the American girl and about America appears in a more complex way in *The Bostonians*.

3. *The Bostonians* (1886)

In 1886, the same year *The Bostonians* was published, *Life* magazine offered an illustration that showed a very modern aspect of Boston life: women getting public

power (Figure 17). The illustration ironically shows how women were getting more and more powerful in the public sphere in Boston; in the poem that accompanies the illustration, the poet deplores the situation that the number of men was small and the male was getting weaker. Indeed, James himself was “struck by the ‘numerosity’ of the women folk” when he visited Boston, and felt that “he was in a city of women, a country of women” (Edel 287)—in other words, the Boston to which James returned was a kind of “Herland.” In Boston, not only was the number of women extremely large but various social movements for women were proceeding after the Civil War.³³ Through such social groups as the New England Women’s Club, the Boston Women’s Educational and Industrial Union (founded in 1877), and the YMCA, middle-class women “worked to ease the burden of poverty and work on their less fortunate sisters” by supporting them and serving to improve their working conditions (Smith-Rosenberg 174).

In *The Bostonians*, then, Henry James took up the very problem of “the so-called ‘woman’s movement,’” which he called “very characteristic of our social conditions” (CN 18, 20). Along with this, he dealt with the Boston marriage; he wrote in his notebook, “The relationship of the two girls should be a study of one of those friendships between women which are so common in New England,” which he called “American” as well as “full of Boston” (CN 19).³⁴ *The Bostonians* complicates James’ exploration of the American girl by presenting a tension between heterosexual marriage and the Boston marriage. As critics have variously argued, one of the central

³³ As for women’s activity in Boston after the Civil War, see Sarah Deutsch.

³⁴ In fact, the Boston marriage is a familiar matter to James; as has largely been recognized, James’ own sister Alice had a Boston marriage with Katherine Loring; and, when Katherine took care of her sick sister Louise, James took Alice to a town near the sea and there he wrote *The Bostonians* (Edel 312).

matters in the novel is the dichotomy between Olive and Basil or their relationships with Verena, and one of the chief questions is which of Olive and Basil possesses Verena.³⁵ A closer examination of “the two girls” (CN 19)—Verena and Olive—instead will reveal the ways in which James reexamines the American democracy embodied by the American girl, making the dichotomy in the novel more than the much-discussed one between Olive and Basil.



Figure 17. “A Glimpse into the Future” (*Life*, April 8, 1886)

³⁵ Though I will not deeply examine it in this dissertation, the issue of lesbianism in the relationship between Olive and Verena is widely discussed. See for example David Van Leer and Aaron Shaheen “The Social Dusk”. Faderman rejects critics’ view of linking lesbianism and the friendship between Verena and Olive, thus of seeing Olive as “lesbian” and “sick,” from the post-Freudian perspective, and argues that James “believed that a romantic relationship between two women was not of itself sick” but that the sisterhood relationship rather served to “permit the self-actualization of the women” (*Surpassing* 195). Edel also suggests that, in James’ times, the relationship between Verena and Olive is not necessarily “a lesbian attachment” (812). For Ransom’s trial to redeem his masculinity, see for example Leland S. Person “In the Closet.” For his taking Verena into the Southern discourse, see two essays by Shaheen as well as Ann Brigham 21.

Verena, who has enormous power to move people, can be linked to some extent with Pandora. Seen by Olive as “the very type and model of the ‘gifted being’” (*Bostonians* 90), Verena gets more powerful as the novel proceeds; the first Book begins just after her success in the West; the second Book begins after her huge success in the Women’s Convention and her study in Europe; then, the third Book begins just before her expected great success at the Music Hall. She “is a growing power since her great success at the convention” and Verena herself declares, “We are going on from triumph to triumph” (*Bostonians* 170, 175). As an embodiment of growing power, Verena is seen as a national icon through her involvement in the women’s movement. Olive says, “Your mission is not to exhibit yourself as a pastime for individuals, but to touch the heart of communities, of nations,” and compares Verena to “Joan of Arc” (*Bostonians* 102, 112)³⁶; Verena is considered to be “born to regenerate the world” and “what was expected of her then was to become a first-class national glory” (*Bostonians* 156, 159). In this sense, Verena can be considered as powerful as Pandora as a national icon. James, however, complexly revises Pandora and the popular image of the American Girl in the figure of Verena, in whose story the option either to have a heterosexual marriage or a Boston marriage creates a tension.

³⁶ The intensely patriotic figure of Joan of Arc was one of the popular images that appeared both in the turn-of-the-century mass media and in the suffrage movement in America. As is similar to the role of Verena in this novel, the image of Joan of Arc frequently emerged in popular entertainment; at the same time, Joan of Arc, who “represented patriotism, courage, militancy, piety, moral authority and a fighting spirit” in addition to “her sex and challenge to gender roles” (Coyle 66-7) was admired by suffragists, who frequently were dressed as Joan of Arc at demonstrations. For more on the image of Joan of Arc around the turn-of-the-century America, see Laura Coyle.

Verena's "development" is parallel to her transition from girlhood to womanhood. In the speech at Miss Birdseye's, Verena calls herself an "American girl": "I am only a girl, a simple American girl, and of course I haven't seen much, and there is a great deal of life that I don't know anything about" (*Bostonians* 50). Being a "girl," Verena is never a "self-made girl" but rather is a dependent child in the first part of the novel. Different from Daisy or Pandora, Verena is introduced to society by her parents, and the fact that she needs her father's mesmeric guidance in making a speech shows her status as a child under her parents' guard. After the speech, Verena "only turned away slowly towards her mother," and Mrs. Tarrant "took her into her arms and kissed her" (*Bostonians* 50). Verena is "both submissive and unworldly" (*Bostonians* 55), and goes to Olive's house immediately by her mother's order. In a sense, Verena is brought up in a European way, under the parents' guidance (especially under her father's control). Also, the radical environment where Verena grows up has a European connection. Her father was a member of the Cayuga Community, which is influenced by Fourierism and which supports free love. In contrast, Olive detests Europe and "would like to abolish it" (*Bostonians* 8), and Olive's radicalism even rejects heterosexual love. Surprised by the fact that Verena keeps "the consummate innocence of the American girl" (*Bostonians* 95), Olive "rescues" her from her "impossible parents," and seeks to "re-make" the American girl. Asking Verena for a sisterhood "friendship," Olive still regards her rather as a child: "You are so simple—so much like a child" (*Bostonians* 63). She continues to call Verena a child: "My dear child, you are so young—so

strangely young. [. . .] I am constantly forgetting the difference between us—that you are a mere child as yet, though a child destined for great things” (*Bostonians* 106).

Central to Verena’s story then is her transition from a girl to a woman, and the question is about what kind of woman Verena is to be. Verena’s coming to Olive’s house to live with her, namely Olive’s “buying off” of Verena’s parents, coincides with Verena’s transition from girlhood to womanhood. At the end of Book 1, the narrator mentions the change in Verena:

The benefit that her father desired for her was now assured; she expanded, developed, on the most liberal scale. Olive saw the difference, and you may imagine how she rejoiced in it; she had never known a greater pleasure. Verena’s former attitude had been girlish submission, grateful, curious sympathy. She had given herself, in her young, amused surprise, because Olive’s stronger will and the incisive proceedings with which she pointed her purpose drew her on. Besides, she was held by hospitality, the vision of new social horizons, the sense of novelty, and the love of change. But now the girl was disinterestedly attached to the precious things they were to do together; she cared about them for themselves, believed in them ardently, had them constantly in mind. Her share in the union of the two young women was no longer passive, purely appreciative; it was passionate, too, and it put forth a beautiful energy. (*Bostonians* 130)

Verena, whose “former attitude had been girlish submission” (*Bostonians* 130), changes and becomes more equal to Olive as a “woman.” The narrator symbolically

emphasizes the transitional period of Verena by calling Olive “the extraordinary friend whom she had encountered on the threshold of womanhood” (*Bostonians* 134). The gradually intensifying union between Verena and Olive—the Boston marriage—separates Verena from the conventional American Girl story.

The success of Verena in women’s movements, however, is not only juxtaposed with the transitional period of Verena from girlhood to (New) womanhood but with the awakening of her “self.” At the beginning, when Verena makes a speech at Miss Birdseye’s, she repeatedly emphasizes that what drives her is “a power outside,” saying “It isn’t *me*” (*Bostonians* 45, 43). Later in the novel, Basil tells Verena to be more independent of people around her, to have liberty: “Are you a little girl of ten and she [Olive] your governess? Have you any liberty at all, and is she always watching you and holding you to an account?” (*Bostonians* 252). Accusing Verena that “she had always done everything that people asked” (*Bostonians* 250-51), Basil uses a variation of Verena’s phrase in her first speech at Miss Birdseye’s, “It isn’t *me*”:

“You always want to please some one, and now you go lecturing about the country, and trying to provoke demonstrations, in order to please Miss Chancellor, just as you did it before to please your father and mother. It isn’t *you*, the least in the world, but an inflated little figure (very remarkable in its way too), whom you have invented and set on its feet, pulling strings, behind it, to make it move and speak, while you try to conceal and efface yourself there.” (*Bostonians* 262)

In fact, Basil's assertion that "[i]t isn't *you* [her]" and that she "tr[ies] to conceal and efface [her]self" is correct, since Verena is not necessarily the child of reform.

Verena's secret is not only her attraction to Ransom but her desire to be another type of woman:

Verena had given great attention to Olive's brilliant sister; she had told her friend [Olive] everything now—everything but one little secret, namely, that if she could have chosen at the beginning she would have liked to resemble Mrs Luna. This lady fascinated her, carried off her imagination to strange lands; she should enjoy so much a long evening with her alone, when she might ask her ten thousand questions. But she never saw her alone, never saw her at all but in glimpses. Adeline flitted in and out, dressed for dinners and concerts, always saying something worldly to the young woman from Cambridge [. . .]. (*Bostonians* 85)

Although a short passage, this part is essential because it uniquely reveals what Verena herself thinks, what Verena herself wants to do "if she could have chosen." It is not necessarily her union with Ransom which Verena makes a secret (finally she tells Olive about it) but it is her awakening desire to be like Mrs. Luna, to be a conventionally feminine and fashionable (though rather corrupted) woman, the "lady" in the world of fashion. When Verena meets Basil after a year and half's silence, she asks him for his agreement that Mrs. Luna is "fascinating" and then "ask[s], further, numerous questions about the brilliant Adeline; whether he saw her often, whether she went out much, whether she was admired in New York, whether he thought her very handsome" (*Bostonians* 180). To Verena, who "had lived with long-haired men

and short-haired women” and who is “the girl [who] had grown up among lady-doctors, lady-mediums, lady-editors, lady-preachers, lady-healers, women who, having rescued themselves from a passive existence, could illustrate only partially the misery of the sex at large” (*Bostonians* 57, 67), what is “new” is paradoxically the conventional gender norm. When Basil tells her, “[i]t isn’t *you*,” Verena feels uneasy and “she [i]s sure, at any rate, it [i]s her real self that [i]s there with him now, where she oughtn’t to be” (*Bostonians* 263). In this respect, Verena’s final leave from Olive is not only caused by her love for Ransom but by her secret wish to be a woman like Mrs. Luna, the “sister” of Olive, who belongs to the conventional, heterosexual gender system.

The second half of the novel is about the “choice” of Verena, and the ending seems to show the domination of the discourse of the American Girl, Verena choosing a heterosexual marriage rather than the Boston marriage. In this respect, it seems appropriate that “[t]he plot’s reliance on a conventional ending suggests that the author, as well as his Victorian American readership, quakes at the thought of endorsing more transgressive possibilities of sexual and racial liberation that the New Woman often embodied” (Shaheen “The Social Dark” 292-3). In fact, at the time of the publication of *The Bostonians*, “[m]any contemporary suffragists and other feminist activists dismissed James’s novel entirely” (Petty 377). Nevertheless, James does not simply follow the popular pattern of the American Girl story, nor does Verena’s leaving Olive directly mean that James is in the end against the Boston marriage. Verena marries in the end as Pandora did, but Verena’s marriage is not celebrated or described as promising. Verena’s marriage is to some extent similar to

Isabel's. They both see the world through their imagination and cannot see the reality there; through marriage, they lose power and control they once had. The ending of *The Bostonians* is quite negative; though Verena says, "Ah, now I am glad!," Basil "presently discovered that, beneath her hood, she was in tears"; the narrator continues, "It is to be feared that with the union, so far from brilliant, into which she was about to enter, these were not the last she was destined to shed" (*Bostonians* 349, 350). Her union with Basil is based on the traditional and patriarchal idea of "separate spheres," where the wife is confined to the private sphere and where her husband "strike[s] her dumb" (*Bostonians* 249).

In a different way, Olive's feminism is also based on the separatist idea, which can be linked with James's avoidance of Verena's choosing the Boston marriage with Olive. Just as James found Boston "a city of women" (Edel 287), the society of women's movements is depicted as a kind of "Herland" in *The Bostonians*. Though there are a few men there, the majority is female, and Verena, at her debut at Miss Birdseye's, appeals only to women as "sisters": "Of course I only speak to women—to my own dear sisters; I don't speak to men, for I don't expect them to like what I say" (*Bostonians* 49); then, "It is what the great sisterhood of women might do if they should all join hands, and lift up their voices above the brutal uproar of the world" (*Bostonians* 50). As I mentioned in the introduction, central to the turn-of-the-century feminist movement was the consolidation of "a separate female sphere," and its major achievement was acquired "through building separate female institutions" (Freedman 514). The sisterhood between Olive and Verena is a personal version of this sisterhood; at their first meeting at Olive's, Olive feels "she found here what she had

been looking for so long—a friend of her own sex with whom she might have a union of soul” (*Bostonians* 63). Olive says repeatedly then, “we must wait” (*Bostonians* 64)—they, or Olive, must wait till Verena develops enough to have a Boston marriage in “a separate female sphere.” The possibility is already undermined at the beginning, though; while Olive “ha[s] no views about the marriage-tie except that she should hate it for herself,” Verena declares she “prefer[s] free unions,” which sounds “so disagreeable” to Olive (*Bostonians* 66). The gap between the two girls’ ideas on the goal of their social work continues to appear. In the scene at Harvard, Verena insists on equal rights in education: “‘I advocate equal rights, equal opportunities, equal privileges. So does Miss Chancellor,’ Verena added, with just a perceptible air of feeling that her declaration needed support”; to this, Ransom answers, “Oh, I thought what she wanted was simply a different inequality—simply to turn out the men altogether” (*Bostonians* 178). Indeed, while Verena’s “plea is for a union far more intimate—provided it be equal—than any that the sages and philosophers of former times have ever dreamed of,” Olive accepts “the doctrine that they [men and women] are natural enemies” and prefers reform based on hierarchy and separatism (*Bostonians* 208).

From the ambivalent ending emerges James’ ambiguous and rather pessimistic attitude toward the “free union,” and even toward the idea of “union” itself. On the one hand, Verena’s sisterhood union with Olive, who “buys” and educates her, is based on separatism and hierarchy; on the other hand, the heterosexual union with Ransom, who thinks that women are “[f]or public, civic uses, absolutely—perfectly weak and second-rate” but “privately, personally, it’s another affair” (*Bostonians*

263), is also based on separatism and leads to a confinement of Verena to the private (domestic) space. In an opposite way, both “marriages” are based on the idea of “separate spheres.” Verena thus cannot get the “free unions” (*Bostonians* 66) she repeatedly declares she wants: whether she chooses Olive or Basil, her marriage is not a “happy marriage.”

Meanwhile, the ending ostensibly presents the American Girl’s marriage to a masculine American man, showing Ransom taking Verena away “by muscular force” and feeling “his victory” (*Bostonians* 349); however, his masculinity and victory are completely undermined from the beginning. Ransom is a Southern gentleman who was beaten in the Civil War, and is repeatedly feminized; for example, “Basil Ransom replied, with a smile, and the curious feminine softness with which Southern gentlemen enunciate that adverb” (*Bostonians* 8). His roots in Mississippi are emphasized in the narrator’s calling him “a Mississippian” or in the narrator’s peculiar interest in Southern pronunciation. Originally, James did not conceive of Ransom as a Southerner. In his notebook, a hero who is to be Basil Ransom is described as a person from the West (*CN* 19); however, in the actual novel, Basil is created as a Southerner, and it is Verena, not Basil, who has been in the West for some years. What does this change mean? In the history of America, the West is linked with the image of the frontier and the American spirit. In *The American*, James describes Christopher Newman as a man who has made a fortune in the West; in other words, as a masculine, American self-made man—Mr. Mann. If regarding Newman as a typical American business man who has new money, James makes Basil a totally different man—a Southerner, who was defeated and lost his fortune,

and who cannot be a genuine “American man.” Being a Southerner, Basil is situated from the beginning on the “wrong” side; namely, even if he finally seems to get “his victory” (*Bostonians* 349) in taking Verena with him, Basil’s attitude and ideas based on the Southern tradition are in their very roots to be classified as “all wrong” in postbellum America (*Bostonians* 9). At the same time, by making Basil a Southern gentleman, James makes him a cultivated man of a higher class, who is closer to American gentlemen in Europe as in James’s previous works.

It is to some extent appropriate to see that the ending, where Verena is united with Ransom instead of with Olive, may reflect James’s interest in the issue of national unity, the abolition of boundary in terms of nation. The intimate relationship between Verena and Ransom is frequently illustrated with an allusion to the North/South dichotomy. Through Miss Birdseye’s eyes, the union of Verena and Ransom is seen as that of the North and the South: “She watched them a little, and it warmed her heart to see the stiff-necked young Southerner led captive by a daughter of New England trained in the right school, who would impose her opinions in their integrity” (*Bostonians* 286). In this respect, the final picture of heterosexual marriage between the Northerner Verena and the Southerner Ransom can be seen as a union crossing boundaries in terms of gender and nation. The ending, however, shows James’ awareness that Miss Birdseye’s transcendental view is merely romantic in reality. Moreover, there is a problematic scene where the dichotomy between the North and the South dissolves much more dramatically and completely in the union between a man and a man than in that of a man and a woman.

While the discourse of the heterosexual “union” of the American Girl “wins” over that of a strong sisterhood in Verena’s story, there is a critical moment where a strong sense of brotherhood emerges from the story. Situated at the very center of the novel, the scene at the Memorial Hall of Harvard is highly important.³⁷ Before entering the hall, Verena cares about Ransom’s reaction to the exhibition, and Ransom asks, “Is there anything against Mississippi?”, to which Verena answers that “there is great praise of our young men in the war” (*Bostonians* 188). Here the dichotomy between the North and the South is underlined. Inside the hall, however, Ransom has a transcendental feeling in front of the memorial of the war:

Most of them were young, all were in their prime, and all of them had fallen; this simple idea hovers before the visitor and makes him read with tenderness each name and place—names often without other history, and forgotten Southern battles. For Ransom these things were not a challenge nor a taunt; they touched him with respect, with the sentiment of beauty. He was capable of being a generous foeman, and he forgot, now, the whole question of sides and parties; the simple emotion of the old fighting-time came back to him, and the monument around him seemed an embodiment of that memory: it arched over friends as well as enemies, the victims of defeat as well as the sons of triumph. (*Bostonians* 189)

What is peculiar here is that, in the middle of the scene where Ransom and Verena secretly go out together, their relationship temporally evaporates and is substituted by

³⁷ Ann Brigham’s essay interestingly focuses on the scene of the Memorial Hall and on the theme of union. However, her view is different from mine in that she views the importance of this scene in its function of connecting Ransom and Verena, of connecting two difference places.

another, spiritual relationship of brotherhood. A fairly sentimental sense of brotherhood dissolves the distinction between the North and the South and eliminates “the whole question of sides and parties”; moreover, Ransom leaves Verena “for ten minutes” (Interestingly, Olive makes Ransom wait for “ten minutes” at the opening of the novel, which suggests their unbridgeable gap) in order to “read again the names of the various engagements” (*Bostonians* 189). Ransom’s communion with “the sons of triumph” as a son of defeat seems to be made more genuine than his union with Verena, which is presented rather pessimistically at the end of the novel. The soldiers’ brotherhood in the Civil War thus seems to be embedded in the text as something not directly related to the surface story but something quite essential, possibly subverting the heterosexual model of the “union” displayed in the surface story. James not only makes dubious the “happy marriage” plot of the American Girl story, but also undermines the ostensible “triumph” of heterosexual love, made ambiguous by the hidden celebration of brotherhood, a male version of the Boston marriage.

Thus, the story of Verena shows a rather negative version of the American Girl plot, where the central dichotomy is between Olive and Basil—or the Boston marriage and the heterosexual marriage. At the same time, however, as James’s notebook shows, *The Bostonians* is about “the two girls” (CN 19), and the negative version of the American Girl story presented through Verena is intertwined with the story of another American girl, Olive Chancellor. While Olive has been seen chiefly as the New Woman and hardly as a “girl,” she is no less insecure than Verena as the American girl. At the beginning of the novel, Olive is described as a “girl” through

Basil's eyes: "But this pale girl, with her light-green eyes, her pointed features and nervous manner, was visibly morbid; it was as plain as day that she was morbid" (*Bostonians* 10). Far from possessing confidence like Henrietta Stackpole, Olive "ha[s] a fear of everything, but her greatest fear [i]s of being afraid" (*Bostonians* 13). Olive's fear and insecurity may in some ways remind readers of Isabel's fear after receiving an enormous fortune: "It's because I'm afraid. [. . .] Yes, I'm afraid; I can't tell you. A large fortune means freedom, and I'm afraid of that. It's such a fine thing, and one should make such a good use of it" (*NYE* III: 320). In fact, there is a certain resemblance between Isabel and Olive; as Isabel is retired in the "office" (*NYE* III: 30) in her melancholic Albany house, Olive is in her house; as Isabel first appears in the novel as "the independent young lady" who is "in a black dress" for the mourning for her father (*NYE* III: 17, 16), Olive does as "a young lady" who is radical, wearing "a plain dark dress, without any ornaments" for the mourning for her mother (*Bostonians* 9, 10). Olive, who is "white," "refined," and "unmarried as well as rich" and who loves independence, could be the ideal American Girl in the fashionable world, with her appearance "delicate in fashion that suggested good bearing" (*Bostonians* 16, 15, 16). Basil once has "a whimsical vision of becoming a partner in so flourishing a firm" (*Bostonians* 15), though he denies his possible marriage to Olive immediately: "Olive Chancellor was unmarried by every implication of her being" (*Bostonians* 16). Much harder than Isabel, Olive suppresses her feminine features by making "her smooth, colourless hair [. . .] confined as carefully as that of her sister was encouraged to stray," and "should hate" the marriage-tie (*Bostonians* 10, 66). Olive, as James's other American girls do (or even in a strict and extreme

way), does challenge the typology of the American Girl. If Verena presents the negative version of the American Girl plot, Olive does the deviation from it, showing a story of a girl who chooses to become a New Woman.

As Verena has a secret about her hidden wish to be a lady of society, Olive has another secret of her own:

It reminded her [Olive], however, on the other hand, that he [Basil] too had been much bereaved, and, moreover, that he had fought and offered his own life, even if it had not been taken. She could not defend herself against a rich admiration—a kind of tenderness of envy—of any one who had been so happy as to have that opportunity. The most secret, the most sacred hope of her nature was that she might some day have such a chance, that she might be a martyr and die for something. (*Bostonians* 12)

It is significant to note that the reason Olive is indignant toward Basil is not only because he is from the South or because she lost two brothers in the Civil War but because she could not take part in the battle herself because she is not a man. For her, Basil's defeat is better than her being incapable of fighting in the war.³⁸

³⁸ Olive's secret indignation and a kind of sense of loss can be seen partly as James's own. James did not go to the Civil War while two of James's brothers went; though different from Olive's two brothers, they came back alive. As Leon Edel suggests, the "obscure hurt" might have prevented James from participating in the Civil War, and the fact that he did not participate in real battles seems to have made him uneasy (Edel 57-8). Edel presents an episode at North Conway in August, 1865, where "two young Civil War veterans, perhaps still in uniform, and Henry, gallantly attended the Temple girls, devoting themselves particularly to Minny" and "Henry felt himself once more on a footing of inequality among his fellows" because "[e]very uniform, every swordbelt and buckle, suggested a life of action that could never be a part of his life" (76). Olive's sense of loss and uneasiness can be attributed to her lack of "a life of action," which James seems partly to share.

Moreover, Olive's sense of lack of "a life of action" in the Civil War due to the boundary of gender is linked with her recognition that she does not lead "a life of action" completely in the women's movement like Miss Birdseye, who at the time of the Civil War "had roamed through certain parts of the South, carrying the Bible to the slave" and "had spent a month in a Georgian jail" (*Bostonians* 139):

Olive had been active enough, for years, in the city-missions; she too had scoured dirty children, and, in squalid lodging-houses, had gone into rooms where the domestic situation was strained and the noises made the neighbours turn pale. But she reflected that after such exertions she had the refreshment of a pretty house, a drawing-room full of flowers, a crackling hearth, where she threw in pine-cones and made them snap, an imported tea-service, a Chickering piano, and the *Deutsche Rundschau*; whereas Miss Birdseye had only a bare, vulgar room, with a hideous flowered carpet (it looked like a dentist's), a cold furnace, the evening-paper, and Doctor Prance. (*Bostonians* 139-40)

Miss Birdseye "belonged to the Short-Skirts League" and "the brevity" of her "simple garment" reflects her wish "to be free for action" (*Bostonians* 23). She has participated in many social reform movements and is very poor because she has spent every cent for her reform movement. On the other hand, Olive, though participating in the reform movement, remains a lady, feeling comfortable in "the refreshment of a pretty house" (*Bostonians* 140). Significantly, in the list of what Olive detests in Miss Birdseye's life appears the name of Doctor Prance, who should be the model such feminists as Olive seek: a New Woman who leads a public life with a profession.

Though Olive belongs to the same women's movement group as Miss Birdseye's, there is a gap among them: the boundary of class. If the New Woman plays a role in breaking or making unstable the boundary while the American Girl fulfills a role in observing the boundary, Olive cannot be a complete New Woman because she internalizes fixed boundaries and supports polarization. Indeed, she even seeks something different in reformers:

With her [Olive's] immense sympathy for reform, she found herself so often wishing that reformers were a little different. There was something grand about Mrs Farrinder; it lifted one up to be with her: but there was a false note when she spoke to her young friend about the ladies in Beacon Street. Olive hated to hear that fine avenue talked about as if it were such a remarkable place, and to live there were a proof of worldly glory. All sorts of inferior people lived there, and so brilliant a woman as Mrs Farrinder, who lived at Roxbury, ought not to mix things up. It was, of course, very wretched to be irritated by such mistakes; but this was not the first time Miss Chancellor had observed that the possession of nerves was not by itself a reason for embracing the new truths. She knew her place in the Boston hierarchy, and it was not what Mrs Farrinder supposed; so that there was a want of perspective in talking to her as if she had been a representative of the aristocracy. Nothing could be weaker, she knew very well, than (in the United States) to apply that term too literally; nevertheless, it would represent a reality if one were to say that, by distinction, the Chancellors belonged to the *bourgeoisie*--the

oldest and best. They might care for such a position or not (as it happened, they were very proud of it), but there they were, and it made Mrs Farrinder seem provincial (there was something provincial, after all, in the way she did her hair too) not to understand. (*Bostonians* 28)

Here is shown the ambivalence in Olive's attitude toward other reformers in the women's movement. Her belonging to "the oldest and best" family in "the Boston hierarchy" creates a gap between her and her fellow reformers.

Though there is certainly a conflict between Olive and Basil in the novel, they share their social standing and their view of Verena. Through the eyes of Basil, who first sees her at Miss Birdseye's, the narrator characterizes her as an Oriental and a gypsy:

There was, however, something rich in the fairness of this young lady; she was strong and supple, there was colour in her lips and eyes, and her tresses, gathered into a complicated coil, seemed to glow with the brightness of her nature. She had curious, radiant, liquid eyes (their smile was a sort of reflection, like the glisten of a gem), and though she was not tall, she appeared to spring up, and carried her head as if it reached rather high. Ransom would have thought she looked like an Oriental, if it were not that Orientals are dark; and if she had only had a goat she would have resembled Esmeralda, though he had but a vague recollection of who Esmeralda had been. (*Bostonians* 47)

Though Basil finds Verena "pretty" as Winterbourne finds Daisy, or Vogelstein finds Pandora, Basil's reaction to the girl is different from that of the other two. While

Winterbourne and Vogelstein are surprised at the free behavior of the American girls, what impressed Basil is Verena's physical appearance. Verena's physical singularity is underlined from the beginning. When introducing Verena, the narrator emphasizes the color of her hair: "The girl was very pretty, though she had red hair" (*Bostonians* 27). Verena's red hair, the mark of her Otherness, is frequently mentioned by the narrator in the novel, and Mrs. Luna, who fascinates Verena, calls her a "red-haired hoyde[n]" (*Bostonians* 155).

The link between Verena and a gypsy is repeated through Olive's perception.

It was just as she was that she liked her; she was so strange, so different from the girls one usually met, seemed to belong to some queer gipsy-land or transcendental Bohemia. With her bright, vulgar clothes, her salient appearance, she might have been a rope-dancer or a fortune-teller; and this had the immense merit, for Olive, that it appeared to make her belong to the 'people,' threw her into the social dusk of *that mysterious democracy which Miss Chancellor held that the fortunate classes know so little about*, and with which (in a future possibly very near) they will have to count. (*Bostonians* 63, emphasis added)

Thus, though Basil and Olive regard each other as enemies, they share the view of Verena as something foreign, and the Otherness—or strangeness—that Basil and Olive find in Verena is linked with the word "democracy." Though James's American girls have been seen to represent Tocquevillian democracy, especially with respect to young girls' freedom and independence, the idea of democracy shown in this novel is in some ways different from James's previous works. It is certain that in *The*

Bostonians, the American girl Verena has a certain freedom to walk around with gentlemen so that Olive wonders if she is a “flirt” (*Bostonians* 94); however, the problem of democracy imagined and explored in *The Bostonians* is related more to the issue of popularization rather than to the freedom of young women. What is at the center of *The Bostonians* is the issue of boundary—or the “vagueness of boundary” (*Bostonians* 24); and, though Basil and Olive stand on opposite sides in the dichotomies of male/female and North/South, they stand on the same side in terms of class. Also, standing at totally opposite poles, they share the idea of “separate spheres” that consolidates boundaries. Conversely, Verena, who is “a flower of the great Democracy” (*Bostonians* 86) as well as a girl from “transcendental Bohemia” (*Bostonians* 63), is “not conscious of so many differences of social complexion” (*Bostonians* 59) and has “no vivid sense that she was not as good as any one else” (*Bostonians* 60).³⁹ She is outside the hierarchical system in terms of gender and class, and she prefers “free unions” (*Bostonians* 66). The gap between Olive and Verena is closely linked with that between Olive and her fellow reformers and therefore with Olive’s remoteness from “a life of action.” Olive has “a cultivated voice” and “a slender white hand” (*Bostonians* 9) while Miss Birdseye has “a delicate, dirty, democratic little hand” (*Bostonians* 23, emphasis added). While Olive secretly wishes to “be a martyr” (*Bostonians* 12), Miss Birdseye, who had “her battles” (*Bostonians*

³⁹ Though this dissertation does not focus closely on the image of Bohemia, it is one of the significant images in relation to the issue of boundaries as something deviant from norms. The three writers dealt with in this dissertation use the image of Bohemia in different ways, which might reflect various roles “Bohemia” had in turn-of-the-century America. While James’s “Bohemian girl,” Verena, shows the elimination of class boundary, Wharton uses “Bohemia” in presenting the artistic area in New York, which is situated outside the “society,” and Cather illustrates the literally “Bohemian girl,” an immigrant from Bohemia as well as refers to the radical center of American Bohemia in New York. For more about the image of Bohemia in America, see Joanna Levin.

138), gives Olive “a kind of aroma of martyrdom,” and Verena has been “in the habit of meeting martyrs from her childhood up” (*Bostonians* 139). If what matters to the American girl in Verena’s story is whether she chooses the Boston marriage or the heterosexual marriage, what is significant in Olive’s story is whether she remains a lady of society and lacks a “life in action” or transgresses class/gender boundaries and acquires a “life in action” as the New Woman.

Importantly, the development of Verena after she comes to live with Olive is found not only in her study for the women’s movement but also in her cultural taste. When she first comes to Olive’s house, Verena is impressed by the interior of the room, which represents “what her mother had told her about Miss Chancellor’s wealth, her position in Boston society,” and even wonders “what could be the need of this scheme of renunciation” (*Bostonians* 64). In fact, Verena’s speech is the means of “re-enter[ing] society” (*Bostonians* 57) for Verena’s mother, who “clung to [. . .] ‘society’” and to whom “[t]o keep it, to recover it, to reconsecrate it, was the ambition of her heart” (*Bostonians* 56); to Mrs. Tarrant, “Verena was born not only to lead their common sex out of bondage, but to remodel a visiting-list which bulged and contracted in the wrong places, like a country-made garment” (*Bostonians* 56). Verena, who is one of the “low-born girls” (*Bostonians* 132)—in fact a working girl who works for her parents (she says to Olive, “I have my work, you know” [65])—and who is contrasted with “the daughters of fashion” (*Bostonians* 131) by Henry Burrage, is cultivated under the influence of Olive, a lady of taste, who belongs to the higher class and who takes Verena to the Music Hall for “the superior programmes” (*Bostonians* 138). Living with Olive allows Verena to enter the society—more

exactly “the best society” represented by the Burrages (*Bostonians* 194); as Pandora advances in the society to the extent that Mrs. Dangerfield’s evaluation of her changes, Verena advances to the extent that Mrs. Burrages, who turns down the possibility of her son’s marriage with Verena in the first half of the novel, asks Olive not to interfere with their possible marriage in the second half of the novel. As a “democratic” girl, Verena has social mobility, and she develops from “a simple American girl” (*Bostonians* 50) to a successful American Girl both in “the fashionable world” (*Bostonians* 192) and in the public world.

In fact, Verena’s “development” is linked strongly with commercialistic mass culture. Verena’s in a sense “mesmeric” attraction introduces the idea of the consumer society. Verena’s speech is called a performance, and she is compared to “an actress” or “a singer” (*Bostonians* 205). Almost everybody except Ransom wants to “produce” Verena in public; for example, Matthias Pardon’s wish to marry Verena is seen to be related to “a view to producing her in public” (*Bostonians* 97). Through a series of words related to “public,” James illustrates in a considerably negative way the contemporary consumer society of the time, where everything is linked with business. The power of the “public” increases to such an extent that Verena’s face is put on the advertisement, that her pictures are sold, and that her “personal items” (*Bostonians* 329) are going to be in public. In this context, Verena, the American Girl to be created in the public arena, represents the materialistic, business-centered American mass culture. Here is a duality in the figure of the American girl; while trained by Olive and getting sophisticated in her high culture, Verena at the same time becomes more like the icon in the popular culture. It is interesting that Verena is to

have a “performance” in front of “people” in the Music Hall, where Olive once took her to listen to classical music to cultivate her.

The democracy embodied by Verena—“a flower of the great Democracy” (*Bostonians* 86)—reminds readers of the idea of democracy represented by Henrietta in *The Portrait of a Lady*, who is called “a kind of emanation of the great democracy—of the continent, the country, the nation” (*NYE* III: 130). Isabel tells Ralph that “there is something of the ‘people’ in” Henrietta (*NYE* III: 130), who has what Mrs. Touchett and Osmond calls “boarding-house civilization” (*NYE* III:133) and vulgarity; then, Olive thinks that Verena, with “her bright, vulgar clothes, [. . .] belong[s] to the ‘people’” (*Bostonians* 63). The new aspect of American democracy which is portrayed rather comically in Henrietta and her journalism in the 1881 novel is examined in a more negative way in the 1886 novel, which was written after James visited the United States. James’s ambiguous view toward this aspect of democracy can be found in his presenting the issue of “blood” in the portrait of Verena, which distinguishes her from Olive, who is an American girl belonging to “the oldest and best” society (*Bostonians* 28). Though Verena comes to be refined under Olive’s influence, she is not deprived completely of her “authors.” The narrator repeatedly mentions Verena’s “blood of the Greenstreets” (*Bostonians* 86) and “queer, bad lecture-blood” (*Bostonians* 193), and emphasizes that Verena’s is attributed to her blood; “whatever theory might be entertained as to the genesis of her talent and her personal nature, the blood of the lecture-going, night-walking Tarrants did distinctly flow in her veins” (*Bostonians* 229). In addition, under Olive’s tutelage, Verena, who was in “bright, vulgar clothes” (*Bostonians* 63), is partly transformed into the

American Girl in white. At the Burrages, Verena on the platform “dresse[s] in white, with flowers in her bosom” (*Bostonians* 205). Again, she is in white in the Music Hall, but the narrator emphasizes the color of her hair: “She was dressed in white, and her face was whiter than her garment; above it her hair seemed to shine like fire” (*Bostonians* 341). What Basil and Olive find as Otherness in Verena, which is symbolized by her red hair, still remains.

James has a keen awareness of the change in the definition of “democracy” in the late nineteenth century, which is hinted at in Basil’s reading Tocqueville and Carlyle, feeling “very suspicious of the encroachments of modern democracy” (*Bostonians* 149). Democracy in this novel means the abolition of boundary, and what James seems to care about most and what makes ambivalent his attitude toward American Democracy is the boundary between high culture and low culture, or the popularization of culture.⁴⁰ As mentioned above, although the central dichotomy in this novel can be found between Olive and Basil, from behind the conflict emerges

⁴⁰ Also, James is conscious of the change in the nature of the social movement. Olive’s sense of loss about her inability to participate in the Civil War is in some ways linked to her feeling of “being too late” for the prime of the transcendental social reform of the Victorian period. In the novel, the active days of Miss Birdseye are related in a nostalgic way and they are linked with the image of battles:

It had become apparent that her long and beautiful career was drawing to a close, her earnest, unremitting work was over, her old-fashioned weapons were broken and dull. Olive would have liked to hang them up as venerable relics of a patient fight, and this was what she seemed to do when she made the poor lady relate her battles—never glorious and brilliant, but obscure and wastefully heroic—call back the figures of her companions in arms, exhibit her medals and scars. Miss Birdseye knew that her uses were ended; she might pretend still to go about the business of unpopular causes, might fumble for papers in her immemorial satchel and think she had important appointments, might sign petitions, attend conventions, say to Doctor Prance that if she would only make her sleep she should live to see a great many improvements yet; she ached and was weary, growing almost as glad to look back (a great anomaly for Miss Birdseye) as to look forward. (*Bostonians* 138)

a certain resemblance between the two. There is something in common between Basil and Olive, both belonging to traditional families in a high society and both detesting vulgarity. Though seeing Olive as an enemy, Basil understands Olive's sacrifice when he sees that they sell Verena's pictures and "the sketch of her life," the commercialization of Verena: "Verena was not in the least present to him in connection with this exhibition of enterprise and puffery; what he saw was Olive, struggling and yielding, making every sacrifice of taste for the sake of the largest hearing, and conforming herself to a great popular system" (*Bostonians* 335). Here Basil does not accuse Olive, and the two relatives stand at the same side against "a great popular system," represented by such characters as Matthias Pardon and Sarah Tarrant.

James is aware that such heroism as Olive seeks is no longer possible in the postbellum America, or New England. The decline of Miss Birdseye symbolizes the decline of the old, ideal heroic social reform movement in New England:

In her [Miss Birdseye's] own person she appeared to Olive and Verena a representative of suffering humanity; the pity they felt for her was part of their pity for all who were weakest and most hardly used; and it struck Miss Chancellor (more especially) that this frumpy little missionary was the last link in a tradition, and that when she should be called away the heroic age of New England life—the age of plain living and high thinking, of pure ideals and earnest effort, of moral passion and noble experiment—would effectually be closed. It was the perennial freshness of Miss Birdseye's faith that had had such a contagion for these modern maidens, the unquenched flame of her transcendentalism, the simplicity of her vision, the way in which, in spite of mistakes, deceptions, the changing fashions of reform, which make the remedies of a previous generation look as ridiculous as their bonnets, the only thing that was still actual for her was the elevation of the species by the reading of Emerson and the frequentation of Tremont Temple. (*Bostonians* 139)

Here James is aware of the change in the social reform from the Victorian period to the Gilded Age. The social reform represented by Miss Birdseye is closely connected with transcendentalism, central to which is Emerson's social reformism. To the eyes of Basil, Miss Birdseye "look[s] as if she had spent her life on platforms, in audiences, in conventions, in phalansteries, in *séances*" (*Bostonians* 23), the typical forms of social reform in the Victorian period, which must have been familiar to James himself as he was brought up by a father who was committed in Swedenborg's spiritualism, Fourierist socialism, and Emersonian transcendentalism (Edel 8).

Significantly, it is not Olive who controls Verena's performance in the Music Hall in Boston. When Basil cried out for Verena in front of the dressing room, Matthias Pardon mentions the name Mr. Filer, and Basil learns that the latter man is the show manager:

When he [Pardon] had hurried away again, Ransom said to the policeman—"Who is Mr Filer?"

"Oh, he's an old friend of mine. He's the man that runs Miss Chancellor."

"That runs her?"

"Just the same as she runs Miss Tarrant. He runs the pair, as you might say. He's in the lecture-business." (*Bostonians* 340)

Here is another Father, the creator of the American Girl in popular culture. Under the control of Mr. Filer, Olive's romantic plan is made into a business, where Olive has no agency. The battle seemingly between Basil and Olive, or man and woman, shifts here to one between the American (and Northern) business man and the woman including the feminized Southern man.

Thus, "the emancipation of women"—the abolition of boundary in terms of gender—is closely intertwined with the abolition of boundary in terms of class, and Olive's incapability of living a "life of action" is closely connected with this. When Olive asks Verena for their sisterhood friendship at the beginning, Olive says, "*I will give up—I will give up everything!*" (*Bostonians* 64); having a connection with a girl from a low family, Olive decides to give up her "position in Boston society" (*Bostonians* 64) and her sophisticated tastes. But how much can she give up? There is

a key scene, when Olive and Verena visit the Burrages, where the boundary of class is consolidated. Listening to the piano Henry Burrage plays, Olive cannot help being relaxed and comfortable: “Olive was extremely susceptible to music, and it was impossible to her not to be soothed and beguiled by the young man’s charming art” (*Bostonians* 119). In Olive’s mind, then, her great cause temporally expires:

It was given to Olive, under these circumstances, for half an hour, to surrender herself, to enjoy the music, to admit that Mr Burrage played with exquisite taste, to feel as if the situation were a kind of truce. Her nerves were calmed, her problems—for the time—subsided.

Civilisation, under such an influence, in such a setting, appeared to have done its work; harmony ruled the scene; human life ceased to be a battle. She went so far as to ask herself why one should have a quarrel with it; the relations of men and women, in that picturesque grouping, had not the air of being internecine. In short, she had an interval of unexpected rest, during which she kept her eyes mainly on Verena, who sat near Mrs Burrage, letting herself go, evidently, more completely than Olive. (*Bostonians* 119-120)

As she has “the refreshment of a pretty house, a drawing-room full of flowers, a crackling hearth” after she gets involved in “the city-missions” (*Bostonians* 140, 139), Olive feels comfortable in listening to the music “with exquisite taste” and even thinks that “the relations of men and women, in that picturesque grouping, had not the air of being internecine.” Just as Basil does in the memorial hall, Olive temporarily forgets “the whole question of sides and parties” (*Bostonians* 189). James’s idea of

“civilization” mentioned here refers not to the contemporary idea of “American civilization” based on imperialism and materialism but to the traditional, European, and more aristocratic one. After listening, Verena says to Olive, “It would be very nice to do that always—just to take men as they are, and not to have to think about their badness. It would be very nice not to have so many questions, but to think they were all comfortably answered [. . .]—sit there and listen for ever to Schubert and Mendelssohn. *They* didn’t care anything about female suffrage! And I didn’t feel the want of a vote to-day at all, did you?” (*Bostonians* 121). Though Olive denies Verena’s idea in the end and the denial serves rather to strengthen their union of sisterhood, it is still important that Olive temporarily forgets about the feminist cause and is comfortable listening to the piano in the house belonging to the upper class.

Indeed, Olive’s problem is that she cannot completely abolish boundaries though she tries to do so. Olive’s romanticism internalizes the class boundary. On the surface, she intends to cross the boundary of class; nevertheless, she never likes Verena’s idea of their “free union,” and, as Leslie Petty states, the “imbalance of power” in their union makes it not an alternative of heterosexual marriage but a repetition of it (392). Also, while Olive has enormous love for Verena, she at the same time repeats what Mr. Tarrant did. At the beginning of the novel, Verena makes a speech under her father’s mesmeric power; after she begins to live with Olive, Verena stops to give a speech in the mesmerized state, but her voice is still partly of a ventriloquial body. In the earlier part of the novel, Olive, asked to address a speech at Miss Birdseye’s, answers she cannot:

‘I can’t talk to those people, I can’t!’ said Olive Chancellor, with a face which seemed to plead for a remission of responsibility. ‘I want to give myself up to others; I want to know everything that lies beneath and out of sight, don’t you know? I want to enter into the lives of women who are lonely, who are piteous. I want to be near to them—to help them. I want to do something—oh, I should like so to speak!’

‘We should be glad to have you make a few remarks at present.’ Mrs Farrinder declared, with a punctuality which revealed the faculty of presiding.

‘Oh, dear, no, I can’t speak; I have none of that sort of talent. I have no self-possession, no eloquence; I can’t put three words together. But I do want to contribute.’ (*Bostonians* 29-30)

Though she desires to speak and to have a “life of action,” all she can do is to contribute money. Olive’s “possession” of Verena reflects this aspect of Olive’s commitment to the women’s movement. Through Verena’s voice, for which Olive pays money, Olive wishes to meet her heroic romanticism in participating in the “great movements.” Verena practices and almost memorizes the speeches which, as she once reveals to Basil, are written by Olive: “Well, she makes mine—or the best part of them. She tells me what to say—the real things, the strong things. It’s Miss Chancellor as much as me!” (*Bostonians* 175).

At the end of the novel, however, Olive breaks the boundary, going to the platform herself and entering a “life of action.” When Olive knows Verena is deserting her, she “rushe[s] to the approach to the platform” (*Bostonians* 348):

If he [Basil] had observed her, it might have seemed to him that she hoped to find the fierce expiation she sought for in exposure to the thousands she had disappointed and deceived, in offering herself to be trampled to death and torn to pieces. She might have suggested to him some feminine firebrand of Paris revolutions, erect on a barricade, or even the sacrificial figure of Hypatia, whirled through the furious mob of Alexandria. (*Bostonians* 348-49)

James here illustrates Olive going to the platform as a fighting woman, which will meet her “most sacred hope” to risk her life for something (*Bostonians* 12).

Symbolically, what stops her at the next instant is “the arrival of Mrs Burrage and her son” (*Bostonians* 349), who represent the bourgeoisie, the upper class to which Olive belongs and because of which she cannot feel she fits completely in the women’s movement and cannot speak. Sarcastically asked, “Oh, are *you* going to speak?”, by “the lady from New York,” Olive answers: ‘I am going to be hissed and hooted and insulted!’ (*Bostonians* 349). What “greeted Olive Chancellor’s rush to the front,” however, is “the quick, complete, tremendous silence” of “the great public,” and “what ever she should say to them (and he [Basil] thought she might indeed be rather embarrassed), it was not apparent that they were likely to hurl the benches at her” (*Bostonians* 349). Though the next sentence shows “Ransom, palpitating with his victory, felt now a little sorry for her” (*Bostonians* 349), it can be said that Olive too possibly gets her victory: Olive finally “can speak.” Claire Kahane, who focuses on the relationship between hysteria and feminism, argues that “the women’s movement was characterized by giving women voice, not only metaphorically through suffrage

but literally in the pervasive speechifying by women on platforms around the world” (288) and discusses the importance of voice in *The Bostonians*. As Kahane aptly points out, there are two final scenes in this novel; while Basil Ransom takes Verena out of the hall and silences her, Olive “becomes a potential phallic woman” on the platform (Kahane 297). Early in the novel, Verena tells her mother that if Olive isn’t “afraid of facing the public, she would go far ahead of” her (*Bostonians* 79). In other words, Olive can be Verena. Of course it is not to say that Olive can be a girl Verena, whose “face and [whose] identity” are “conceal[ed]” (*Bostonians* 349), but that Olive, who has been “a patroness of movements who happened to have money” (*Bostonians* 79), can be “Verena,” the first-rate female public speaker. And yet, James leaves the result open. In the long citation above, Olive is compared to “some feminine firebrand of Paris revolutions,” which may remind readers of Eugène Delacroix’s famous picture of the French revolution titled “Liberty Leading the People,” and she is also compared to Hypatia, a female philosopher and mathematician who was killed by the Christian mob.⁴¹ Though both are heroic female figures, readers cannot tell whether Olive becomes the “Liberty leading the people” or the victim of “a great popular system” (*Bostonians* 335), killed by the mass. James’s ambiguity about American democracy is in some ways found in the final picture of Olive, who is standing on the democratic stage and “facing the public” with her high, romantic mind (*Bostonians* 79). The novel thus ends with two girls standing on the threshold—one between “a girl” and “a married woman” and the other between “a girl” and “a New Woman”—both vulnerable and insecure.

⁴¹ For more on the image of Hypatia in literature, see Maria Dzielska 1-26.

Taken together, *The Bostonians*, juxtaposing two stories of “girls,” explores in a complicated way the issue of boundary and American democracy. While James illustrates negatively Ransom’s conventional gender-based view on the idea of “separate spheres,” he still to a certain extent separates himself from Olive’s feminism because her idea of gender is also based on the “separate spheres” in a different way from Basil’s. The democratic “free union” which Verena seeks cannot be found either in her union with Basil or in that with Olive. Moreover, the idea of “democracy” is changed in this novel, as it is linked more with popularization, commercialism, and mass culture. While James shows separatism in gender in a negative light, he is not positive toward “vagueness of boundary” (*Bostonians* 24) between public and private and between high culture and low culture. In this complicated picture of America, the idea of American civilization James seeks might be found in the scene cited above, when Henry Burrage plays the piano: “Civilisation, under such an influence, in such a setting, appeared to have done its work; harmony ruled the scene; human life ceased to be a battle” (*Bostonians* 119). The idea of sophisticated “harmony” brings in something different from polarization, demarcation, and also popularization.

Finally, there is one character in the novel who truly “succeeds.” The character James portrays most positively in this novel is Doctor Prance, whose name may reflect the name of Jewett’s girl who becomes a New Woman, Nan Prince.⁴² Doctor Prance stands in a very peculiar position, since she does not completely commit to either side of the dichotomy in terms of gender. Doctor Prance, “a plain, spare young

⁴² Marcia Jacobson, arguing the influence of the New Woman novel as well as of the Civil War Romance in *The Bostonians*, also points out this similarity (25-27).

woman, with short hair and an eye-glass" (*Bostonians* 26), has chosen the traditionally male profession, the doctor. When Basil first meets her at Mrs. Birdseye's party, he understands her as "a perfect example of the 'Yankee female' — the figure which [. . .] was produced by the New England school-system, the Puritan code, the ungenial climate, the absence of chivalry" (*Bostonians* 33); then, she seems like a boy in Basil's eyes: "She looked like a boy, and not even like a good boy. It was evident that if she had been a boy, she would have 'cut' school, to try private experiments in mechanics or to make researches in natural history. It was true that if she had been a boy she would have borne some relation to a girl" (*Bostonians* 33). Thus, Doctor Prance is categorized as a "boyish" female, who does not necessarily subvert the heterosexual social system itself but succeeds in transcending the idea of the "separate spheres." Being present at Miss Birdseye's meeting, Doctor Prance is dubious about the idea of Mrs. Farrinder, who is regarded as the first-rate feminist. Doctor Prance says, "All I know is that I don't want any one to tell *me* what a lady can do!" (*Bostonians* 39). Later in the novel, when Miss Birdseye passes away, Doctor Prance goes back to Boston soon, saying, "I am not of importance. They think women the equals of men; but they are a great deal more pleased when a man joins than when a woman does" (*Bostonians* 276). She does not "care for great movements" (*Bostonians* 34) nor seek any sympathy, heroism, and romanticism; instead, she just works as a doctress and in a way practices the movement in a literal sense. James ironically reveals that she is much more skilled than Mr. Tarrant, the mesmeric healer:

She [Doctor Prance] didn't believe in his [Mr Tarrant's] system or disbelieve in it, one way or the other; she only knew that she had been called to see ladies he had worked on, and she found that he had made them lose a lot of valuable time. He talked to them—well, as if he didn't know what he was saying. She guessed he was quite ignorant of physiology, and she didn't think he ought to go round taking responsibilities. (*Bostonians* 35)

Thus, the presence of Doctor Prance undermines both a vulgar paternalism symbolized by Mr. Tarrant and feminist movements in the novel. "It was certain," the narrator asserts, "that whatever might become of the movement at large, Doctor Prance's own little revolution was a success" (*Bostonians* 39). If Olive seeks a romantic revolution, Doctor Prance practices the realist revolution.

Doctor Prance's role is to present a different idea about the gender issue from that of Mrs. Farrinder and Olive or of Basil:

'Well, did she [Mrs. Farrinder] convince you?' Ransom inquired.

'Convince me of what, sir?'

'That women are so superior to men.'

'Oh, deary me!' said Doctor Prance, with a little impatient sigh; 'I guess I know more about women than she does.'

'And that isn't your opinion, I hope,' said Ransom, laughing.

'Men and women are all the same to me,' Doctor Prance remarked. 'I don't see any difference. There is room for improvement in both sexes. Neither of them is up to the standard.' (*Bostonians* 33-34)

Committing to neither side, feminist or anti-feminist, she most powerfully shows the idea of democracy in terms of gender. Moreover, James, though being ambivalent about the separatist sisterhood of Olive and Verena, seems to be positive about the sisterhood of Miss Birdseye and Dr. Prance, who live in the same house with others, where “prevail[s] much vagueness of boundary” (*Bostonians* 24).

4. *The Golden Bowl* (1904)

When James returned to his international theme in his later career, his American girls changed from his original ones such as Daisy Miller and Isabel Archer. Mamie Pocock, an American girl and the fiancée of Chad Newsome in *The Ambassadors* (1903), is considerably different from her sisters in James’s earlier works. Mamie is regarded as the product of Woollett, which symbolizes to Strether the power of Mrs. Newsome; Strether has wondered “if Mamie *were* as pretty as Woollett published her” and thinks that “seeing her now again [i]s to be so swept away by Woollett’s opinion” (*NYE XXII*: 75). Different from other American girls in James’s previous works, she knows what is going on. Talking with Mamie, Strether finds that she, “unlike Sarah, unlike Jim, knew perfectly what had become of” Chad (*NYE XXII* 151) and she indirectly admits it, saying, “Oh yes, I know everything.” (*NYE XXII* 155). In fact, Mamie has something in common with Pandora, having been already settled and being in some ways a “woman”:

For she *was* charming, when all was said—and none the less so for the visible habit and practice of freedom and fluency. She was charming, he was aware, in spite of the fact that if he had n’t found her so he

would have found her something he should have been in peril of expressing as “funny.” Yes, she was funny, wonderful Mamie, and without dreaming it; she was bland, she was bridal—with never, that he could make out as yet, a bridegroom to support it; she was handsome and portly and easy and chatty, soft and sweet and almost disconcertingly reassuring. She was dressed, if we might so far discriminate, less as a young lady than as an old one—had an old one been supposable to Strether as so committed to vanity; the complexities of her hair missed moreover also the looseness of youth [. . .]

But if all this was where she was funny, and if what was funnier than the rest was the contrast between her beautiful benevolent patronage—such a hint of the polysyllabic as might make her something of a bore toward middle age—and her rather flat little voice, the voice, naturally, unaffectedly yet, of a girl of fifteen; so Strether, none the less, at the end of ten minutes, felt in her a quiet dignity that pulled things bravely together. (*NYE XXII* 149-50)

What Strether perceives as funny is the gap in Mamie, the odd mixture of the matron and the maiden in her. Though Mamie is still an American “girl,” inside her is already a “woman” who has “a quiet dignity that pulled things bravely together.” The American girl represented by Mamie is no longer insecure but has much more power and control than James’s previous American girls. The description of Mamie reflects the contemporary trend of connecting the American girl with the image of a bride. Through Strether’s eyes, “[w]hat Mamie was like was the happy bride, the bride after

the church and just before going away” (NYE XXII 76-7); however, she can be so without “a bridegroom to support it” (NYE XXII 149). Having much more knowledge and control than James’s earlier American girls, the American girl in *The Ambassadors* has a mission of taking the American man back home as an expected bride; and in the matronly nature of Mamie can be found James’s awareness of the change in American women, who, as are presented by the dominating presence of Mrs. Newsome, became more powerful.

James’s last novel, *The Golden Bowl* (1904), has been read as a kind of settlement of his long exploration of American girls’ marriages, and critics have argued that in this novel James “brings the marriage off” (Edel 585) and “the Ververs are not faced with defeat or renunciation, but with the consequences of complete triumph” (Matthiessen 99). Examining James’s portraits of the American girl, however, reveals that her marriage is not so a complete “triumph” even in *The Golden Bowl*, which can be seen as another version of James’s continuous study of the Tocquevillian idea of American democracy and the female and which also explores the issue of the “American civilization” that was being built by turn-of-the-century progressive America when James wrote the novel.

What distinguishes Maggie from James’s previous American girls is that Maggie remains the American girl even after marriage.⁴³ She spends every day freely

⁴³ In one sense, the Prince plays the role of the American wife, having no freedom and staying at home. Acutely arguing the Prince’s feminization through his marriage to Maggie, Guy Davidson suggests that “the Prince is associated with aesthetically pleasing but instrumentally useless objects” (28). This point is significant, since here occurs the reversion of the fixed ideas of gender. While Wharton criticizes the social convention where women should be ornamental, in James’s works men should be ornamental. Indeed, in James’s novels, it is not only a woman who is looked at; rather, it is a man whose body is looked at and selected. Daisy is together with Giovanelli because he is handsome. In *The Bostonians*, it

at her father's house, which has rooms for Maggie and her boy, and "[t]he Principino, for a chance spectator of this process, might have become, by an untoward stroke, a hapless half-orphan, with the place of immediate male parent swept bare and open to the next nearest sympathy" (*GB* 115). The boy in fact is "a link between a mamma and a grandpa" (*GB* 115), which evokes a sense of incest. When Adam gives a party, which is held by his wife, Maggie is so anxious and excited that she, not Charlotte, looks like the hostess, as "Maggie Verver": "It was all unmistakable, and as pretty as possible, if one would, and even as funny; but it put the pair so together, as undivided by the marriage of each, that the Princess—*il n'y avait pas à dire*—might sit where she liked: she would still, always, in that house, be irremediably Maggie Verver" (*GB* 237). The boundary between "a girl" and "a married woman" is blurred here, and Maggie remains a perpetual American Girl, because of the enormous power of her father's money. Considering that James's previous girls have been innocent about the power of money—for example, Daisy Miller and Isabel Archer do not realize that men are attracted to their money—Maggie is not completely "innocent" from the beginning. Maggie fully recognizes the power of money and leads her married life in an American way as "Maggie Verver." The Garden of Eden, where Maggie and Adam belong, is protected by Adam's "rare power of purchase" (*GB* 561), and American innocence in this novel is imagined not the same way as was illustrated in "Daisy Miller"; it becomes something artificial, political, and even violent.⁴⁴

is not only Basil who is to blame for ignoring the thought of Verena and just loving her because she is pretty; Verena, too, loves Basil only because he is physically attractive, for she declares she dislikes his thought. Then, in *The Golden Bowl*, Maggie loves the Prince because he is handsome. In James's novels, not only the female body but also the male body is the object.

⁴⁴In fact, American "innocence" represented by Adam and Maggie is not as good as it seems,

Maggie, in perpetual American girlhood, is vividly contrasted with another girl in the novel, Charlotte Stant. While Charlotte has tended to be situated on the side of Europe in the dichotomy of America and Europe, or Innocence and Experience, what is worth noting is that Charlotte is created as an American girl, or a girl who cannot be fully so. In the original idea of the novel written in his notebook in 1892, James depicts Charlotte as American: “the father, a widower and still youngish, has sought in marriage at exactly the same time an American girl of very much the same age as his daughter” (*CN* 74); “The other woman and the father and daughter all intensely American” (*CN* 75). Charlotte, however, cannot fully recognize her citizenship because America is “the country for interests” (*GB* 43). She confesses that she went back to her country to marry “some good, kind, clever, rich American” (*GB* 43), but could not succeed. The point that Charlotte is a “poor” American girl is underlined again when Maggie asks her father to invite Charlotte to their house:

It had all Mr Verver’s attention. ‘She has “tried”—?’

‘She has seen cases where she would have liked to.’

‘But she has not been able?’

just as Charlotte is not as “evil” as she seems. Charlotte, visiting the Prince’s alone on a rainy day, complains that both Adam and Maggie neglect Charlotte: “What do they really suppose . . . becomes of one? [. . .] even just physically, materially, as a mere wandering woman: as a decent harmless wife, after all; as the best stepmother, after all, that really ever was; or at the least simply as a *maîtresse de maison* not quite without a conscience” (*GB* 223-24): American innocence—or indifference—becomes violence. Then, after perceiving something has happened, Maggie “innocently” tries to solve the problem and Charlotte is forced not only to be sexually “innocent” but also to be innocent/ignorant about what is going on. On the other hand, Charlotte presents morality to some extent. Fanny Assingham, early in the novel, tells her husband that Charlotte gave up the marriage to the Prince and that she did not choose to be his mistress, which she could if she wished. When Charlotte receives a telegram from the Prince, she offers it to Adam, and it is Adam who refuses to see it. Then, Charlotte and the Prince do not have or intend to have an immoral relationship immediately after Charlotte’s marriage. The scheme of good America /evil Europe that is central to most of James’s works is undermined in this novel, which makes the boundary ambiguous and quite complicated.

‘Well, there are more cases, in Europe, in which it doesn’t come to girls who are poor than in which it does come to them. Especially,’ said Maggie with her continued competence, ‘when they’re Americans.’
(GB 135)

Charlotte, who is beautiful and sophisticated but cannot marry because she is poor, has much in common with Lily Bart in Edith Wharton’s *The House of the Mirth*, which was published a year after *The Golden Bowl*; however, Charlotte is different from Lily in two ways. First, while Lily declares she has to marry, Charlotte tells the Prince that even if she cannot marry “[t]he position of a single woman to-day is very favourable, you know” (GB 44). This statement is highly significant, since Charlotte can possibly become a New Woman, as Isabel Archer could be, though James does not make her so. Second, while Lily cannot consider marriage as a business transaction and dies in the end, Charlotte can, and marries Adam. Many illustrators at the turn of the century including Charles Dana Gibson show that marriage becomes a form of business in the turn-of-the-century materialistic society in America. For example, Figure 18 shows a bride supported by her father’s money and Figure 19 shows a young bride who marries an old rich man. These two images of the American Girl can be found in the contrasted portraits of Maggie and Charlotte.

While Maggie remains the American girl even after marriage, Charlotte, by marrying Adam, is deprived of her freedom, and, just as Isabel is “put into a cage” through her marriage (NYE IV: 65), she is imprisoned in a “gilded cage”⁴⁵:

⁴⁵ Jean Kimball, in “Henry James’s Last Portrait of a Lady: Charlotte Stant in *The Golden Bowl*,” argues that Charlotte’s predicament is situated at the center of *The Golden Bowl*, and, in doing so, links Charlotte with Isabel as well as Maggie with Pansy.

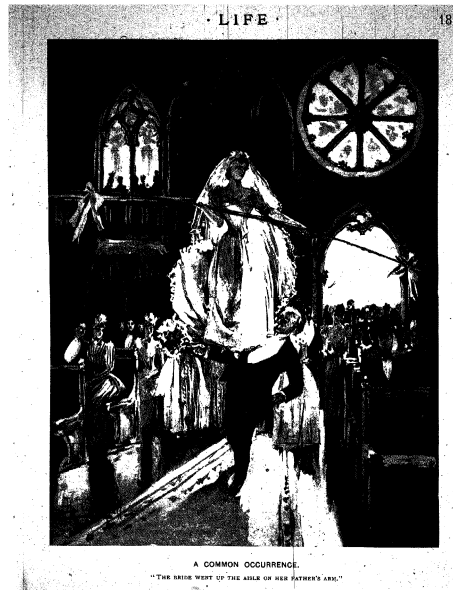


Figure 18. “A Common Occurrence: ‘The Bride Went up the Aisle on Her Father’s Arm’” (*Life*, Oct. 9, 1890)



Figure 19. A part of “Blind Women” by C. D. Gibson
(*The Gibson Girl and Her America* 7)

She [Maggie] walked round Charlotte's [cage]—cautiously and in a very wide circle; and when, inevitably, they had to communicate she felt herself, comparatively, outside, on the breast of nature, and saw her companion's face as that of a prisoner looking through bars. So it was that through bars, bars richly gilt, but firmly, though discreetly, planted, Charlotte finally struck her as making a grim attempt; from which, at first, the Princess drew back as instinctively as if the door of the cage had suddenly been opened from within. (*GB* 466)

Like a “prisoner,” Charlotte is confined in the “bars richly gilt”—the marriage with Adam. While Maggie as “Maggie Verver”—or as the American Girl—continues to “enjo[y] a place of liberty and pleasure in her father's house,” Charlotte, “in her husband's home, lives in almost cloistered surroundings” (Tocqueville 686). Though she is not literally imprisoned in the house, Charlotte claims that she is “just fixed—fixed as fast as a pin stuck, up to its head, in a cushion” (*GB* 187). Thus the Tocquevilian idea of the American girl/woman, which is fully embodied by Isabel Archer, is presented in the contrast of the two girls in *The Golden Bowl*, where James is more conscious than ever of the essential role of money in making the American Girl.

Meanwhile, the two girls in *The Golden Bowl* are connected with another issue regarding America of the Progressive Era. Recent criticism of *The Golden Bowl* has reconsidered the relationship in terms of imperialism, regarding Adam's building of a

museum as “the cultural work of empire” (Peyser 146).⁴⁶ His museum, which is under construction in American City, is described as follows:

He had wrought by devious ways, but he had reached the place, and what would ever have been straighter, in any man’s life, than his way, now, of occupying it? It hadn’t merely, his plan, all the sanctions of civilisation; it was positively civilisation condensed, concrete, consummate, set down by his hands as a house on a rock—a house from whose open doors and windows, open to grateful, to thirsty millions, the higher, the highest knowledge would shine out to bless the land. In this house, designed as a gift, primarily, to the people of his adoptive city and native State, the urgency of whose release from the bondage of ugliness he was in a position to measure—in this museum of museums, a palace of art which was to show for compact as a Greek temple was compact, a receptacle of treasures sifted to positive sanctity, his spirit to-day almost altogether lived, making up, as he would have said, for lost time and haunting the portico in anticipation of the final rites. (*GB* 107)

What is important here is that the museum that Adam is building is closely linked with the word “civilization.” In fact, in late-nineteenth-century America, the building of a nation or civilization and the building of a museum were closely connected. The Metropolitan Museum of Art was built in 1870, the Boston Museum in 1876, the Chicago Institute of Art in 1879—museums were built as cities developed. It

⁴⁶ For criticism on the theme of imperialism, see Stuart Burrows, C. Brooks Miller, and Thomas Peyser.

symbolizes the movement of the building of American civilization and, in that the museums collect the “world,” they had the similar function to the White City in the Chicago World Exposition, which situated America at the culmination of the world’s evolution.

Though James stayed in England at the time of the Spanish-American War, he was able to receive a lot of information about the war from some friends in the media and in the embassy and also from some American friends such as Henry Adams, with whom James spent a whole summer in a manor house in the countryside; and half connecting the war with the memory of the Civil War, James was both critical of and worried about the war (Edel 471). As the war ended and the American frontier expanded abroad, James came to have a more positive attitude toward this progressive movement, seeing the “extension of American power” as “a New World version of Britain’s *imperium*”; James thought about the British Empire favorably because “the British he felt had been good colonizers, and the cause of civilization had, on the whole, been advanced” (Edel 473). This sense—“a New World version of Britain’s *imperium*”—can be fully found in *The Golden Bowl*, which starts with the scene where the Prince, a Roman gentleman who has just engaged a rich American girl, is walking in London feeling “in the present London much more than in contemporary Rome the real dimensions of [. . .] an *Imperium*.” (GB 3)

On the one hand, Adam, who builds the “museum of museums,” seems to represent the America which seeks to become an empire in the world. James compares Adam to Cortez, linking Adam’s fascination with collecting art to “Keats’s sonnet about stout Cortez in the presence of the Pacific” (GB 104) and connects him

with the imperialist discourse by the repetitive use of such words as “conquest” and “discover.” At the same time, however, James makes Adam different from what James thought American businessmen were. Adam has culture; he is “a *real galantuomo*” as the Prince calls him (*GB* 5). In James’s earlier novel *The American*, Christopher Newman, an American businessman with new money, cannot tell the difference between real art and imitation. On the other hand, Adam Verver is a rich American businessman who never makes mistakes about antiques. In this respect, James does not just present “the threat posed to European culture by American capitalism” (C. B. Miller 5); instead, he explores the possibility that the enterprise of building the “American civilization” might transform the American mass culture, which James negatively portrays in *The Bostonians*, into something more sophisticated.

C. Brook Miller reads Maggie as the drive of American cultural imperialism, as the American Girl who serves “to further America’s own imperial aggrandizement” (20). In fact, Maggie’s marriage is part of Adam’s enterprise of collecting art for his museum as Maggie tells the Prince that he is “at any rate a part of his collection” and “a *morceau de musée*” (*GB* 10). The Prince tries to get accustomed to his wife’s and his father-in-law’s way, and tells Maggie that he is practicing “American” language: “I want to continue, and as it’s when he [Adam] talks American that he *is* most alive, so I must also cultivate it, to get my pleasure” (*GB* 7). Considering that the standardization of language is what America carried out as a part of “incorporation,” the Prince may show the model of Americanization or assimilation. Participating energetically in Adam’s “conquest” of Europe, Maggie to some extent shares the idea

of the American Girl imagined by Howard Chandler Christy, who insists that “the exodus of American Girls into foreign lands can at worst only hasten that Americanizing of the world” (125). At the same time, however, it is worth noting that Maggie criticizes “America” itself while she admires her father. When she talks with Adam about the museum in American City, Maggie shows her contempt for American people by using such words as “awful,” “vulgar,” and “horrible”:

‘Well, American City—if “personalities” can do it—has given me a pretty personal side. What do you make,’ he went on, ‘of what I’ve done for my reputation?’

‘Your reputation *there*? You’ve given it to them, the awful people, for less than nothing; you’ve given it up to them to tear to pieces, to make their horrible vulgar jokes against you with.’ (*GB* 493)

What Maggie praises is her father as American Adam and not America itself, and here is shown the gap in the attitude toward America between Adam, who has the dream of the American museum which will cultivate the American people, and Maggie, who is skeptical about it (she is not so patriotic as critics have thought; she jokingly tells the Prince that he will not be buried till being dead “[u]nless indeed you [he] call it buried to go to American City” [*GB* 11]). Maggie is as “real” as her father. While Daisy is together in Rome with Giovanelli, whom Winterbourne calls “a clever imitation of” an Italian gentleman (“Daisy” II: 50) and Isabel spends her married life in Rome with “a vague, unexplained American who has been living these thirty years, or less, in Italy” (*NYE* III: 358), Maggie chooses a real Roman gentleman. Disclosing her repugnance to “awful people” in America and denouncing them as “vulgar” (*GB*

493), Maggie reveals the reality under the romantic ideal, reflecting James's dual consciousness that, while he partly shares Adam's romantic patriotism of dreaming of building his version of the American civilization, he also realizes that the American masses lack sophistication. Though Maggie admires and encourages Adam's cultivating-America enterprise, she does not go back to America herself to join the building of the American civilization.

At the end of the novel, the character who goes back to American City with Adam Verver for the opening of his museum is not Maggie or the Prince, as they originally planned, but Charlotte. The narrator reveals that her "mission" is something related to the building of American civilization: "Her mission had quite taken form—it was but another name for the interest of her great opportunity—that of representing the arts and the graces to a people languishing, afar off, in ignorance" (*GB* 558). Charlotte is "[g]reat for the world that was before her—that he [Adam] proposed she should be: she was not to be wasted in the application of his plan" (*GB* 565). The "plan" here is nothing but the building of American civilization. Considering that Charlotte and the Prince are compared to "a pair of effigies of the contemporary great on one of the platforms of Madame Tussaud" (*GB* 561), it is certain that Charlotte, "not Amerigo, is destined to become an exhibit in the museum of American City" (Peyser 159). At the same time, her role in the museum is not only that of an object to be seen. What Charlotte's "mission" in America is like is already hinted at in the scene where Charlotte shows and explains about Adam's precious collection to the neighbors of the Fawns, who are not cultivated. Maggie cannot bear listening to the "voice, high and clear and a little hard" (*GB* 510) and the "words, addressed to the

largest publicity” of Charlotte, who places “her cheerful submission to duty” (*GB* 511) with “a long silken halter looped round her beautiful neck” (*GB* 508).⁴⁷

Charlotte, the beautiful, sophisticated, and cosmopolitan woman, is taken back to the still crude society of America to face “the awful people” (*GB* 493) and work for Adam’s “plan,” which Maggie sees as Charlotte’s death.

Hugh Stevens, focusing on the issue of sexuality in *The Golden Bowl*, argues that “Maggie, the civilized woman projects onto Charlotte the image of the primitive beast” which represents threatening sexuality (“Sexuality” 64); this is appropriate if the “civilization” represented by Maggie is the contemporary American civilization of the time, where female sexuality is suppressed.⁴⁸ Through the eyes of Maggie and Adam, Charlotte is linked with the stereotyped image of the Sexual Orient; for example, Adam, when thinking about his marriage to Charlotte, juxtaposes her with “an extraordinary set of oriental tiles” (*GB* 145) and in Maggie’s famous meditation at the beginning of Book Two Charlotte is linked with the image of “a Mahometan mosque” (*GB* 300). Meanwhile, James uses the discourse of the savage / the civilized in a totally different sense. The Prince notes the power of Charlotte’s “strange sense for tongues” and links her polyglot quality with civilization: “The point was that in this young woman it [being polyglot] was a beauty in itself, and almost a mystery: so, certainly, he had more than once felt in noting, on her lips, that rarest, among the Barbarians, of all civil graces, a perfect felicity in the use of Italian” (*GB* 41). In

⁴⁷ Interesting to note, the phrase, “her cheerful submission to duty” (*GB* 511), may remind readers of what Tocqueville notes about the American wife, who “submits to narrower duties” in her husband’s house (Tocqueville 686).

⁴⁸ In fact, Charlotte, by marrying Adam, is deprived of her sexuality. Charlotte implies in the novel that Adam, now old “Mr. Mann,” lacks masculinity; in other words, she is brought in the American Eden, “a state of childlike innocence, the state of our primitive parents before the Fall” (*GB* 246).

contrast, Maggie is not good at learning another language, and the plight of Maggie is in a way caused by her ignorance of other languages—or, the linguistic “Americanization.” Certainly, she does not know the meaning of “gentleman” in another language: “What was supremely grotesque, in fact, was the essential opposition of theories—as if a galantuomo, as *he* [the Prince] at least constitutionally conceived galantuomini, could do anything *but* blush to ‘go about’ at such a rate with such a person as Mrs. Verver in a state of childlike innocence, the state of our primitive parents before the Fall” (*GB* 245-46). While Maggie is “American,” speaking no Italian and very poor French, Charlotte is “European” or a polyglot cosmopolitan; and James connects here the idea of civilization with the polyglot (and pluralism), which is sharply contrasted with the contemporary movement of Americanization.

As recent critics have noted, the change in Maggie in Book Two is closely related to sexuality and can be seen as the change from girlhood to womanhood.⁴⁹ Indeed, Book Second shows the process that Maggie, who has been the “innocent” American girl, gets to acquire “knowledge” both of the secret affair and of sexuality, which are interestingly juxtaposed. Virginia C. Fowler, reading Maggie’s change psychoanalytically in relation to a father-daughter relationship, aptly argues that Maggie’s change is parallel to her individuation from her father, linked with “the birth of her sexuality” and with the “awakening to her womanhood” (126, 128). By rejecting Adam, Fowler suggests, Maggie “moves from being at once an object and a collector of objects to becoming a subject and a creator”; she is “the only one of these American girls not merely to withstand ‘the whole assault of life’ but to triumph over

⁴⁹ For example, see Beth Sharon Ash, Virginia C. Fowler, and Hugh Stevens.

it” (138, 111). While Charlotte is put into the gilded cage as a powerless married woman, Maggie, by acquiring the knowledge about “evil” and about sexuality, renounces her status as the American Girl and “awaken[s] to her womanhood” (Fowler 128)—not as the American wife, who has no power, but as the Princess/the European lady.

The ending of *The Golden Bowl*, then, seemingly presents a “happy marriage” of an American girl with a European gentleman. And yet, the final portrait is not cast in a positive light:

‘Isn’t she too splendid?’ she simply said, offering it to explain and to finish.

‘Oh, splendid!’ With which he came over to her.

‘That’s our help, you see,’ she added—to point further her moral.

It kept him before her therefore, taking in—or trying to—what she so wonderfully gave. He tried, too clearly, to please her—to meet her in her own way; but with the result only that, close to her, her face kept before him, his hands holding her shoulders, his whole act enclosing her, he presently echoed: “‘See’? I see nothing but *you*.’ And the truth of it had, with this force, after a moment, so strangely lighted his eyes that, as for pity and dread of them, she buried her own in his breast.

(*GB* 567)

Though Maggie acquires power, which James’s earlier American girls did not, the last scene of Maggie’s “triumph” is quite ambiguous. What she feels here is not happiness but “pity and dread” for whatever “so strangely lighted his eyes.” The final

union of Maggie and the Prince is not depicted as negatively as the one between Verena and Basil, where the narrator declares that the union is “far from brilliant” and the tears Verena sheds are “not the last she [i]s destined to shed” (*Bostonians* 350). Different from Verena, whose eyes are covered by a hood, Maggie still covers her eyes by herself as “she burie[s] her own [eyes] in his breast” (*GB* 567). In the novel, Maggie has tried to restore the marital relationships through the negation of speaking and listening; Maggie’s final act of restoring her own marital relationship is the negation of seeing. The final picture of the “happy marriage” thus is far from settled and secure but is still ambiguous and in-between, making the novel open-ended. As John Auchard acutely suggests, “[t]here are no entirely happy endings in the profoundly complex world of which Henry James writes, in part because there are no endings” (149). Far from showing the ending, the final scene presents the beginning of the story of Maggie as a European lady who has just crossed the threshold of the polyglot civilization after the Fall.

After the publication of *The Golden Bowl*, James went back to the United States after a twenty-year absence and saw enormous changes in his country. Though he found some places unchanged and familiar, he disliked the “newness” in big cities such as New York. He was horrified by skyscrapers and, in the Metropolitan Museum, he was dissatisfied with “the expense which, like so much of the expense of New York, d[id]n’t educate” (Edel 613). The American civilization he found in America was the place in which he “discovered a desire among people for ‘sameness’ rather than difference” (Edel 594). When James republished his works as the New

York Edition, then, he omitted a number of “American tales” including *The Bostonians*, and he also revises his American girls again, including Daisy Miller.⁵⁰

About a quarter century after the publication of James’s “Daisy Miller,” an essay titled “Daisy Miller and the Gibson Girl” was published in *The Ladies’ Home Journal*; in the essay, Winfield Scott Moody vividly contrasted the two figures of an American girl—Daisy and Theodosia, who is “the ‘modern’ American girl”—and characterized their most essential difference as Daisy’s “ignorance” and Theodosia’s “knowledge”: “One might have fancied that Daisy herself was reincarnated, with a difference—with this difference: Daisy knew no better. Theodosia knows better with every sensitive fibre of her highly organized and highly trained and developed mind and body” (17). When James revised “Daisy Miller” for the New York Edition in 1909, he in an ironical way showed the dichotomy between nature and civilization, which Moody finds in the difference between Daisy Miller and the Gibson Girl. In the Preface he added to the 1909 edition, James describes the model of Daisy Miller as “a child of nature and of freedom” (*NYE* XVIII: v), and in the 1909 version, he used the expression, “the child of nature of the Swiss lakeside” (*NYE* XVIII: 46), instead of “Daisy Miller,” which is used in the 1878 version. The link between Daisy and nature is significantly underlined in the 1909 version again when a friend of Winterbourne tells him about Daisy’s portrait; in the 1878 version, the friend says, “I had the pleasure of contemplating a picture of a different kind—that pretty American

⁵⁰ “Daisy Miller: a Study” was first published in *Cornhill Magazine* in June and July, 1878, and appeared with slight revisions as a book published by MacMillan in 1879; then, James fully revises the 1879 version into the New York Edition published in 1909, where the title itself is changed to “Daisy Miller.” As for the revision of Daisy Miller, see also Viola R. Dunbar. Dunbar concludes that the aim of the revision is “to bring out more clearly the meaning of the situation” about “a spontaneous American girl who is the victim of rigid social conventions” (316-7).

girl whom you pointed out to me last week” (“Daisy” II: 60), and, in the 1909 version, he says, “I enjoyed sight of an image of a different kind; that little American who’s *so much more a work of nature than of art* and whom you pointed out to me last week” (NYE XVIII: 79, emphasis added). On the other hand, when Daisy Miller is told to get on Mrs. Walker’s carriage to save her “reputation,” the narrator describes Winterbourne’s thought by the phrase, “Daisy Miller should take Mrs. Walker’s advice,” in the 1878 version (“Daisy” II: 53), which is revised into the phrase, “his charming friend should listen to *the voice of civilized society*,” in the 1909 version (NYE XVIII: 62, emphasis added). Here Mrs. Walker, who is treated as an individual in the 1878 version, is regarded as the representative of the “civilized society,” where Daisy Miller, “a child of nature,” cannot be accepted. Indeed, the 1909 version highlights clearly the opposition of the American Girl as “a child of nature” to the “civilized society,” and the characters belonging to the “civilized society” are much more ironically described.⁵¹ James makes the characters who belong to the “civilized society” less attractive, which suggests his ironical reaction to the controversy which the original version of “Daisy Miller” raised in the United

⁵¹ Mrs. Costello “becomes more acid-tongued, indulging habitually in sarcastic exaggerations” (Dunbar 313), and Mrs. Walker becomes harder and more acrid. While characters of the “civilized society” become less attractive in the 1909 version, Daisy also becomes more powerful. Asked by Winterbourne why he takes Daisy to the dangerous place, Giovanelli in the 1878 version answers, “For myself I had no fear; and she wanted to go,” and Winterbourne exclaims, “That was no reason!” (“Daisy” II: 67); in the 1909 version, Giovanelli answers, “For myself I had no fear; and *she*—she did what she liked,” and Winterbourne repeats the phrase, “She did what she liked!” (NYE XVIII: 92). In the 1909 version, Daisy is not so much a victim as in the 1878 version. While in the 1878 version the responsibility is attributed more to Giovanelli, who did not stop Daisy, it is rather Daisy who is responsible for her own death in the 1909 version, where Daisy’s—or the American girl’s—freedom, will, and agency are more emphasized.

States.⁵² Moreover, his emphasis on the nature/civilization dichotomy and his redefinition of the American Girl as a “child of nature” in his final revision of Daisy Miller suggests that James, facing drastic changes in American society, finally distances himself from the possibility of building such an “American civilization,” as he explores in *The Golden Bowl*.

Taken together, James, continuously revising his American girl, resists the stereotyped American Girl plot which was popular around the turn of the century, and his revision of the American girl shows his complex and shifting view of the young female in America as well as of the American democracy. James’s American girl does not have a “happy marriage” as does the American Girl in popular culture, revealing that a “girl” is insecure and vulnerable; at the same time, James’s American girl becomes more powerful, which may reflect James’s awareness of the change in American women. Also, the Tocquevillian idea of American democracy, which is fully embodied in his earlier American girls such as Daisy and Isabel, comes to be juxtaposed with the new idea of American democracy linked with the progressive idea (as is shown in “Pandora”) and with the emergence of mass culture and the popularization of culture, which James negatively portrays in *The Bostonians*. In his later novels, James explores the issue of American civilization in relation to the American girl; however, after facing the reality when he went back to the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century, he separates himself from his

⁵² As James mentions in his Preface, “Daisy Miller” is first rejected by an American publisher for the reason that it is “an outrage on American girlhood” (*NYE* XVIII: v). After its publication, “William Dean Howells wrote the author that society almost divided itself into Daisy-Millertites and anti-Daisy-Millerites” (Dunbar 311).

romantic idea of American civilization, which may lead to the revision of his original American girl Daisy Miller into “a child of nature,” who is not conforming to the “civilized” world.

In the next chapter, I will deal with the representation of American girl in Edith Wharton’s novels, which are set in the America of the Gilded Age that James negatively calls “the great Republic” in the revised version of “Pandora.” Wharton in an ironical way plays with the popular icon of the American Girl, and in her American girl can be traced the Jamesian idea of American girl as “a child of nature.”

Chapter Three: Edith Wharton's Critique of the American Girl

Edith Wharton's autobiography published in 1933, *A Backward Glance*, starts as follows:

It was on a bright day of midwinter, in New York. The little girl who eventually became me, but as yet was neither me nor anybody else in particular, but merely a soft anonymous morsel of humanity—this little girl, who bore my name, was going for a walk with her father. The episode is literally the first thing I can remember about her, and therefore I date the birth of her identity from that day. (*A Backward Glance* 1)

Looking at her little self as a third person, Wharton regards the birth of her identity as simultaneous with her recognition of gender. She continues to tell how the little Edith puts on clothes, looking at her figure in the glass:

She had been put into her warmest coat, and into a new and very pretty bonnet, which she had surveyed in the glass with considerable satisfaction. The bonnet (I can see it today) was of white satin, patterned with a pink and green plaid in raised velvet. [. . .] As the air was very cold a gossamer veil of the finest white Shetland wool was drawn about the bonnet and hung down over the wearer's round red cheeks like the white paper filigree over a Valentine; and her hands were encased in white woolen mittens. (*A Backward Glance* 1)

Here the little Edith's clothes faithfully reflect one of the essential characteristics of the image of the American Girl: whiteness. She puts on a new bonnet made "of white satin" and with a veil of "the finest white Shetland wool," and wears "white woolen mittens." It is at this time, Wharton relates, that the little Edith "woke to the importance of dress, and of herself as a subject for adornment"; in other words, the moment was "the birth of the conscious and feminine *me* in the little girl's vague soul" (*A Backward Glance* 2). On that day, Wharton continues, the little Edith, who walked down Fifth Avenue with her father, met Cousin Henry and his son Daniel: "[. . .] the small Daniel and Edith found themselves face to face close to the pavement, the little girl peered with interest at the little boy through the white woolen mist over her face. The little boy, who was very round and rosy, looked back with equal interest; and suddenly he put out a chubby hand, lifted the little girl's veil, and boldly planted a kiss on her cheek. It was the first time—and the little girl found it very pleasant" (*A Backward Glance* 3). Wharton suggestively illustrates how the little girl is situated in the heterosexually gendered system. The fact that Wharton situates this episode at the beginning of her autobiography vividly displays her recognition of having been brought up as a white, feminine American Girl, which is to a large extent reflected in her representation of the American girl. As critics have variously argued, one of the chief concerns of Wharton's works is the situation of women in America, and this chapter aims to contribute to develop critics' arguments by focusing on the image of the American girl, through whose portrait Wharton challenges the "ordinary" American Girl plot in a much more ironical way than James.⁵³

⁵³ There are various discussions on the issue of women in America and the idea of "feminism" in Wharton's works. See, for example, Ammons *Argument*, Judith Fryer, Gilbert

The American girls in Wharton's works fit physically the type of the tall, white, rich, unmarried, and beautiful American Girl who serves to show the ideal of the materialistic and imperialistic America. At the same time, Wharton plays with the typology of the American Girl itself, showing prolonged girlhood (*The House of Mirth*), reproduction of girlhood (*The Custom of the Country*), and everlasting girlhood (*The Age of Innocence*). While *The Custom of the Country* presents the most direct caricature of the American Girl in the figure of Undine Spragg of Apex—U.S.A., this chapter will focus on the other two, both of which deal with the old society in New York and examine the issue of the American Girl through the contrast of two female characters. Investigating how the ideas of “girl” and of “Americanness” are imagined in the novel, this chapter first focuses on *The House of Mirth*, examining the ways in which Wharton challenges the typology of the American Girl and explores the options for the American girl and the ways in which the Jamesian idea of America is juxtaposed with the materialistic idea of America in her American girl. As an ornamental and perfectly beautiful American girl, the novel's heroine Lily Bart seems to have only one option: marriage. The novel, however, presents another option for a girl, which is chosen by Lily's less fashionable friend Gerty Farish, who is a New Woman devoting herself to social work in the public sphere. Lily's story is intertwined with Gerty's story, and from under the surface plot of Lily's husband-hunt emerges the strong image of the sisterhood union. A close examination of the role Gerty plays in the novel as another “girl” will reveal that *The House of Mirth* is something more than “the marriage novel frustrated”

and Gubar, and Cynthia Griffin Wolff *Feast* among others. Julie Olin-Ammentorp presents a different view from others in pointing out that Wharton shows men as victims as well as women.

(Wagner-Martin 127). The later part of this chapter will deal briefly with *The Age of Innocence*, exploring how the image of the American girl and the potential sisterhood shown in *The House of Mirth* changes in the 1920 novel.

1. “To be herself, or a Gerty Farish”: two options for the American girl
in *The House of Mirth* (1905)

What is striking in *The House of Mirth* is that throughout the novel Lily Bart continues to be called “girl” by the narrator, though she is almost thirty years old. This singularity is highlighted from the very beginning, when Selden sees Lily among the crowd in the station and is struck by her beauty as a “girl”:

Selden had never seen her more radiant. Her vivid head, relieved against the dull tint of the crowd, made her more conspicuous than in a ball-room, and 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 and indefatigable dancing. Was it really eleven years, Selden found himself wondering, and had she indeed reached the nine-and-twentieth birthday with which her rivals credited her? (*HM* 5-6)

Lily’s “radiant” and “conspicuous” figure is presented as a perfect model of the American Girl—or the Gibson Girl—who is culturally and socially constructed as the standardized model of materialistic, Anglo-Saxon America at the Progressive Era. Lily is “a figure for whiteness, class pedigree, western European origin and incipient nativism,” namely “a supreme emblem of her race” (Kassanoff 38). Selden “ha[s] a

confused sense that she must have cost a great deal to make, that a great many dull and ugly people must, in some mysterious way, have been sacrificed to *produce her*” (*HM* 7, emphasis added); at the same time, he thinks that she is “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” (*HM* 8, emphasis added). As Amy Kaplan suggests, “the gaping mob both defines and threatens the upper class” (102), and the opening scene highlights the vivid contrast of Lily and the mob, whom Maggie Verver would call “the awful people” (*GB* 493). Through Selden’s eyes, Lily is portrayed as the product of the American civilization of the Gilded Age, which is based on materialism. As “the Veblenisque female” (Ammons *Argument* 30), Lily is “brought up to be ornamental” rather than for “practical purpose” (*HM* 232) and her “sole end of existence” is to have a “conventional rich marriage” (*HM* 123). She is trained to be an American Girl of the Gilded Age, when female beauty has monetary value, and, after the Barts are ruined, Lily’s beauty is regarded as “the last asset in their fortunes” (*HM* 29). When *The House of Mirth* was first published in *Scribner’s Magazine* as a serial from January to November in 1905, it was accompanied by illustrations by A. B. Wenzell, one of the famous illustrators contemporary to Gibson. Each illustration shows a scene from the novel, and, portraying a tall, beautiful girl in white, Wenzell makes Lily represent the type of the American Girl popular in contemporary popular culture of the time.⁵⁴ In this novel, then, Wharton challenges

⁵⁴ The scenes of each illustration are as follows: Lily’s meeting a charwoman at the stairs of Benedick Building (January), Lily at Bellomont (February), Selden and Lily holding each other’s hand under the tree (March), Lily and Gus Trenor in the Opera box (April), Lily facing Gus in the Trenors (May), Lily leaning on a chair, comforted by Gerty (June), Lily and Selden leaving the party of the Dorsets (July), Lily sitting on the bench at the Gormers (August), George Dorset proposing to Lily (September), Lily at Mme. Regina’s work-house

the culturally invented image of the American Girl, who is exclusively illustrated as a young woman of the age of around 18 or 20 (and hardly 30), by presenting the damaging effects of a prolonged girlhood and by raising a question of the boundary regarding the American Girl—namely a question about by what age the American Girl can be “the American Girl.”

Fully aware of the image-making of the American Girl at the turn of the century, Wharton symbolically uses the image of American Beauties in the novel: “In the centre of the table, between the melting *marrons glacés* and candied cherries, a pyramid of American Beauties lifted their vigorous stems; they held their heads as high as Mrs. Bart, but their rose-colour had turned to a dissipated purple, and Lily’s sense of fitness was disturbed by their reappearance on the luncheon-table” (*HM* 27). “American Beauty” is the name of roses originally bred in France and brought to the United States in 1875, and the turn-of-the-century culture in America linked this rose with the icon of the rich and beautiful American Girl (Figure 20).⁵⁵ That Mrs. Bart

(October), and Lily giving Selden a final kiss at his library (November). It is interesting that only the illustration presenting Mme. Regina’s work-house shows Lily in a black dress, which symbolizes her fall from the status of the American Girl.

⁵⁵ Henry James also uses the image of the American beauty in *The American Scene*, though not linking it with the American Girl. He presents two types of “American beauty.”

This, on September Sunday mornings, was what American beauty *should* be; it filled to the brim its idea and its measure—albeit Mount Washington, hazily overhung, happened not to contribute to the effect. It was the great, gay river, singing as it went, like some reckless adventurer, good-humoured for the hour and with his hands in his pockets, that argued the whole case and carried everything assentingly before it. (*Collected Travel Writings* 379-80)

Then the “American beauty,” the rose of interminable stem, becomes the token of the cluster at large—to that degree that, positively this is all that is wanted for emphasis of your final impression. [. . .] Crowned not only with no history, but with no credible possibility of time for history, and consecrated by no uses save the commercial at any cost, they are simply the most piercing notes in that concert of the expensively provisional into which your supreme sense of New York resolves itself. (*Collected Travel Writings* 420)

displays American Beauties, which “held their heads as high as” her (*HM* 27), at the center of her public dinner table suggests that she follows the popular discourse of the progressive era, where the ideal is symbolized by the image of the American Girl—the American Beauty—which she trains her daughter to be. Wharton ironically criticizes Mrs. Bart’s faith in this ideal by portraying the deformed icon of American Beauties. Then, it is significant that Lily herself does not necessarily commit to her mother’s faith, asking for fresh lilies-of-the-valley instead of roses. She is Lily, and not American Beauty; and, as “the gilded lily,” she cannot completely fit the typology of the American Girl of the Gilded Age. She has to have “the conventional rich marriage which she had been taught to consider the sole end of existence” (*HM* 123), which Lily cannot completely accept; she “would not indeed have cared to marry a man who was merely rich” (*HM* 30).

The duality in Lily’s nature can be linked with the gap between her parents. While Lily’s mother plays a typical role of wife in what Thorstein Veblen calls “conspicuous consumption” among the leisure class, Lily’s father does not fully fit the materialistic society in the progressive era. He spends his time “reading poetry” in his youth, and after his death they find “a score or two of dingy volumes which had struggled for existence among the boots and medicine bottles of his dressing-room shelves” (*HM* 30). He retains what is being lost in the new materialistic society, and

In these two totally different pictures of “American beauty,” the first one in New England and the second one in New York, James displays the ideal image of “what American beauty should be” and the ironic and grotesque image of what “American beauty” is. While the ideal “American beauty” is illustrated in a picture of pastoral with the river and with a horizontal image, the latter provides a vertical, gothic, and sublime image with the symbol of sky-scraper growing upward interminably, with the metaphor of “the monster [that] grows and grows” (*Collected Travel Writings* 418). Juxtaposing two images of “American beauty” in two places, James again uses the contrast of “nature” and “civilization” in the contrast of the retrospective American ideal and the contemporary American reality.

he cannot survive the New America. Though trained by her mother to be the American Girl, Lily takes pity on her father and has a certain distance from what she was formed into, feeling “secretly ashamed of her mother’s crude passion for money” (*HM* 30). She is disappointed that Ned Silverton, who plays a similar role in a way to Lily in the novel, once “had meant to live on proof-reading and write an epic” but “now lived on his friends and had become critical of truffles” (*HM* 45). She is not interested in *Americana*, which is collected by the Gryces not for reading but for “conspicuous consumption.”



Figure 20. “American Beauties” by Howard Chandler Christy
(1906, an illustration in *The American Girl*)

Her appreciation of literature is one of the reasons why she is attracted to Selden: “His reputed cultivation was generally regarded as a slight obstacle to easy intercourse, but Lily, who prided herself on her broad-minded recognition of literature, and always carried an Omar Khayyam in her travelling-bag, was attracted by this attribute, which she felt would have had its distinction in an older society” (*HM* 52-3). Belonging to “an older society,” his cultivation in literature makes him “a more specialized *race*, of carrying the impress of a concentrated past” (*HM* 53, emphasis added). Wharton’s use of the word “race” is significant, reflecting the turn-of-the-century discourse of race and also showing her fear about the new “race” in New York.⁵⁶ In this sense, Lily’s attraction to Selden is attributed not only to her love for him or for his idea of “the republic of the spirit” (*HM* 55) but also for the standard of old New York which he (and Lily’s father) supports.⁵⁷ While Miss Van Osburgh, Percy Gryce, and “most of Lily’s set” present a monolithic idea, sharing “the same quality of making other standards non-existent by ignoring them” (*HM* 40), what distinguishes Selden from others is that he shows Lily another standard. Being a daughter of her mother—who belongs to the new society—and her father—who has a connection with a Van Alstyne and “belonged to the class of old New Yorkers” (*HM* 32)—Lily has two incompatible standards in herself and secretly has more sympathy

⁵⁶ This is more clearly found in *The Custom of the Country*, where Ralph compares people who belong to the Old New York to “the Aborigines,” namely “those vanishing denizens of the American continent doomed to rapid extinction with the advance of the invading race” (*Four Novels* 493). He repeatedly uses the word “race” when he thinks that “[t]he daughters of his own race sold themselves to the Invaders” and when he calls people of Old New York “the conquered race” (*Four Novels* 497). As is in *The Custom of the Country*, the appreciation of literature in *The House of Mirth* is connected with the old society, which was replaced by the turn-of-the-century new, materialistic society.

⁵⁷ Similarly, to Selden, Lily is a kind of substitute for his mother, and Selden, “the product of his upbringing and environment just as Lily is, would like to remodel his beloved in the image of his mother” (Ammons *Argument* 36).

for the latter.⁵⁸ The two divided aspects of Lily—the aspect of being the American Girl that is formed through training and performing and the aspect of rejecting it—makes her “an uncertain blend of art and nature” (Wolff “Lily” 320).

Situated at the edge between old New York and new New York, Lily is the complicated mixture of the two notions of making the American Girl. Slater, examining turn-of-the-century manner manuals for girls, states that “the American Girl was profoundly affected by th[e] new conception of manners, th[e] notion that virtuous behavior was a theatrical performance rather than a birthright” (113); in this respect, Wharton’s “two heroines, Lily Bart and Undine Spragg, represent the fatal flaw in the turn-of-the-century notion of virtuous American Girlhood: that inherently virtuous figures such as Lily could be cast off for illusory transgressions while the callous, uncultivated Undine could rise ever higher so long as she behaved according to the rules set forth in the latest etiquette manual or advice column” (Slater 114).

Indeed, while embodying the very image of the Gibson-Girl-like American Girl, which is constructed by training and performance, Lily presents the Jamesian idea of American innocence which is lost in the materialistic society. Though she is performing “innocence” in one way, “she never fully loses her naiveté” (Wolff “Lily” 325). In Chapter 9, the charwoman who works at Selden’s apartment comes to see

⁵⁸ Lily’s situation to a certain extent reflects Edith Wharton’s own childhood. In *A Backward Glance*, Wharton states that in old New York “every gentleman had what was called ‘a gentleman’s library’” (52), and explains: “The old New York to which I came back as a little girl meant to me chiefly my father’s library” (54). Wharton then contrasts her parents, giving ironical comments on her mother: “there were the tall splendid father who was always so kind, and whose strong arms lifted one so high, and held one so safely; and my mother, who wore such beautiful flounced dresses, and had painted and carved fans in sandalwood boxes” (26). Wharton had nicknames “Pussy” and “Lily” when she was a girl (Gilbert and Gubar 133), and it is appropriate to see Wharton’s own gap in her nature as the American Girl in Lily’s in *The House of Mirth*.

Lily to sell letters which Bertha Dorset wrote to Selden, and Lily feels considerably shocked:

A wave of indignation swept over Lily. She felt herself in the presence of something vile, as yet but dimly conjectured—the kind of vileness of which people whispered, but which she had never thought of as touching her own life. She drew back with a motion of disgust, but her withdrawal was checked by a sudden discovery: under the glare of Mrs. Peniston’s chandelier she had recognized the hand-writing of the letter.
(*HM* 82)

The shock Lily feels in the face of “something vile” is so enormous that the scene of her recognition may remind readers of the famous scene in which Isabel perceives something vile is going on in *The Portrait of a Lady*. In this scene, Lily cannot decide what to do for a long time. Lily finds that the writer of letters is Bertha Dorset and that keeping and using the letters would give her the advantage in the light of the standard of society; however, she buys the letters not to take revenge on Bertha but to prevent them from becoming public. Later in the novel, the issue of whether Lily makes the letters public or not becomes very important. After the betrayal of Bertha, Lily declines until she becomes extremely poor. To Carrie Fisher, Lily says, “The world is too vile”; still, Lily cannot “fight it on its own terms” as Carrie advises her to do (*HM* 197). When George Dorset suggests his possible marriage to Lily, which would be an enormous chance not only to restore Lily’s social status but also to get revenge on Bertha, “suddenly fear possesse[s] her—fear of herself, and of the terrible force of the temptation” (*HM* 191) and rejects his offer. Again, when Rosedale openly

advises Lily to use the letters to silence Bertha, Lily, though moved by temptation, “reject[s] Rosedale’s suggestion with a promptness of scorn almost surprising to herself” (*HM* 204). Thus, she has the “purity of moral behavior” of the Tocquevillian American girl (Tocqueville 685), which distinguishes her and isolates her from other people in her society, and she declines since “there had been nothing in her training to develop any continuity of moral strength” (*HM* 204). Even at the bottom of her poverty, she thinks that she has to return the money she owes Gus Trenor, and that “what really frightened her was the thought that she might gradually accommodate herself to remaining indefinitely in Trenor’s debt” (*HM* 230-1). At last, she finds that the only way for her to survive in society is to make the letters public and then marry Rosedale, who urges her to do so. But seeing Selden, she finally decides to burn the letters, and she cannot survive the new America.

As critics have discussed, Lily’s death can be seen as the preservation of the Anglo-Saxon race. Lily’s discarding of letters prevents the potential marriage between Lily as a WASP icon and Rosedale, a Jew. In the new New York, where the structure of the society has been changed by the increase of immigrants and nouveau-riches, “the whitest of white women, literally named ‘Lily,’ whose task is to perform the beauty of Anglo-Saxonness in a tableau vivant, is better off dead than married to a Jew” (Ammons “Edith” 70), and “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 [. . .] What links these concerns is an implicit belief—held by Wharton and a number of her elite compatriots—in a genealogical conception of

American citizenship” (Kassanoff 38).⁵⁹ At the same time, her burning of the letters suggests that she finally does not give up the Tocquevillian idea of moral purity; in this sense, her death symbolically signifies that the Jamesian American girl who has genuine moral innocence cannot continue to live in America of the Gilded Age.

While such qualities as freedom, independence, and morality are presented as distinctively American in the representations of American girls in James’s works, Lily’s yearning for them—or her deviation from the standard of society—is seen as foreignness in Wharton’s novel. Mrs. Peniston repeatedly connects Lily’s ignorance of social convention with her “foreign bringing-up” (*HM* 137). More importantly, Lily, who has fallen down from the fashionable society to which she used to belong, finds herself seen as if she were a foreigner at Mme. Regina’s work-room by working-girls, who share the standard of the Gilded Age:

It was the strangest part of Lily’s strange experience, the hearing of these names, the seeing the fragmentary and distorted image of the world she had lived in reflected in the mirror of the working-girls’ minds. She had never before suspected the mixture of insatiable curiosity and contemptuous freedom with which she and her kind were discussed in this underworld of toilers who lived on their vanity and self-indulgence. Every girl in Mme. Regina’s work-room knew to whom the headgear in her hands was destined, and had her opinion of its future wearer, and a definite knowledge of the latter’s place in the social system. That Lily was a star fallen from that sky did not, after the first stir of curiosity had

⁵⁹ For a similar argument about Lily’s death as preservation, see also Jennifer L. Fleissner 529.

subsided, materially add to their interest in her. She had fallen, she had “gone under,” and *true to the ideal of the race*, they were awed only by success—by the gross tangible image of material achievement. The consciousness of her different point of view merely kept them at a little distance from her, *as though she were a foreigner with whom it was an effort to talk*. (HM 223, emphasis added)

Importantly, the narrator uses the word “race” again, which was typically used in the turn-of-the-century argument of national identity. The race presented in the novel sees “material achievement” (HM 223) as the only mark of success and possesses a nativist view “of making other standards non-existent by ignoring them” (HM 40). Lily, who does not share “the ideal of the race” but has a “different point of view” (HM 223), is regarded as “a foreigner,” who does not belong to “the American race.” Thus, two ideas of “America” are mixed and create tension in Lily.

As James emphatically uses the contrast of “civilization” and “nature” in such stories as “Pandora” and the revised version of “Daisy Miller,” Lily, with a certain deviancy from the “American race” of the Gilded Age, is portrayed as “a child of nature.” Lily is linked with the image of dryad; when she is at Selden’s at the beginning of the novel, Selden sees Lily “as though she were a captured dryad subdued to the conventions of the drawing-room” and thinks that “it was the same streak of sylvan freedom in her nature that lent such savour to her artificiality” (HM 12). When Lily is alone, she is often described as enjoying beautiful landscape; for example, when she wakes up in Bellomont, she feels fresh, seeing the landscape outside: “The windows stood open to the sparkling freshness of the September

morning, and between the yellow boughs she caught a perspective of hedges and parterres leading by degrees of lessening formality to the free undulations of the park” (*HM* 33-34). Her joy, however, is broken soon by Mrs. Trenor’s summons. Moreover, intimate meetings of Lily and Selden are linked with the image of nature. It is when the two walk around the pastoral landscape of the park in Bellomont that Lily for the first time learns from Selden the idea of “the republic of the spirit,” which celebrates “personal freedom,” not material success (*HM* 55). Then, when they meet at the Brys’ house, they go out to the garden against the tide of people who are going to the supper-room. The natural environment where Lily meets Selden is always next to, or is contained by, the society of “art.” The park belongs to the Trenors’ house, and the garden at the Brys’ is in fact a “conservatory” (*HM* 110). The contrast James uses in “Pandora”—the white, artificial city of Washington, DC, and the old town of Alexandria and Mount Vernon full of nature—is partly repeated to present two ideas of America represented by the American girl. The image of nature is linked with “the real Lily Bart,” who yearns for a different standard from that of society, and Lily and Selden’s meeting in a natural environment is strongly contrasted with Percy Gryce’s warning to Lily not to go outside.

Lily’s rebellion against her role of the American Girl is expressed in the famous scene of tableau vivants at the Brys, again linked with the image of nature. Lily’s tableau vivant, in which Selden finds “the real Lily Bart,” is linked with the image of a dryad: “Her pale draperies, and the background of foliage against which she stood, served only to relieve the long dryad-like curves that swept upward from her poised foot to her lifted arm” (*HM* 106). What she represents is not Reynolds’s

“Mrs. Lloyd” and not even “the portrait of the American Girl” but “Lily Bart.” Her tableau vivant shows “the flesh and blood loveliness of Lily Bart” (*HM* 106). Lily chooses “a picture without distracting accessories of dress or surroundings” (*HM* 106), and she presents herself in a way without “clothes,” which “are the background, frame” that are necessary for the American Girl Lily (*HM* 12); instead of the “frame” for the American Girl, the background of “Mrs. Lloyd” is nature (Figure 21). Considering that Mrs. Lloyd in the picture writes her newly-wed husband’s name on the tree, Lily possibly “use[s] this occasion to sell herself as a marriageable commodity” (Orlando 70), linking her own figure with marriage. At the same time, the woman writing a name on the tree is a popular motif in relation to Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* (McIntyre 302), where the heroine writes the name of her true love in the forest. Selden sees in her tableau vivant “her beauty that Selden always felt in her presence, yet lost the sense of when he was not with her,” and thinks that the present figure is “the real Lily Bart” (*HM* 106). Lily’s tableau vivant reveals “nature” hidden under “art,” and thus discloses the flesh suppressed under the “image” of the American Girl that is culturally—or artificially—constructed. Lily’s figure, however, paradoxically delivers another meaning of “nature” to people. To men at the party, Lily’s natural body and her “flesh and blood loveliness” (*HM* 106) do not mean what Selden calls “the real Lily Bart” but the literal body of Lily; Van Alstyne says to Selden, “The trouble is that all these fal-bals they wear cover up their figures when they’ve got ’em. I never knew till tonight what an outline Lily has” (*HM* 109).

In fact, while Wharton uses the dichotomy of nature and art to show “the real Lily” under the artificial mask of the American Girl, she also uses it in another, less



Figure 21. “Mrs Richard Bennet Lloyd” by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1775-76)

(Mannings, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Complete Catalogue of His Paintings* 81)

romantic way. Just as Wharton ironically breaks the image of American Beauty roses by showing them getting “a dissipated purple” after one night (*HM* 27), she does the icon of the American Girl by making the girl physically decline, by presenting her not as an incorporeal icon but as a mortal body. As “a biological clock” (Fleissner 520), the body of the American Girl threatens her own existence.⁶⁰ From the beginning,

⁶⁰ Fleissner suggests that there was an idea at the turn of the century that “female maternal

Lily's quality as the American Girl starts to deteriorate in her physical decline, and the decline of her status as the American Girl is proportionate to her physical condition. In the novel, Lily repeatedly looks at her face in the mirror, noticing the decline of her appearance: "As she sat before the mirror brushing her hair, her face looked hollow and pale, and she was frightened by two little lines near her mouth, faint flaws in the smooth curve of the cheek" (*HM* 25). Thus, Wharton uses the nature/art dichotomy not only to show Lily's inner morality, or innocence, but also to show Lily's natural body, the physical reality of the American Girl, which serves as a critique of the turn-of-the-century fantasy of a forever young and beautiful American Girl.

The physical reality of the American Girl drives Lily's story. At the end of the novel, it is her need of sleep that kills Lily. After sleepless nights, her body demands sleep: "Sleep was what she wanted—she remembered that she had not closed her eyes for two nights" (*HM* 250). Lily's death has raised a controversy about whether it is an "accident or suicide" (Preston 72). In fact, there is a moment when she thinks "[i]f only life could end now" (*HM* 249), and she is also fully aware of the risk of taking a larger amount of medicine; however, "[s]he did not, in truth, consider the question very closely—the physical craving for sleep was her only sustained sensation" (*HM* 250). Taken together, Lily's "nature" leads her to death in dual senses. At the symbolic level, the moral nature of Lily—or the Jamesian aspect of the American Girl—cannot enable her to survive in the Gilded Age. At the same time, it is the natural needs of her body that kill her; in other words, it is the American Girl's

capacities themselves take the form of a biological clock" (520), and reads the contrast of the conventional "feminine plot as a flower's blooming" and "the newer possibility of conceiving woman as a clock" (527) in *The House of the Mirth* and *Bunner Sisters*.

physical body itself that undermines the icon, which Wharton fully discloses is highly artificial and romantic. Lily's being called a "girl" throughout the novel despite her age is highly ironical, demonstrating that the category of "girl" is culturally constructed and not biologically determined; and the vulnerability of Lily's body to aging breaks the romantic idea about the perpetually young and beautiful American Girl.

While physical decline serves to accelerate Lily's fall as the American Girl, another factor is her reluctance to marry. Continuing postponing marriage, Lily cannot cease to be the American Girl until her body kills itself. Marriage is shown in this novel as a sole "vocation" for a girl. When Selden asks, "Isn't marriage your vocation? Isn't it what you're all brought up for?", she admits that with a sigh, saying "I suppose so. What else is there?" (*HM* 10). Complaining about her lack of options, she shows her dissatisfaction at the inequality between Selden, who can choose whether to marry or not, and her, who cannot: "Ah, there's the difference—a girl must, a man may if he chooses" (*HM* 12). Later again, when Mrs. Fisher tries to convince Lily to "marry as soon as you [she] can," the latter takes it a little ironically, thinking that "for once Mrs. Fisher lack[s] originality" (*HM* 187). Seeking originality, Lily is fascinated by the idea of having an independent life; she "[i]s beginning to have fits of angry rebellion against fate, when she long[s] to drop out of the race and make an independent life for herself" (*HM* 33). The narrator repeatedly relates that Lily is fighting "fate," and the "fate" Lily is fighting is not only shown as her dingy life but more as her very being as the American Girl, who is "marriageable" and who should marry.

It is important, at the same time, that Lily does not only point out the difference in terms of gender but the difference among women: “Why should she have to suffer for having once, for a few hours, borrowed money of an elderly cousin, when a woman like Carry Fisher could make a living unrebuked from the good-nature of her men friends and the tolerance of their wives? It all turned on the tiresome distinction between what a married woman might, and a girl might not, do” (*HM* 63). Here Lily, distinguishing “a married woman” and “a girl,” insists on the inequality between them, and what makes Lily fall from the society is that Lily transgresses the boundary between “a married woman” and “a girl.” There are unwritten rules for unmarried girls; it is supposed that they never smoke, gamble, and, in particular, never borrow money from their male friends, because these things are “not considered becoming in a *jeune fille à marier*” (*HM* 56). Wharton’s ideas of a “girl” and “a married woman” is opposite to James’s; James presents the Tocquevillian idea of the American female: that American girls enjoy freedom and independence though they lose both once they get married; Wharton’s idea of the American female in fashionable society resembles what James describes as European.

In that Lily continues to resist marriage, Linda Wagner-Martin rightly states that “*The House of Mirth* is not about the typical young woman headed for a good marriage; it is about the maverick young woman who resists the social code that would coerce her into wifedom” (117); at the same time, the point is not only that Lily “resists the social code” but also that she herself internalizes that code, according to which the girl is supposed to marry. To Lily, Selden suggests that women can have an independent life, saying that “[e]ven women [. . .] have been known to enjoy the

privileges of a flat”; however, Lily denies the possibility of being one of them: “Oh, governesses—or widows. But not girls—not poor, miserable, marriageable girls!” (HM 8). Here again Lily underlines the specific category of “girl” and defines it as “marriageable.” When Selden continues, “I even know a girl who lives in a flat,” Lily first is expectantly surprised, but then emphasizes that the girl whom he means, Gerty Farish, is not “*marriageable*” (HM 8).

In the “American Girl” story of Lily, the possible alternative to “the conventional rich marriage” (HM 123) expected by the society seems to be her marriage to Selden, which “they both believe they cannot afford” (Ohler 80). At their last meeting at Selden’s library, Lily tells Selden that she misses the chance to be happy with him: “Once—twice—you gave me the chance to escape from my life, and I refused it: refused it because I was a coward. Afterward I saw my mistake—I saw I could never be happy with what had contented me before. But it was too late: you had judged me—I understood. It was too late for happiness” (HM 239). Following this plot, it seems that the options for Lily are whether she has a conventional marriage with a rich man—Dillworth, Gryce, Dorset or Rosedale—or has a love-based marriage to Selden, and that she fails to choose the right option. But how much is this the case?

Regarding the relationship of Selden and Lily, critics have largely acceded to the view that it presents an alternative to the money-based marriage which Lily is unwilling to have and also that Wharton ironically criticizes Selden’s perspective. Selden “has been trained as a connoisseur,” who continues to see Lily “as a moral-aesthetic object” (Wolff “Lily” 328, 332), and there is “the gap between the female

subject and the male narrative gaze through which she is presented” (Orlando 73).⁶¹

While these arguments exclusively focus on male gazes, it is also worth noting that there is another gaze, which would be no less essential in the argument of sexual politics regarding Lily Bart. When Lily presents her tableau vivant at the Brys, it is not only Selden that sees in her a romantic figure of “the real Lily”; his view is shared by Gerty Farish:

“Wasn’t she too beautiful, Lawrence? Don’t you like her best in that simple dress? It makes her look like the real Lily—the Lily I know.”

He met Gerty Farish’s brimming gaze. “The Lily *we* know,” he corrected; and his cousin, beaming at the implied understanding, exclaimed joyfully: “I’ll tell her that! She always says you dislike her.”

(*HM* 107)

Gerty, who shares Selden’s view of Lily, serves to complicate the gender politics in the novel.

In fact, Gerty Farish stands in a peculiar position in the novel, presenting another option for a “girl.” As cited before, the novel presents the contrast of Lily and Gerty as two options from the beginning. At Selden’s flat, he shows Gerty’s way of life as an option for a girl to choose: “I even know a girl who lives in a flat” (*HM* 8). Lily, however, denies the option, declaring that Gerty is not “*marriageable*” while

⁶¹ Emily J. Orlando connects Selden’s “morbid reading of Lily” and Lily’s “own status as a body-made-shrine at the narrative’s end,” which shows the typical theme of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood: the sleeping virgin on the bed (74), and discusses that Wharton criticizes sexual politics in the art of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood that sexualizes and possesses female bodies by making Selden’s view similar to that of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. In addition to these views, Wagner-Martin interestingly suggests that “[t]he early liaison between Selden and the married Bertha is further testimony to Selden’s unreliability as narrator” (119).

she is (*HM* 8). Looking at her gorgeous appearance, Selden understands she cannot be a Gerty Farish: “As he watched her hand, polished as a bit of old ivory, with its slender pink nails, and the sapphire bracelet slipping over her wrist, he was struck with the irony of suggesting to her such a life as his cousin Gertrude Farish had chosen” (*HM* 8). While Gerty’s way of life is regarded as impossible for Lily, it is still shown as one of the “choices.” The contrast of two options is repeated later: “It was a hateful fate—but how escape from it? What choice had she? To be herself, or a Gerty Farish” (*HM* 23).

The option of becoming a Gerty is presented as opposite to the life of Veblen’s “conspicuous consumption,” for which Lily has been trained. Lily tells Selden that Gerty “has a horrid little place, and no maid, and such queer things to eat” (*HM* 8); later again, she “ha[s] a vision of Miss Farish’s cramped flat, with its cheap conveniences and hideous wallpapers” (*HM* 23). Lily emphasizes the difference between Gerty and her: “But we’re so different, you know: she likes being good, and I like being happy. And besides, she is free and I am not” (*HM* 8). Here Lily links Gerty’s frugal life with being good and her fashionable life with being happy, the latter of which she declares she prefers. But how much does she separate herself from Gerty’s way of life at the unconscious level?

Though continuously denying her possibility of becoming a Gerty, Lily is irritated by the fact that Gerty enjoys her life: “Of course, being fatally poor and dingy, it was wise of Gerty to have taken up philanthropy and symphony concerts; but there was something irritating in her assumption that existence yielded no higher pleasures, and that one might get as much interest and excitement out of life in a

cramped flat as in the splendours of the Van Osburgh establishment” (*HM* 71). Lily’s irritation here is attributed to the fact that Gerty, who belongs to the same class and society as Lily’s, finds contentment in a life different from the one she pursues. In other words, Lily is irritated by Gerty’s showing another option for a “girl,” which gives a girl freedom, independence, and self-fulfillment.

Importantly, what she says about Gerty’s life is quite similar to what she tells Selden about their potential married life. When Lily and Selden are in the park at Bellomont just by themselves, Selden tells Lily about his idea of “republic of the spirit,” where success means “personal freedom” (*HM* 55), and Lily temporarily dreams of her marriage to Selden which would be dingy but would give her self-fulfillment, saying, “I shall look hideous in dowdy clothes; but I can trim my own hats” (*HM* 59); then, Lily, though repeating her dislike of Gerty’s flat, tells Selden that she “could manage to be happy even in her [Gerty’s] flat” if she is “free” (*HM* 8). Thus, the idea of freedom is connected not only with Selden’s idea of the “republic of the spirit” but also with the choice “to be a Gerty Farish.” In a significant way, “to be a Gerty Farish” serves an option as powerful for the American Girl Lily as the marriage to Selden. In this respect, the “choice” for Lily is not necessarily shown as which man she should marry, but as whether she should remain the American Girl or become a Gerty Farish—an independent New Woman.

Though not being portrayed as radical, Gerty is a New Woman who gets involved in social work in the public sphere.⁶² She is a member of the committee of

⁶² Critics have tended to view the role of Gerty as limited or threatening. For example, Gilbert and Gubar argue that Wharton shows the limitations of the New Woman: “Nevertheless, by depicting Gerty throughout the book as, on the one hand, naively loving and, on the other hand, inexorably marginalized, Wharton implies that even if this New

the Girls' Club, the association whose object is "to provide comfortable lodgings, with a reading-room and other modest distractions, where young women of the class employed in down town offices might find a home when out of work, or in need of rest" (*HM* 87). Also, she works for immigrants, meeting "a district visitor on the East side" (*HM* 128), which "at the turn of the century was a ghetto crowded with newly arrived immigrants, primarily Italian and Jewish" (*HM* 128 footnote). Some critics have associated Gerty with such turn-of-the-century social activists as Jane Addams.⁶³ As Jane Addams—or as Olive Chancellor in *The Bostonians*—who belongs to the class of leisure, Gerty meets girls of the working class through social work. She is situated at the edge of the society, and in the novel Gerty represents the "vagueness of boundary" (*Bostonians* 24), transcending the boundaries in terms of class and gender.⁶⁴

Gerty plays an important role in showing Lily a "different point of view" (*HM* 223) both from the society's and from Selden's. When Lily accidentally meets Gerty at a shop and hears about the lack of money for the Girls' Club, she gives Gerty a certain amount of money which she has kept for a dressing-case. Though Lily "was often bored by the relation of her friend's philanthropic efforts" (*HM* 88), she

Woman's obscure existence in a shabby corner of her culture may be somehow 'right,' it is so tenuous, so tentative, that it can hardly be said to foreshadow the coming of a utopia" (146).

⁶³ Maureen Howard suggests that "Gerty is the do-good maiden lady who would have been in the audience when Jane Addams lectured, making a point of the social responsibility which must be assumed by the fortunate" (149-50); on the other hand, Lawrence Buell argues that "not even Gerty goes so far as to live in a settlement house" and reads *The House of Mirth* as "a kind of retort in advance to Addams's belief" shown in *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (661).

⁶⁴ Acutely aware of the importance of Gerty's role in the novel, Lori Harrison-Kahan links Gerty as a New Woman and Rosedale as a Jew and views them as "queer" beings who threaten Lily's "whiteness." It is true that Gerty shows something outside the standard of the society (as Rosedale); it is also interesting to note that she shares with Lily the class standard of old New York. She does not like Lily's relationship with Rosedale. While she crosses the boundaries of class and gender, she observes the line between the old New York and the new New York, or the boundary of race.

acquires a different view from the one she had before: “These were young girls, like herself; some perhaps pretty, some not without a trace of her finer sensibilities. She pictured herself leading such a life as theirs—a life in which achievement seemed as squalid as failure—and the vision made her shudder sympathetically” (*HM* 88). She then is satisfied to find “a new interest in herself as a person of charitable instincts,” and “her horizon was enlarged by the vision of a prodigal philanthropy” (*HM* 88).

The narrator suggests that Lily’s philanthropy is dubious; after the sentences cited above, the narrator adds that Lily’s awakening as a philanthropist is merely a “sense of self-esteem which she naturally mistook for the fruits of altruism” (*HM* 88); later again, the narrator states that “Gerty Farish was not a close enough reader of character to disentangle the mixed threads of which Lily’s philanthropy was woven” (*HM* 119). In fact, while Lily’s visit to Gerty’s Girls’ Club functions in making her have a cross-class interaction with working girls, it also makes her realize the class distinction. Lily would share Olive Chancellor’s dislike of a “free union” (*Bostonians* 66); it is because “she looked down on them from above, from the happy altitude of her grace and her beneficence” that she “had felt an enlightened interest in the working-classes” when she visited the Girls’ Club, and when she comes to belong to the working-class herself, “the point of view was less interesting” (*HM* 224).

Nevertheless, it is still important that Lily has sympathy for other girls and is “drawn out of herself by the interest of her direct relation with a world so unlike her own” (*HM* 119). Gerty tells Selden that Lily “sat there, and laughed and talked with them [. . .] as if she liked it as much as they did” (*HM* 105).

In addition to Gerty's playing the role of introducing Lily to another world, she has a role in presenting another portrait of Lily from the one known to people in the society. At the Brys's party, Gerty tells Selden that Lily has visited the Girls' Club:

“Do you look at Mrs. George Dorset's pearls—I suppose the smallest of them would pay the rent of our Girls' Club for a year. Not that I ought to complain about the club; every one has been so wonderfully kind. Did I tell you that Lily had given us three hundred dollars? Wasn't it splendid of her? And then she collected a lot of money from her friends—Mrs. Bry gave us five hundred, and Mr. Rosedale a thousand. [. . .] Do you know she has been there with me twice?—yes, Lily! And you should have seen their eyes! One of them said it was as good as a day in the country just to look at her. And she sat there, and laughed and talked with them—not a bit as if she were being *charitable*, you know, but as if she liked it as much as they did. [. . .].” (HM 104-105)

Gerty reveals that Lily raised funds for the Girls' Club and made a visit twice. Lily's visit to the Girls' Club on the one hand strengthens the myth of the American Girl, for Lily is adored and seen as the ideal by the working girls of the Girls' Club. On the other hand, Lily's contribution to the Girls' Club is regarded as something different from her activity in the society. The life represented by Bertha Dorset with her gorgeous pearls (and the life Lily clings to) is vividly contrasted with the life Gerty spends working for her Girls' Club (the life Lily secretly joins). What is peculiar here, moreover, is that the information about Lily's contribution to the Girls' Club is disclosed not only to Selden but also to readers for the first time. The narrator did not

show any scene of Lily's visiting the Girls' Club. This may be attributed to Wharton's lack of knowledge about such clubs for working girls.⁶⁵ At the same time, the very point that the narrator does not describe scenes at the Girls' Club effectively suggests that the Girls' Club is situated outside of the society which the novel portrays and which Lily clings to.

Lily's experiencing another option for a girl and her relationship with Gerty are parallel to her decline in the society and to the deprivation of her status as the American Girl. While Lily starts to be rumored negatively in society, Lily's participation in Gerty's social activity drives Gerty to adore Lily all the more: "Gerty's affection for her friend—a sentiment that had learned to keep itself alive on the scantiest diet—had grown to active adoration since Lily's restless curiosity had drawn her into the circle of Miss Farish's work" (*HM* 119). Gerty adores Lily to such an extent that she has Lily's "recent photograph" in her room, which she praises with Selden as she did Lily's tableau vivant at the Brys: "The photograph was well enough—but to catch her as she had looked last night! Gerty agreed with him—never had she been so radiant. But could photography capture that light? There had been a new look in her face—something different; yes, Selden agreed there had been something different" (*HM* 123). "Something different" that both of them see in Lily may refer to an aspect of her which Selden finds appropriate for his "republic of the spirit"; at the same time, Lily's figure, which is "radiant" but without any accessories, can be seen as Lily as someone other than the American Girl of the Gilded Age,

⁶⁵ Mary Cadwalader Jones, Wharton's sister-in-law, wrote an essay on Working Girls' Clubs in 1894, however, and it is fairly possible that Wharton read the essay and had some knowledge about Girls' Clubs (*HM* 278 footnote).

though Lily herself regards her tableau vivant as the opportunity to restore her status in the society.

Meanwhile, Gerty, unlike Olive Chancellor, is not necessarily against the traditional role of women, and it is not to be overlooked that she regards herself as a “marriageable girl.” She recommends Lily to accept “a good man’s love” (*HM* 187) and also is good at housework herself. Though Lily regards Gerty as not in the least “marriageable,” she dreams of her own marriage to her cousin Lawrence Selden. At the wedding party of Miss Van Osburgh, Gerty confesses to Lily that she is excited to have dinner with Selden: “I am to dine with him at Sherry’s. I really feel as excited as if I were getting married myself!” (*HM* 71). At the Brys’, Gerty feels happy to be near Selden: “It may be that Selden’s nearness had something to do with the quality of his cousin’s pleasure” (*HM* 104). Even her adoration of Lily is linked with her happiness in sharing the feeling with Selden: “And it was so delightful that this higher degree of sympathy should be reached through their interest in Lily Bart!” (*HM* 119). Thus, Gerty is depicted as a “girl” who regards herself as “marriageable” in the heterosexual system.

Gerty’s dream of marriage to Selden, however, is broken at the very moment when she regards Lily as a firm basis of her relationship with Selden. She discovers that in the triangular relationship, it is not that Lily connects Selden and Gerty but that Gerty connects Selden and Lily: “He had come to talk to her of Lily—that was all! There had been a third at the feast she had spread for him, and that third had taken her own place” (*HM* 124); then, “She remembered, too, how Lily had talked of him—she saw herself bringing the two together, making them known to each other” (*HM* 128).

Just as Lily is shocked to see the decline of her appearance in front of the glass, Gerty sees her face in the little glass, and deplores her appearance being plain: “What right had she to dream the dreams of loveliness? A dull face invited a dull fate” (*HM* 128). Gerty even “wanted happiness—wanted it as fiercely and unscrupulously as Lily did, but without Lily’s power of obtaining it” (*HM* 128-9). Here can be found a different picture of Gerty from the one portrayed by Lily, who tells Selden that Gerty “likes being good, and I [Lily] like being happy” (*HM* 8). *The House of Mirth* is not only the story of the American Girl Lily Bart but also the story of another girl, Gerty Farish, who first situates herself in the heterosexual order as a “marriageable” girl but gives up her claim for heterosexual love in favor of sisterhood.

While the central contrast in the surface story lies between Lily’s relationship with Rosedale and with Selden—namely the contrast of the “Republic of the material” in the Gilded age with the idea of “the republic of the spirit”—another powerful contrast, or tension, emerges from underneath: the contrast between the heterosexual relationship and the strong sisterhood. Situated at the center of the novel, Chapters 13 and 14 of Book I are highly significant, raising tension and becoming paired. The two chapters start with a similar image of two girls’ waking up in a happy mood; in Chapter 13, “Lily woke from happy dreams to find two notes at her bedside” (*HM* 109), and in Chapter 14, “Gerty Farish, the morning after the Wellington Brys’ entertainment, woke from dreams as happy as Lily’s” (*HM* 118). In the two chapters, then, these girls’ happy dreams are broken; in Chapter 13, Lily’s happy recognition of her success at the Brys’ is undermined by the potential rape by Gus Trenor, and, in Chapter 14, Gerty’s happy dream about her union with Selden is

broken by the recognition of his love toward Lily. In both chapters, heterosexual relationships have a destructive power on the girls.

Chapter 13 of Book I shows a highly tensioned scene where the heterosexual relationship appears in the most violent and essential way. Elizabeth Ammons sees this chapter as central in the novel and regards Gus Trenor's "attempting to rape her [Lily]" as the epitome of the patriarchal system, which the world in the novel is based on: "The first book of Wharton's novel shows Lily's deviancy, her refusal to become the wife of Dillworth, Gryce, Selden, or Rosedale, and ends in a sexual confrontation in which the head of the entire economic and social system, its most powerful august patriarch—a man Wharton even names Augustus—literally tries to force Lily into submission" (*Argument* 34). Admitting that he is "not talking the way a man is supposed to talk to a girl" (*HM* 116), Gus quite openly suggests to Lily what he wants: "Hang it, the man who pays for the dinner is generally allowed to have a seat at a table" (*HM* 114). Twice he touches Lily, who totally rejects it: "He had taken her hand, half-banteringly, and was drawing her toward a low seat by the hearth; but she stopped and freed herself quietly" (*HM* 112); then, "His touch was a shock to her drowning consciousness. She drew back from him with a desperate assumption of scorn" (*HM* 116). Though deeply threatened, Lily manages to free herself from Gus's place. On her way home, then, she feels completely isolated and "expatriate" (*HM* 118). Fearing that "she must spend them [hours] alone, shuddering sleepless on her bed" (*HM* 117), she strongly wants "the darkness made by enfolding arms, the silence which is not solitude, but compassion holding its breath" (*HM* 118). What she thinks the next instant, then, is Gerty Farish: "Gerty! [. . .] if only she could feel the hold of

Gerty's arms while she shook in the ague-fit of fear that was coming upon her!" (*HM* 118).

While Lily refuses Gus's touching her, she asks Gerty to touch and hold her. A person who shares a bed with Lily is Gerty Farish:

There was but one bed in the little flat, and the two girls lay down on it side by side when Gerty had unlaced Lily's dress and persuaded her to put her lips to the warm tea. The light extinguished, they lay still in the darkness, Gerty shrinking to the outer edge of the narrow couch to avoid contact with her bed-fellow. Knowing that Lily disliked to be caressed, she had long ago learned to check her demonstrative impulses toward her friend. But tonight every fibre in her body shrank from Lily's nearness: it was torture to listen to her breathing, and feel the sheet stir with it. As Lily turned, and settled to complete rest, a strand of her hair swept Gerty's cheek with its fragrance. Everything about her was warm and soft and scented: even the stains of her grief became her as rain-drops do the beaten rose. But as Gerty lay with arms drawn down her side, in the motionless narrowness of an effigy, she felt a stir of sobs from the breathing warmth beside her, and Lily flung out her hand, groped for her friend's, and held it fast.

"Hold me, Gerty, hold me, or I shall think of things," she moaned; and Gerty silently slipped an arm under her, pillowing her head in its hollow as a mother makes a nest for a tossing child. In the warm hollow Lily lay still and her breathing grew low and regular. Her hand still clung

to Gerty's as if to ward off evil dreams, but the hold of her fingers relaxed, her head sank deeper into its shelter, and Gerty felt that she slept.

(*HM* 133)

In this highly tensioned scene, the close description of Gerty's perception is worth examining. In the beginning, Gerty tries at all costs to avoid touching Lily and at the same time is suffering from doing so. Gerty tells Selden later that she has a traumatic memory of kissing Lily and being rejected by her (Lily says, "Please don't kiss me unless I ask you to, Gerty"), and since then she has "always waited to be asked" (*HM* 211). Thus, Gerty's avoidance of touching Lily can be regarded as her fear of being rejected by Lily. Lying apart from Lily, however, Gerty is "torture[d]" by Lily's breathing, her movement, and "a strand of her hair" which "swept Gerty's cheek with its fragrance." Here Gerty's perception is described as highly sensuous, and the scene is as much sexually tense as the previous scene at the Trenors. Asked by Lily to hold her, Gerty touches Lily, "slipp[ing] an arm under her, pillowing her head in its hollow as a mother makes a nest for a tossing child" (*HM* 133). Their relationship is compared to a mother and a child in the end and the sensuous tone of this scene recedes; nevertheless, the intimate relationship between Gerty and Lily shows a strong sense of sisterhood, and "the warm hollow" that Gerty provides Lily eases the coldness which she refuses to be eased at the Trenors. Here, two girls' "happy dreams" which have been broken by men are replaced by the warm union of sisterhood. As the sense of brotherhood temporarily prevails over the heterosexual relationship at the scene of the Memorial Hall in *The Bostonians* and thus makes unstable the heterosexual system which the novel's plot seems to support, the sense of

sisterhood so intimate and so powerful in this scene in *The House of Mirth* overtakes the heterosexual order, on which the world in the novel is based.

Furthermore, Lily and Gerty's sisterhood here is connected with a larger sense of sisterhood, as Lily is compared to a girl of the working class, whom Gerty and her Girls' Club help. When Lily suddenly visits Gerty, the latter's first reaction to "the shining vision of Lily Bart" is "revulsion," since, just before Lily comes, Gerty "lay shivering, and hated her friend" (*HM* 129); however, "Gerty's compassionate instincts" prevail as Lily is now "simply some one who needed help" (*HM* 129). Moreover, Lily compares herself to a girl in Gerty's Girls' Club. She says to Gerty, "I am bad—a bad girl—all my thoughts are bad," and asks her about girls whom Gerty helps: "There are bad girls in your slums. Tell me—do they ever pick themselves up? Ever forget, and feel as they did before?" (*HM* 131). Eileen Connell, reading *The House of Mirth* in comparison with the historic situations of New York City Working Girls' Clubs, states that "the clubs invented a home that would both suit the needs of the twentieth-century working girl and, like Nettie Struther's flat, provide a space in which the bridging of class differences between women could be imagined" (564). Here the home of Gerty functions as a place with "vagueness of boundary" (*Bostonians* 24) in terms of class, gender, and sexuality. The sense of sisterhood, however, is shown only as temporary, and the next chapter shows Lily waking up the next morning with the "sense of physical discomfort" (*HM* 133). As if they feel guilty about their intimacy the previous night, Gerty "glance[s] shyly at Lily, asking in an embarrassed tone how she fe[els]" and Lily "answer[s] with the same constraint" (*HM* 134). Here the strong sisterhood—or the potential Boston Marriage—is

complexly shown both as an impossible alternative to the heterosexual relationship but still a possible one.

In the second half of the novel, Selden repeatedly suggests that Lily should live with Gerty:

“But with your income and Gerty’s—since you allow me to go so far into the details of the situation—you and she could surely contrive a life together which would put you beyond the need of having to support yourself. Gerty, I know, is eager to make such an arrangement, and would be quite happy in it—“

“But I should not,” Miss Bart interposed. “There are many reasons why it would be neither kind to Gerty nor wise for myself. [. . .] You will perhaps excuse me from giving you these reasons.” (*HM* 218)

Selden’s suggestion of the two women living together can be connected with the idea of the Boston marriage; in this respect, Lily’s options in the second half of the novel are not only to marry a rich man—either Dorset or Rosedale—or to marry Selden but also to have a Boston marriage with Gerty. Lily, however, rejects this idea, and decides to remain a marriageable American Girl. Lily suggests there are many reasons for her rejection, and, though she does not articulate them, one of the reasons might be her dislike of “close intimacy”: “She had resolutely refused Gerty’s offer of hospitality. Something of her mother’s fierce shrinking from observation and sympathy was beginning to develop in her, and the promiscuity of small quarters and close intimacy seemed, on the whole, less endurable than the solitude of a hall bedroom” (*HM* 224). In the story of Lily, she tries to observe the boundaries of race,

gender, class and also the boundary between “a girl” and “a married woman” (she finally returns money she owes Gus Trenor)—so she remains the American Girl. In addition, Wharton denies Lily’s possible success as a New Woman. Even if Lily wants to be independent, whether of men or of women, she cannot become a New Woman in the upper class who leads an independent life. When starting to work at Mme. Regina’s, Lily dreams of having “the green-and-white shop,” just as “[o]ther young ladies of fashion [who] had been thus ‘set-up,’ selling their hats by the mere attraction of a name and the reputed knack of tying a bow” (*HM* 221); nevertheless, Lily comes to learn that it is only a dream she cannot afford. Lily cannot become a middle-class New Woman who has a profession, and she instead becomes a working girl.

While Lily refuses to accept Gerty’s hospitality, their potential sisterhood union becomes essential in Gerty’s story. Gerty remembers the night she spent with Lily later in the novel:

She [Gerty] had not forgotten the night of emotion when she and Lily had lain in each other’s arms, and she had seemed to feel her very heart’s blood passing into her friend. The sacrifice she had made had seemed unavailing enough; no trace remained in Lily of the subduing influences of that hour; but Gerty’s tenderness, disciplined by long years of contact with obscure and inarticulate suffering, could wait on its object with a silent forbearance which took no account of time. (*HM* 209)

Here, from Gerty's point of view, the narrator describes that "she and Gerty had lain in each other's arms" whereas the narrator depicts that "Gerty silently slipped an arm under her [Lily], pillowing her head in its hollow as a mother makes a nest for a tossing child" (*HM* 133) in Chapter 13 of Book I. While the same-sex union is finally replaced by the image of the mother-child union in the latter, it is presented as more intimate in the former, and the emotional intimacy described here is much more powerful than any other relationships in the novel. "The sacrifice she [Gerty] had made," namely her giving up Selden for Lily, signifies that Gerty's feeling toward Lily prevails over that toward Selden: the union of sisterhood prevails over the heterosexual union in Gerty's story.

After the scene of the night Gerty spends together with Lily, Gerty remains a sisterly friend of Lily. When people get to know that Mrs. Peniston disinherits Lily, it is only Gerty, not Lily's relative, who stays with her. At the same time, Gerty, fully knowing that Lily "ha[s] no wish for the kind of help she could give" (*HM* 209), plays the role of bringing Lily and Selden together. Gerty frequently asks Selden to go and help Lily. Declaring, "I do ask you, then; I ask you because she once told me that you had been a help to her," Gerty asks Selden to "show her [Lily] the other side" of life instead of her (*HM* 211). At the ending, again, when Selden goes to Lily's flat, the door is "opened by Gerty Farish" (*HM* 252), and it is Gerty who lets Selden stay together with Lily: "She held his hand in hers a moment longer, and then, with a last look at the bed, moved silently toward the door. On the threshold she paused to add: 'You will find me downstairs if you want me'" (*HM* 253). Though Selden tries to detain her, saying, "But why are you going? She would have wished—," Gerty denies

it, saying, “No: this is what she would have wished—” (*HM* 253). Knowing what Lily would wish, she leaves Selden behind with Lily. Gerty thus gives up her own heterosexual love plot (and also her potential sisterhood union), and instead supports the others, and the last picture of the (lost) heterosexual romantic love at Lily’s deathbed is in a way directed by Gerty, who has a no less strong presence in the last chapter of the novel.

Though Gerty and Selden share their romantic idea about “the real Lily Bart,” Gerty comes to see through “the real” Lily. When Lily visits Gerty later in the novel, Gerty pays attention to Lily’s “pale face, in which the eyes sh[i]ne with a peculiar sleepless lustre” (*HM* 206). Lily hysterically declares, “My eyes are bright now because I’m so nervous—but in the mornings they look like lead. And I can see the lines coming in my face—the lines of worry and disappointment and failure!” (*HM* 207). When Lily closes her eyes, Gerty has “a startled perception of the change in her face—of the way in which an ashen daylight seemed suddenly to extinguish its artificial brightness” (*HM* 208). Here, the “nature” Gerty sees under Lily’s artificial mask is vividly contrasted with another “nature” that Selden sees at the beginning of the novel: “it was the same streak of sylvan freedom in her nature that lent such savour to her artificiality” (*HM* 12). Thus, Gerty sees the reality of the physical body of the American Girl, which Selden cannot see, and plays a role of relativizing Selden’s romantic eyes.

The ending provided in Chapter 14 of Book II portrays the parting of Selden from the dead Lily. To his eyes, the dead Lily has a “calm unrecognizing face, the semblance of Lily Bart,” and he hardly recognizes her as real: “That it was her real

self, every pulse in him ardently denied. Her real self had lain warm on his heart but a few hours earlier—what had he to do with this estranged and tranquil face which, for the first time, neither paled nor brightened at his coming?” (*HM* 252-3). Lily’s dead face even looks like a mask for him: “He stood looking down on the sleeping face which seemed to lie like a delicate impalpable mask over the living lineaments he had known. He felt that the real Lily was still there, close to him, yet invisible and inaccessible; and the tenuity of the barrier between them mocked him with a sense of helplessness” (*HM* 253). The mask Selden sees on Lily’s face is that of the American Girl; she dies, remaining a marriageable American Girl. For Selden, Lily’s death “apotheosizes her triumphant *tableau vivant*” (Wolff “Lily” 337). But is “the real Lily” whom Selden feels near him truly near him? The ending of the novel certainly shows, whether romantically or ironically, the picture of the heterosexual union of Selden and Lily, and, in this sense, “the conclusion allows *The House of Mirth* a traditional ‘marriage novel’ structure. If the expected ending was the marriage of the protagonists, then the scene of the lamenting Selden, kneeling near Lily’s dead body, is a satisfactory denouement—the marriage novel frustrated” (Wagner-Martin 127). But how much is the heterosexual relationship a fixed standard in the novel? While the silent union of Lily and Selden is situated at the end of the novel, the novel does have another ending: Lily’s dying scene through her own perception. Though the novel does not show the exact moment of Lily’s death, the story of Lily herself ends after Chapter 13 of Book II, after she falls into the eternal sleep. The final image presented at the end of Chapter 13, just before she falls asleep, is not the union of Lily

and Selden but that of Lily and the baby. As *The Bostonians* has two endings, *The House of the Mirth* has two endings.

Significantly, the contrast discussed above between Chapters 13 and 14 of Book I—the contrast between the heterosexual relationship and the strong sisterhood—is repeated again at the end of the novel, between the scene at Selden’s and the one at Nettie’s. Having decided finally to show Bertha the crucial letters and to marry Rosedale, Lily visits Selden on her way to the Dorsets. Looking at Lily’s serious face, Selden says, “You have something to tell me—do you mean to marry?”, and she admits, saying, “You always told me I should have to come to it sooner or later!” (*HM* 240). Meeting Selden, however, changes her mind, and her final decision is to burn the letters. Her decision of burning letters seems to show her love for Selden, her giving up living as the American Girl of the Gilded Age. Her disposal of the letters, however—and her giving up her potential marriage to Rosedale—does not necessarily lead to the union of Selden and Lily. At the end of the chapter, she says “Goodbye” to Selden and leaves his room, which seems to suggest the impossibility of having the “republic of the spirit” in the Gilded Age. The last illustration by Wenzell presents the scene of Selden’s library, where Lily gives him a final kiss (Figure 22), underlining the (failed) love plot of Lily and Selden.

The next chapter, then, shows that Lily on her way home accidentally meets Nettie, who Lily helped before through Gerty’s Girls’ Club, and the sisterhood union presented between Gerty and Lily before is repeatedly shown between Lily and Nettie. As Gerty’s “very heart’s blood passing in to her friend” (*HM* 209) when she holds Lily, Lily momentarily leans on Nettie, whose “thin shabby figure” is full of



Drawn by A. B. Wenzell.

"Goodbye," she said.—Page 66.

Figure 22. An illustration for *The House of Mirth* by A.B. Wenzell

(*Scribner's Magazine*, November 1905)

“hope and energy,” and gets energy from her: “[a] faint glow of returning strength seemed to pass into Lily from the pressure of the supporting arm” (*HM* 243). Again, as Lily gets warmth in Gerty’s home after visiting Gus Trenor’s cold home, she does so in Nettie’s house after visiting Selden’s cold house; while she says she is “very cold” in Selden’s library (*HM* 241), “[i]t was warm in the kitchen” at Nettie’s (*HM* 244). In this scene filled with warmth, a mother-child relationship portrayed in the union of Lily and Gerty is repeated in the union of Lily and Nettie’s child: “The child’s confidence in its safety thrilled her with a sense of warmth and returning life, and she bent over, wondering at the rosy blur of the little face, the empty clearness of the eyes, the vague tendrilly motions of the folding and unfolding fingers” (*HM* 245).

It may be meaningful that the baby is a girl. Nettie calls her baby Marry Anto'nette and dreams of her girl's growing up to be like Lily, who disagrees, saying, "Oh, she must not do that" (*HM* 246). While Nettie has the same standard as the society, where the American Girl like Lily is regarded as ideal, Lily does not believe in it and wants the baby to be a girl who is different from the "American Girl." Here Lily sees a different picture of a mother-child relationship from her own—or Wharton's; the girl is shown not as a social or artificial product but a natural product.

As Despina Korovessis argues, "[w]hat Lily seeks is a sense of community, a connection to her fellow human beings, and some sense of continuity with the past" (68). At Nettie's, Lily feels that "the surprised sense of human fellowship took the mortal chill from her heart" (*HM* 246) and "her first glimpse of the continuity of life had come to her that evening in Nettie Struther's kitchen" (*HM* 248). Lily's craving for "mysterious links of kinship" (*HM* 248), then, leads her to the meditation about her relationship with Selden, since Nettie's marriage shows an example of "[s]uccessful marriages based on love rather than material considerations" (Korovessis 67). In Lily's mind—or in her story—"mysterious links of kinship" should be brought by her possible union with Selden, which she cannot achieve. In this sense, it may be right that "[i]ronically, Wharton's 'solution' to the commodification of women within the consumer public sphere is to (re)confine them within the heterosexual economy of nineteenth-century domesticity" (Merish 256). Nevertheless, it is also worth noting that Nettie's husband George does not appear in the scene. What is highlighted instead is the relationship between Nettie and Lily and the one between Lily and Nettie's baby girl, whose birth Lily indirectly helps through

the sisterhood activity of Gerty's Girls' Club. In a symbolic sense, Lily participates in "the continuity of life" (*HM* 248) through sisterhood.

The scene of Gerty and Lily's sisterhood union in Chapter 14 of Book I is repeated not only in the scene at the Nettie's but also in the scene of Lily's death in Chapter 13 of Book II. In Chapter 14 of Book I, Lily, fearing that "she must spend them [hours] alone, shuddering sleepless on her bed" (*HM* 117), strongly wants "the darkness made by enfolding arms, the silence which is not solitude, but compassion holding its breath" and asks for Gerty's embrace (*HM* 118); in Chapter 13 of Book II, Lily, afraid of keeping sleepless and thinking that "darkness, darkness was what she must have at any cost," takes a drug which will ease her "as though an invisible hand made magic passes over her in the darkness" (*HM* 250). The contrast of coldness and warmth is repeated again just before Lily falls into the endless sleep:

She stirred once, and turned on her side, and as she did so, she suddenly understood why she did not feel herself alone. It was odd—but Nettie Struther's child was lying on her arm: she felt the pressure of its little head against her shoulder. She did not know how it had come there, but she felt no great surprise at the fact, only a gentle penetrating thrill of warmth and pleasure. She settled herself into an easier position, hollowing her arm to pillow the round downy head, and holding her breath lest a sound should disturb the sleeping child.

As she lay there she said to herself that there was something she must tell Selden, some word she had found that should make life clear between them. [. . .]

Slowly the thought of the word faded, and sleep began to enfold her. She struggled faintly against it, feeling that 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 flash 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 of 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. (*HM* 251)

Though Lily momentarily thinks about Selden, about the word she has to tell him but forgets, her meditation is overtaken by her sense of union with the baby. The last paragraph in the citation above resembles that of Chapter 14 of Book I: “Her hand still clung to Gerty’s as if to ward off evil dreams, but the hold of her fingers relaxed, her head sank deeper into its shelter, and Gerty felt that she slept” (*HM* 133). The final image of Lily is that of her sleeping in the warmth, which she feels at Nettie’s and Gerty’s. Considering that physical comfort is linked with Lily’s belonging to the society—or having money—in the novel, the point is highly important that Lily’s body feels comfortable in these two scenes, which are situated outside of the society to which Lily belonged and to which she wants to return. Furthermore, considering that the tense same-sex union of Gerty and Lily in their bed is replaced by the image of a mother-baby relationship in Chapter 14 of Book I, the image of mother-baby relationship at Gerty’s, Nettie’s, and Lily’s death bed can be seen as a transformed

version of the sisterhood relationship. Though the heterosexual relationship ostensibly prevails at the level of Lily's story, the strong sisterhood prevails as a subtext.

As critics have stated, the scene of Lily and Nettie's union is not necessarily presented as a positive solution. It is certain that Nettie embodies domesticity and "the continuity of life" (*HM* 248) that Lily cannot have; however, Nettie tries to imitate the class of leisure, calling her daughter "Marie Antoinette," and, in this respect, "Nettie's life also becomes a parody of its own imitation of upper-class life" (Kaplan 102). In addition, as Korovessis argues, "[i]t would seem a mistake [. . .] to idealize Wharton's account of working-class women in general" (72). Not only in the work-house but also in the restaurant, which is "full of women and girls," Lily is isolated: "Her eyes sought the faces about her, craving a responsive glance, some sign of an intuition of her trouble. But the sallow preoccupied women, with their bags and note-books and rolls of music, were all engrossed in their own affairs, and even those who sat by themselves were busy running over proof-sheets or devouring magazines between their hurried gulps of tea. Lily alone was stranded in a great waste of disoccupation" (*HM* 235). Wharton thus does not necessarily make the cross-class sisterhood a powerful solution to women's plight. And yet, the warm sisterhood unions between Lily and Nettie, and between Lily and Gerty, present a "different point of view" (*HM* 223), and, as Connell states, a sentimental tone in the scene of Lily's chance meeting with Nettie can be seen as restoring "the original function of sentimentalism" (589). Moreover, the sisterhood in this novel has something more than the Victorian sense of sentimental sisterhood. As mentioned before, the turn-of-the-century social work made possible a cross-class sisterhood through women's

clubs—namely “a home when out of work, or in need of rest” (*HM* 87). By the presence of Gerty’s Girls’ Club, the idea of sisterhood and home has a new meaning in the novel.

Taken together, Wharton discloses the artificial aspect of the category of “girl” by ironically playing with the typology of the forever young and beautiful American Girl in the portrait of Lily, and the stories of both Lily and Gerty are interwoven in the novel as two options for a “girl,” creating tension between the discourse of the heterosexual order and that of the strong sisterhood. *The House of Mirth* has two endings—Lily’s death from Lily’s perspective in Chapter 13 and Lily’s death from Selden’s perspective in Chapter 14—and Wharton leaves the question open about which of the heterosexual relationship or the sisterhood union prevails in Lily’s story. Though Lily’s heterosexual relationship with Selden seems to prevail as the novel ends with Selden kneeling down at Lily’s death bed and exchanging unspoken words with Lily, the warmth of sisterhood secretly functions as an alternative to the heterosexual relationship and makes unstable the (failed) American Girl plot. Facing Lily lying in the bed, Selden thinks that Lily’s “real self had lain warm on his heart but a few hours earlier” (*HM* 252-3); however, it is Nettie’s child who “the real Lily” is together with in her warm bed “a few hours earlier,” and it is in a mother-baby union—a transformed version of sisterhood union—that Lily falls asleep to death. If the last chapter shows the death of the “art” side of the American Girl Lily—she appears as a mask—Chapter 13 presents the death of the “nature” side of Lily, namely the “real Lily Bart.”

2. Two women and two ideas of “America” in *The Age of Innocence*

After the publication of *The House of Mirth*, Wharton’s American girls changed in relation both to social changes in America, and to changes in Wharton’s life. In *The Custom of the Country*, Wharton draws a caricature of the very typology of the American Girl of the New America, who takes advantage of the marriage market by reproducing girlhood and her “virgin innocence” (*Four Novels* 499) again and again through divorces. As Patterson states, Undine is “at once new species, new product, new technology, new money, new morality, and New Woman,” and her power “suggest[s] the power of an American nation arguably superior to Europe technologically and economically” (82, 84). Undine’s destructive power, which threatens old New York, presents both Wharton’s fear about the New America and her own self-consciousness as the former American Girl who, against the custom of old New York, divorces her husband in the same year she wrote *The Custom of the Country*.

When Wharton again deals with the old New York in *The Age of Innocence*, the issues examined in the figure of Lily Bart appear again in a different way in the contrast between two female characters—May Welland and Ellen Olenska. Though *The Age of Innocence* is set in the 1870s, when the old New York was not truly “doomed to rapid extinction with the advance of the invading race” (*Four Novels* 493), Wharton uses the typology of the American Girl that became very popular in the 1890s in the character of May Welland. Chiefly seen through Newland’s eyes, May is described as the American Girl produced by the society. She is introduced in the novel as “a young girl in white with eyes ecstatically fixed on the stage-lovers” (*AI*

5). As is illustrated in the little Edith in the opening of *A Backward Glance*, May is shown as a girl in white and situated in a heterosexual relationship. To Newland, May represents such abstract ideas as “whiteness, radiance, goodness” (AI 16), and, as Selden regards Lily as the product of the society, Newland sees May as such:

As he dropped into his armchair near the fire his eyes rested on a large photograph of May Welland, which the young girl had given him in the first days of their romance, and which had now displaced all the other portraits on the table. With a new sense of awe he looked at the frank forehead, serious eyes and gay innocent mouth of the young creature whose soul’s custodian he was to be. That terrifying product of the social system he belonged to and believed in, the young girl who knew nothing and expected everything, looked back at him like a stranger through May Welland’s familiar features; and once more it was borne in on him that marriage was not the safe anchorage he had been taught to think, but a voyage on uncharted seas. (AI 28)

His sense that May is “[t]hat terrifying product of the social system” is repeatedly found when he is “discouraged by the thought that all this frankness and innocence were only an artificial product” (AI 30). Viewing May as a completely social product, Newland sees her more as “a type rather than a person [. . .] as if she might have been chosen to pose for a Civic Virtue or a Greek goddess” (AI 115). The image of the tall girl May as a Civic Virtue precisely corresponds to such a statue as “The Republic” situated at the center of the White City.

While Wharton challenges the icon of the American Girl by illustrating the prolonged American Girlhood and showing the American girl's deteriorating body in *The House of Mirth* and by presenting the "reproduction" of the American Girl in *The Custom of the Country*, she discloses the artificiality of the idea of "girl" again in *The Age of Innocence* by making the American Girl unchanged after her marriage, blurring the boundary of a girl and a married woman in a different way from in previous works. The image of May does not change even after marriage, connected to the turn-of-the-century popular image of Diana, a virgin goddess. At the van der Luydens, before their marriage, "Archer saw May Welland entering with her mother. In her dress of white and silver, with a wreath of silver blossoms in her hair, the tall girl looked like a Diana just alight from the chase" (AI 42). The Diana image of May is repeated when Newland and May stay in England on their honeymoon, making May seem more "American": "Newland leaned back in his chair and smiled at her. She looked handsomer and more Diana-like than ever. The moist English air seemed to have deepened the bloom of her cheeks and softened the slight hardness of her virginal features" (AI 118). Then, her figure as Diana is most vividly illustrated at the scene of Newport: "In her white dress, with a pale green ribbon about the waist and a wreath of ivy on her hat, she had the same Diana-like aloofness as when she had entered the Beaufort ballroom on the night of her engagement" (AI 128). As if she were a Diana embodied, she wins the archery game. A similar scene to the opening scene at the opera appears after two years' marriage of May and Newland; "As on that evening, she was all in white; and Archer, who had not noticed what she wore, recognized the blue-white satin and old lace of her wedding dress" (AI 192). May's

girlhood does not end with her marriage, and here May appears as the American Bride in white. Observing a slight difference in her physical condition, Newland finds May unchanged as a “girl”:

Though May’s outline was slightly heavier, as her goddess-like build had foretold, her athletic erectness of carriage, and the girlish transparency of her expression, remained unchanged: but for the slight languor that Archer had lately noticed in her she would have been the exact image of the girl playing with the bouquet of lilies-of-the-valley on her betrothal evening. The fact seemed an additional appeal to his pity: such innocence was as moving as the trustful clasp of a child. (*AI* 192)

To Newland’s eyes, May is still a “goddess-like” and “girlish” child. May continues to be illustrated as the American Girl as a virgin goddess even after marriage, which serves to reveal that the idea of “girl” is not biological but artificial or cultural.

May is shown through Newland’s eyes as the perfect type of the American Girl as the artifact created by society—or “America’s Dream Girl” (Ammons “Cool Diana” 438)—and is vividly contrasted with Ellen Olenska, a European lady. In this novel, Wharton uses the typical contrast of the fair lady versus the dark lady in portraying May—who has “fair skin” (*AI* 115)—and Ellen—who is “bold [and] brown” (*AI* 21) and is literally called “the dark lady” by Winsett (*AI* 77). The contrast is clearly shown from the beginning, where while May is in white, Ellen wears “the dark blue velvet gown,” which is regarded as “unusual dress” (*AI* 7). Then, the fair/dark dichotomy is linked with the American/foreign dichotomy. Even when she is

a child, Ellen is compared to “a gipsy foundling,” whose clothing does not follow “the unalterable rules that regulated American mourning” (AI 38). Dale M. Bauer links the 1870s context and the 1920s context in the idea of bohemianism, pointing out “the connections Wharton makes between European immigration and the artistic and intellectual freedom that followed” and suggesting that Wharton “links Ellen to the fears of racial impurity” (478, 476); in fact, considering that Ellen is married to a Polish gentleman—not a Northern or Western European but an Eastern European—Ellen can be compared to a “new immigrant” in the late nineteenth century. In addition, Ellen is also linked with the Sexual Orient. When Newland first visits Ellen’s room, he finds it “foreign” (AI 45), connecting the room with the image of the Oriental. He feels “the scent of some far-off bazaar, a smell made up of Turkish coffee and ambergris and dried roses” (AI 45). Comparing Ellen’s room to Samarkand, Newland sees May and Ellen as a pair of opposites: “Far down the inverted telescope he saw the faint white figure of May Welland—in New York,” who embodies the WASP icon of the American Girl (AI 50).

Frequently referring to the contrast Wharton makes between American women and European women in *French Ways and Their Meaning*,⁶⁶ critics have read the

⁶⁶ In *French Ways and Their Meaning*, published in the year previous to the publication of *The Age of Innocence*, Wharton vividly contrasts the American woman and the Frenchwoman, claiming that the Frenchwoman is “grown up” (100) while “the average American woman is still in the kindergarten” (100-101). Wharton suggests that the relationship between “grown up” men and women is essential:

The reason why American women are not really “grown up” in comparison with the women of the most highly civilized countries—such as France—is that all their semblance of freedom, activity and authority bears not much more likeness to real living than the exercises of the Montessori infant. Real living [...] is a deep and complex and slowly-developed thing, the outcome of an old and rich social experience. [...] it has its roots in the fundamental things, and

contrast of May and Ellen as that of “the American child-woman” and “the European adult-woman/artist,” celebrating the latter. For example, Ammons suggests that May embodies “[t]he American child-woman who epitomizes her era’s ideal femininity” and that her characterization “emphasizes that the ideal is a constellation of qualities adults enjoy in children: gaiety, innocence, ignorance, acquiescence, dependence, affectionateness, and a decorous spontaneity” (*Arguments* 148); about Ellen, she argues that “America finds the creative woman dangerous *because* she is female and therefore ostracizes her” (“Cool Diana” 445). Michael Nowlin, seeing *The Age of Innocence* and *French Ways and Their Meaning* as “complementary cultural nationalist texts” (90), suggests that “[t]he revolutionary and conservative strands of Wharton’s cultural criticism [. . .] are represented most compellingly by Ellen Olenska and Newland Archer” (106). Also, referring to the title of the novel, *the Age of Innocence*, which is the title of Reynolds’s picture of a small girl, Orlando states that “[a]n important and especially damaging part of the myth of the American Girl is that she is, of course, a perpetual child” (190), while Ellen is “both a survivor and an artist,” being “a woman who, like Edith Wharton, lives her final days enjoying a rich, artistic life in France” (171).⁶⁷ While the contrast of “the American child-woman” and “the European adult-woman/artist” is the fundamental contrast of May and Ellen,

above all in close and constant and interesting and important relations between men and women. (101-102)

Here Wharton links the discourse of civilization with the issue of gender, and states that the basis of civilization should be “close and constant and interesting and important relations between men and women.”

⁶⁷ Gilbert and Gubar also link Ellen with Wharton; Ellen is “a dark lady who incarnates just the metamorphoses that this writer herself underwent in her passage from a provincial origin as ‘Pussy/Lily’ Jones, New York debutante, to a brilliant career as Edith Wharton, expatriate novelist” (167).

these two figures also complicate the dichotomy by presenting themselves momentarily as something different from their labels.

First, while Newland's eyes always sees May as "America's Dream Girl" (Ammons "Cool Diana" 438), May is wiser, stronger, and more modern than Newland realizes. May is not as insecure as Lily Bart, but has "a woman" in her like Mamie in *The Ambassadors*, who is "bridal—with never [. . .] a bridegroom to support it" (*NYE* XXII: 149). When Newland proposes that they advance the date of their wedding, May acutely asks whether it is because he is "not certain of continuing to care for" her, whether "there [is] someone else" (*AI* 92). Saying, "Let us talk frankly," May "seem[s] to grow in *womanly* stature and dignity" (*AI* 92, emphasis added):

She dropped back into her seat and went on: "You mustn't think that a girl knows as little as her parents imagine. One hears and one notices—one has one's feelings and ideas. And of course, long before you told me that you cared for me, I'd known that there was someone else you were interested in; every one was talking about it two years ago at Newport. And once I saw you sitting together on the verandah at a dance—and when she came back into the house her face was sad, and I felt sorry for her; I remembered it afterward, when we were engaged. (*AI* 93)

She discloses what is under the mask of the American Girl, and wants to know "the truth" (*AI* 93). May, moreover, recommends Newland break their engagement if he loves someone else: "I've wanted to tell you that, when two people really love each other, I understand that there may be situations which make it right that they should—

should go against public opinion. [. . .] and if there is any way . . . any way in which you can fulfill your pledge . . . even by her getting a divorce . . . Newland, don't give her up because of me!" (AI 93). May's opinion here that the individual should be superior to the society is totally different from the standard of the society, from what Newland has told Ellen—the view that "[t]he individual [. . .] is nearly always sacrificed to what is supposed to be the collective interest" in the New York society (AI 71). Though May refers only to Newland's past affair here, it is quite appropriate to consider that May indirectly refers to Newland's possible love for Ellen. Newland, however, would not tell "the truth." While Newland sees May as the "terrifying product of the social system" (AI 28), it is Newland who clings to the standard of the society and who makes May remain the American "Girl." Newland does not tell "the truth," and instead repeats his rather hypocritical argument about "each woman's right to her liberty" (AI 93), telling May not to submit "to another form of the same foolish conventionalities" in delaying their marriage (AI 94). Newland's not telling the truth extinguishes "the real May." She wears again the mask of the American Girl "full of happy tears," and "in another moment she seem[s] to have descended from her *womanly* eminence to helpless and timorous *girlhood*" (AI 94 emphasis added). It is significant that Wharton uses the words "woman" and "girl" in showing two different beings in May. Though Newland feels "too much disappointed at the vanishing of the new being" in May (AI 94), it is he that makes it vanish, and it does not appear again until the last moment of the novel when Newland gets to know she knew everything.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Closely examining the representation of May's eyes, Evelyn E. Fracasso argues that May "is a perceptive, strong-willed, and determined woman who develops into 'a person of great

Being more modern than she seems, May has a modern body, which shows a different kind of female body from the Victorian one. Mrs. Mingott finds that May's hand is larger than the standard: "Her hand is large—it's these modern sports that spread the joints—but the skin is white" (*AI* 20). The narrator indicates May's fitness to sports later again: "She was not a clever needle-woman; her large capable hands were made for riding, rowing and open-air activities; but since other wives embroidered cushions for their husbands she did not wish to omit this last link in her devotion" (*AI* 177). As a winner of the archery game at Newport, May has such physical strength and inclination toward sports, and thus is vividly contrasted with Newland, who is interested not in sports but in art and who spends much of his time reading books or visiting museums, which may suggest that he belongs to "an older society" (*HM* 53). The itinerary of their honeymoon is changed from what Newland originally planned, since "[h]er own inclination (after a month with the Paris dressmakers) was for mountaineering in July and swimming in August" (*AI* 118-19). For her, the trip is "merely an enlarged opportunity for walking, riding, swimming, and trying her hand at the fascinating new game of lawn tennis" (*AI* 119). Modern young women in America came to be interested in sports and athletics in the late nineteenth century and one of the most popular American Girl images from 1890 to 1910 was that of "the Outdoors Girl" (Banta *Imaging* 47-8); reflecting these modern trends (and also sharing some of Mamie's "quiet dignity that pulled things bravely together" [*NYE* XXII: 150]), May is portrayed as a more modern and powerful girl than Newland thinks.

depth' than Newland Archer could ever have imagined" (43).

Next, while May and Ellen are clearly contrasted by the America/foreign dichotomy, it is also worth noting that Ellen is not only Europeanized but also emphatically linked with “Americanness” in several scenes, where Ellen presents a different idea of American from what May embodies. On the one hand, Ellen plays in this novel a role of giving criticism and raising a question about the changes in America, asking, “Is there nowhere in an American house where one may be by one’s self?” (*AI* 83); again, saying, “It seems stupid to have discovered America only to make it into a copy of another country” (*AI* 146). On the one hand, “Paris represents freedom for both Ellen and Riviere” (Orlando 193); on the other hand, it is also significant that Ellen herself connects America with freedom. Discussing her wish of divorce, Ellen suggests that she has come back to America because she “want[s] to be free” (*AI* 69). Ellen regards America as something similar to Selden’s “the republic of the spirit,” where personal freedom is the most supreme goal (*HM* 55). Ellen says, “I want to forget everything else, to become a complete American again, like the Mingotts and Wellands” (*AI* 42). Ellen’s words here are highly ironic, however, since what Ellen means by the word “American” is totally different from what the Mingotts and Wellands embody. In *The House of Mirth*, Lily’s desire to have what Daisy Miller represents as Americanness—such as personal freedom and the neglect of social convention—is seen as her foreignness; then, in *The Age of Innocence*, Ellen Olenska’s desire to have freedom and independence makes her a “foreigner.”⁶⁹ As

⁶⁹ It is also significant to note that those women who are independent enough to possibly subvert the conventional system (not only Ellen but also Catherine Mingott) are linked with foreignness. For example, Catherine Mingott’s house is described as follows: “Her visitors were startled and fascinated by the foreignness of this arrangement, which recalled scenes in French fiction, and architectural incentives to immorality such as the simple American had never dreamed of” (*AI* 19).

Daisy is blamed for her going out with Giovanelli, Ellen is blamed for her being “seen walking up Fifth Avenue this afternoon with him [Beaufort] by the whole of New York” (AI 26); also she neglects the “[e]tiquette” which requires her to “wait, immovable as an idol, while the men who wished to converse with her succeeded each other at her side” (AI 41). Such Daisy-Miller-like qualities of Ellen, then, are categorized as “foreign” by the society. Mrs. Welland tells about Ellen’s sensational debut, which deviates from the standard, saying, “That must have been at least twelve years ago; and since then Ellen has never been to America. No wonder she is completely Europeanized” (AI 90).

The issue of American freedom is shown in a more essential way in the scene, where Newland says, “Countess Olenska thought she would be conforming to American ideas in asking for her freedom,” to which Mrs. Welland answers, “That is just like the extraordinary things that foreigners invent about us” (AI 90). Here, the Jamesian idea of American freedom is reconsidered and modified in a more realistic way. Ellen is “foreign” in having a very idealistic conception of what “freedom” means to Americans. This point is highlighted again when M. Riviere, a Frenchman who helped Ellen escape from her husband, tells Newland that he finds Ellen essentially “American”: “*Tenez*—the discovery, I suppose, of what I’d never thought of before: that she’s an American. And that if you’re an American of *her* kind—of your kind—things that are accepted in certain other societies, or at least put up with as part of a general convenient give-and-take—become unthinkable, simply unthinkable” (AI 154). Here, a foreigner Riviere presents his idealistic notion of American morality that would be called “just like the extraordinary things that

foreigners invent about us” (AI 90) by Mrs. Welland. In *The Age of Innocence*, Wharton denies in quite a realistic and ironical way the possibility of the Tocquevillian (or Jamesian) idea of America.

In the end, the society of New York publicly brands Ellen as a “foreigner” at the farewell party: “It was only at an entertainment ostensibly offered to a ‘foreign visitor’ that Mrs. van der Luyden could suffer the diminution of being placed on her host’s left. The fact of Madame Olenska’s ‘foreignness’ could hardly have been more adroitly emphasized than by this farewell tribute” (AI 200). Ellen and Newland are made into “lovers in the extreme sense peculiar to ‘foreign’ vocabularies,” which should be cleared (AI 200). Ellen’s wish to “pass herself off as Ellen Mingott” (AI 74)—or as an “American girl” who could replace May—is not allowed and she is forced to remain as Countess Olenska—or as a “European lady”—whose “foreign syllables” shows it as “an unlikely name for a New York telegraph office” (AI 167). Taken together, May and Ellen, who form the solid dichotomy of “the American child-woman” and “the European adult-woman/artist,” make it blurred at the same time by presenting themselves as something different from what others label them, which serves to raise a question about the ideas (or the boundaries) of “girl” and “America.”

In the penultimate chapter of the novel, as the physical deterioration breaks the fantasy of the American Girl in *The House of Mirth*, what ends May’s girlhood is the change in her body: her pregnancy. May’s body breaks the icon of the American Girl, which is linked with the images of virgin and bride, in a different way from Lily’s. Suggestively, May’s white wedding dress is torn and becomes dirty the night when

she tells her husband that she is pregnant. As in *The House of Mirth*, the baby plays an important part at the end of *The Age of Innocence*, though in quite a different way. While the baby serves to connect two women and to create a sense of sisterhood in *The House of Mirth*, the baby serves to part two women and to strengthen the marital relationship in *The Age of Innocence*. In the latter novel, the text no longer shows the possibility of a strong sisterhood's subverting the heterosexual order. While Lily Bart dies holding an imaginary baby, May gets power to change the situation by having a baby. May succeeds in urging Ellen to return to Europe and in dissuading Newland from traveling abroad and going away from her, and finally "her blue eyes [were] wet with victory" (AI 206). The "continuity of life" (HM 248) is not brought by sisterhood any more in *The Age of Innocence*; it is presented through the elite family of the white, Anglo-Saxon America of the Progressive Era.

Considering that May has an active, strong body (which is quite different from Lily's declining body), it is worth noting that the name of Theodore Roosevelt appears in the novel as one of the most important friends of Newland. In his famous speech in 1899, "The Strenuous Life," Roosevelt emphasized the importance of physical health in America, declaring that "a healthy state can exist only when the men and women who make it up lead clean, vigorous, healthy lives" (Roosevelt 756). Then, he established an ideal vision of the American family in the progressive America: "The man must be glad to do a man's work, to dare and endure and to labor; to keep himself, and to keep those dependent upon him. The woman must be the housewife, the helpmeet of the homemaker, the wise and fearless mother of many healthy children" (Roosevelt 756). In the last chapter of *The Age of Innocence*,

Roosevelt, the Governor of New York (just when he gave the speech, “The Strenuous Life”), comes to Newland’s house and urges Newland to participate in politics:

“Hang the professional politician! You’re the kind of man the country wants, Archer. If the stable’s ever to be cleaned out, men like you have got to lend a hand in the cleaning” (AI 207). Newland then becomes a member of the State Assembly and in a way participates in “shaping the new nation” (Nowlin 106). Thus, May, getting pregnant, restores her marital union with her husband and contributes to forming such an American family as serves the duty demonstrated by Theodore Roosevelt. At the same time, however, this ending of forming the American Family is not necessarily celebrated by Wharton. The narrator reveals that Newland is not reelected, and wonders if he is an appropriate man: “Archer, as he looked back, was not sure that men like himself *were* what his country needed, at least in the active service to which Theodore Roosevelt had pointed” (AI 207). In other words, Newland, being “a contemplative and a dilettante” (AI 207) and being attracted by a European lady, cannot completely become “Mr. Mann,” who should lead what Roosevelt called the “strenuous life” in the progressive America.

Meanwhile, a “different point of view” (HM 223), which is examined through Gerty’s Girls Club in *The House of Mirth*, is shown in a different way through Ellen’s engagement in art in the 1920 novel. While Ellen can be seen as a New Woman who wants to get divorced and to be independent from her husband, Wharton distances Ellen from joining social reform but makes her an independent artist. After coming back to New York as a married woman, Ellen’s deviancy from social norms is not only shown in her request of divorce and in her neglect of social convention but also

in her living in “*des quartiers excentriques*” (AI 47), the place called “a ‘Bohemian’ quarter” (AI 65), which is situated outside of the society: “Beyond the small and slippery pyramid which composed Mrs. Archer’s world lay the almost unmapped quarter inhabited by artists, musicians and ‘people who wrote’” (AI 64). Ellen, who belongs to it, is categorized as “Bohemian”: “It was incredible, but it was a fact, that Ellen, in spite of all her opportunities and her privileges, had become simply ‘Bohemian’” (AI 158). As Nowlin points out, “the term ‘Bohemian’ as applied to a denizen of lower New York suggests Wharton’s familiarity with the Greenwich Village intellectual scene that had gained notoriety by 1919” (90), and the Greenwich Village, which was the area of artists of high culture in the nineteenth century, became the center of radical reform movements including the women’s movement in the 1910s. Wharton, then, makes Ellen leave a “Bohemian” part of New York before it was full of “reforms and ‘movements,’ [. . .] fads and fetishes and frivolities” (AI 211). Ellen’s asking for a divorce could itself lead to her involvement in the women’s movement at the turn of the century; instead of making Ellen work for radical reforms in America, Wharton makes her a different kind of a New Woman from a social activist by making her a custodian of art in France. Here can be found the nature of Wharton’s engagement with what is called “feminism”; while her works function as a powerful critique of the romantic fantasy regarding women and of limitations on women’s lives in America, she distances her characters from the radical women’s movement of the 1910s.

Taken together, Wharton ironically and critically plays with the icon of the American Girl created by turn-of-the-century image-makers, disclosing the artificial nature of the notion of “girlhood.” In the two novels examined in this chapter, the American Girl plot and the New Woman plot are intertwined and also the Jamesian idea of America is juxtaposed with the turn-of-the-century idea of progressive and materialist America, which serves to raise a question about the idea of “America” as well as the idea of “girl. In *The House of Mirth*, the story of Lily is intertwined with that of Gerty, creating a kind of double-plot and showing plural options for both girls. Portraying the failed love plot between Lily and Selden, Wharton seems to explore half unconsciously, or secretly, the potential option for the American girl to be a New Woman who lives for sisterhood instead of seeking a conventional marriage. In *The Age of Innocence*, however, there is no more a possibility of a strong sisterhood subverting the heterosexual relationship, and the novel presents in an ironical way the perfect American Girl story through May in the progressive era. Also, in these two works, Lily and Ellen present the Jamesian idea of America; however, in the “American” society portrayed by Wharton, the Jamesian idea of a Tocquevillian America no longer prevails, labeled as “foreign.” Lily cannot survive the new America with her morals and desire for freedom, and Ellen, claiming “American” freedom, is made a “foreigner” and finally leaves America.

In the next chapter, I will deal with Willa Cather’s pioneer novels, where her “not-American” girls revise the American Girl plot and also present Cather’s idea of America. Sharing the Tocquevillian idea of the American girl with James and Wharton, Cather’s “not-American” girl novels reflect more the situation of 1910s

America, and Cather negotiates the American Girl story and the New Woman story in a different way from James and Wharton.

Chapter Four: Willa Cather's "Not-American" Girls

While the Jamesian idea of America—or the Tocquevillian democracy consisting of freedom and individualism—is shown in Edith Wharton's novels as the foreignness of the American girls, the same quality is represented by "foreign" girls in cosmopolitan America in Willa Cather's works. As more and more immigrants came to the United States around the turn of the century, the cosmopolitan world had come to be presented not only outside America but also inside America, and "[a]n immediate consequence of the new waves of immigration was an increase in the anxious theorizing needed to support the American Girl as the WASP icon" (Banta *Imaging* 113). Cather, in contrast, displays a negative attitude toward the assimilating and incorporating movement of the nation. As recent critics have variously discussed, Cather's pioneer novels are more than nostalgic novels of the pioneer days but are something closer to a reaction to the turn-of-the-century social and cultural contexts,⁷⁰ presenting the idea of cultural pluralism in opposition to the turn-of-the-century homogeneous ideology. Cather's version of America shares to a certain extent the idea James and Wharton conceived of what "American civilization" should be, enriched by the cultural influence of European civilization, and her pluralist idea of America resonates with those developed by such thinkers of the time as Horace M. Kallen and Randolph Bourne, the latter of whom was an acquaintance of Cather's.⁷¹

⁷⁰ See, for example, Michelle Ann Abate, Marilee Lindemann *Willa Cather*, Ann Moseley, Tim Prchal, and Guy Reynolds.

⁷¹ Bourne considerably liked *O Pioneers!* and was eager to read *The Song of the Lark*, about which Cather talked at a publisher's lunch (Sergeant 130-31). In presenting the multicultural, pluralist America, Cather's immigrant novels can be contrasted with such texts as Mary

In “Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot” (1915), Kallen states that “‘American civilization’ may come to mean the perfection of the cooperative harmonies of ‘European civilization,’” (No. 2591, 220), and, in “Trans-national America” (1916), Bourne points out the failure of assimilation, or Americanization, and suggests that in an essential sense “America is transplanted Europe [. . .] that has not been disintegrated and scattered in the transplanting as in some Dispersion” (282).

Cather’s interest in the multicultural idea of America can be partly attributed to the fact that she was in a sense an immigrant from Virginia, experiencing a kind of “Americanization” and retaining her Old World heritage after moving to Nebraska. Cather’s house in Red Cloud was “a *Virginia* household,” where they “took a Virginia newspaper, cooked and organized the household work Southern style, preserved Southern stories and relics (including a Confederate flag, sword, and uniform)” (Romines 277), similar to *Ántonia*’s Bohemian household shown in the end of *My Ántonia*. Also, Cather herself experienced a kind of “Americanization” when she tried to abandon her own Southern accent after she moved to Nebraska and started to go to school in Red Cloud; she “became aware at once that her speech was different from that of the other children, and hastened to get rid of her slight Southern accent” (Lewis 18). Cather’s effort to suppress her Southern accent, however, coincides with her starting to use her middle name “Sibert,” her maternal Southern family name (Lewis 19). In this seemingly inconsistent behavior, Cather seems to

Anton’s *The Promised Land*, which was published in the same year as *O Pioneers!* and which illustrates positively the process of Americanization of an immigrant girl. Immigrant novels by two writers make a striking contrast, suggesting that the issue of Americanization (or its failure) was an essential problem in the 1910s, and Cather, through the portraits of “Not-American” girls, presents her idea of the cosmopolitan America as her opinion about the controversial issue.

have tried to retain her Southern roots and at the same to hide them. From the gap between the standard of the (Northern) American and the manners she brought from her Old World may derive Cather's concept of multiculturalism and her nostalgic celebration of immigrant heroines' possessing of their Old World culture, which is at the same time juxtaposed with other characters' difficulty of bridging the Old World and the New World.⁷²

This chapter will examine Cather's "not-American" girl stories, investigating the ways in which Cather's girls revise the archetypal American Girl and the homogeneous idea of America she embodies.⁷³ The chapter first briefly deals with two of Cather's early short stories, "Tommy, the Unsentimental" (1896) and "The Profile" (1907), examining how "American" girls in these stories deviate from the model of the American Girl. Next, this chapter will examine Cather's earlier novels, *O Pioneers!* (1913) and *The Song of the Lark* (1915), where such "not-American" girls as Alexandra and Thea successfully transcend boundaries of nation and gender and present a modernized model of the American Girl story, making her works

⁷² For more on Cather's Old World connection, see Ann Romines and Joyce McDonald. Also, Anne Goodwyn Jones and Tomoyuki Zettsu explore the presence of Cather's Southern roots in her novels such as *My Ántonia* and *The Lost Lady*. Lisa Marcus, discussing Cather's identification with her uncle, asserts that Cather came to avoid the link with her uncle as a Confederate soldier; Cather "rewrites him [her uncle]" as a Unionist soldier in the story, "The Namesake" (1907), and cut the poem, "The Namesake" (1902) from a revised version of *April Twilights* in 1923 (107-8).

⁷³ Recent criticism has developed arguments about Cather's versions of American girls/women from various perspectives. For example, Patterson argues that the exclusive characteristic of Cather's New Woman is gender transgression, discussing how Cather's heroines transgress gender normativity; then, Abate considers the issues of gender and nation together, paying attention to a gender-bending tomboy figure and exploring the way in which tomboyism had been linked with whiteness and Americanness, argues that in Cather's culturally pluralist America immigrant heroines' tomboyism helps them present Americanness. This chapter aims to contribute to the development of these arguments by examining girlhood as a site where plural options create tension—whether to marry or not, or whether to be American or not—and by investigating how the two ideas of "America" are shown in Cather's girls.

something different both from the ordinary American Girl novels and from the turn-of-the-century New Woman novels. The main part of the chapter will focus on another “not-American” girl novel, *My Ántonia* (1918). The novel has a complex structure with two narrators, whose paired portraits of “girls” create various tensions—between Ántonia and Lena and between Ántonia and Mrs. Burden—and, with references to the 1910s social situation in America, the novel becomes something more than a nostalgic memoir of late-nineteenth-century pioneer days and the mythic celebration of the “not-American” girl. Cather has something in common with Wharton, living as a New Woman though not getting involved in radical women’s movements,⁷⁴ and her dual attitude toward New Womanhood can be traced in the portrait of another “Bohemian girl” in the 1918 novel.

⁷⁴ From both the contemporary and today’s critics, Cather has been seen as a New Woman. Jeanette Babour wrote in *Pittsburg Press* in 1897 about Cather, a “woman editor” of the *Home Monthly*, saying that she was “such a thoroughly up-to-date woman she certainly should be mentioned among the pioneers in woman’s advancement” (*Willa Cather in Person* 2); also, critics such as Ammons, Gilbert and Gubar have regarded Cather as a New Woman, pointing out that Cather made a living as a professional writer, remained single, and lived with her female friends, namely having a “Boston Marriage.” While Cather herself lived as a New Woman, she distanced herself from the so-called women’s movement, which proceeded more and more powerfully in the 1910s. Elizabeth Sergeant remembers her initial encounter with Cather at the office of *McClure’s Magazine*, which was “the best of the popular ‘uplift’ magazines in the reforming period” and was evaluated by social workers; instead of finding the type of hard-looking working woman she had expected, Sergeant met an open, warm, and boyish figure with “[n]o trace of the reforming feminist” (Sergeant 31, 33). Also, while Cather celebrates some New Women figures, she shows a negative view toward the so-called New Woman novels and toward the women’s movement. In 1894, Cather severely criticized Sarah Grand’s *The Heavenly Twins*, a New Woman novel about the woman’s rights question, calling it “atrocious.” Also, in a book review in the *Leader* on April 8, 1898, she gave a fairly acidic comment on the second volume of the *Woman’s Bible* edited under the direction of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Cather criticizes “the temerity of these estimable ladies,” pointing out their lack of linguistic or theological learning (*The World and the Parish* 539). In rejecting Stanton’s emphasizing on woman’s plight, Cather seems to sympathize more with Emma Churchman Hewitt, whose essay Cather as an editor situated next to “Tommy, the Unsentimental” in the *Home Monthly*; in the essay titled “What Relation Does Woman Bear to the Present,” Hewitt argues that there had been women who could be categorized as New Women before the phrase as such appeared, and strongly rejects the emphasis on “woman,” stating that “[t]he women of to-day who are really ‘advanced’ have sunk all idea of ‘woman’s

1. Cather's portraits of the "American" girl in her early stories

Written before pioneer novels with immigrant heroines, two early short stories deal with "American" girls, where Cather challenges the model of the American Girl in various ways. First, in "Tommy, the Unsentimental" (1896), Cather focuses on the transition from girlhood to womanhood of the American girl. The heroine Tommy has business ability, is "scarcely girlish," and has "the lank figure of an active half grown lad" ("Tommy" 6). As a modern and more masculine version of Jo March in *Little Women*, she is a tomboy with a masculine nickname and, with "a peculiarly unfeminine mind," she identifies herself not with domestic women but with professional men; Tommy "kn[ows] almost no women, because in those days there were few women in Southdown who were in any sense interesting, or interested in anything but babies and salads," and instead sees "plenty of active young business men and sturdy ranchers" as "her own kind" ("Tommy" 6). Tommy then goes to school in the East and comes back with "a girl she had grown fond of at school, a dainty, white languid bit of a thing, who used violet perfumes and carried a sunshade" ("Tommy" 7). Linking Tommy's friendship with Jessica with sexual transgression, people in the town see it as dangerous: "The Old Boys said it was a bad sign when a rebellious girl like Tommy took to being sweet and gentle to one of her sex, the worst sign in the world" ("Tommy" 7). Though there is no exact description of Tommy's being "sweet and gentle" to Jessica, their sisterhood friendship is presented as something that possibly subverts the gender norms of society. Tommy's deviation from the conventional gender norms culminates at the scene when she rides a

rights'" (6).

bicycle—the emblem of the New Girl—at high speed to go and help her friend Jay stop the run on his bank, and Jessica, who has asked Tommy to take her, gets too tired to follow her on their way to the destination:

It flashed upon Miss Jessica that Tommy was not only very unkind, but that she sat very badly on her wheel and looked aggressively masculine and professional when she bent her shoulders and pumped like that. But just then Miss Jessica found it harder than ever to breathe, and the bluffs across the river began doing serpentines and skirt dances, and more important and personal considerations occupied the young lady.

(“Tommy” 7)

Critics have read this scene as sexually charged, presenting “the potential if not the actuality of Tommy’s sexuality” (Patterson 159).⁷⁵ Riding on the road which crosses “the big Divide” (“Tommy” 7), then, functions in making both of the girls recognize they are different. When Tommy rejects Jessica’s plea to stop and drink water in the middle of the ride, Jessica for the first time realizes that Tommy is a different kind of girl from her. While Jessica finds Tommy “aggressively masculine and professional,” the narrator calls Jessica “the young lady” though she was called a “girl” or “Miss Jessica” earlier.⁷⁶ At the same time that Jessica finds Tommy “masculine,” Tommy fully understands that Jessica comes with her not because she cherishes their

⁷⁵ Regarding Tommy’s sexuality in relation to this scene, see also Judith Butler 158-59.

⁷⁶ Moreover, the change can be found in the way Jessica calls Tommy. Before they started, Jessica called her friend “Theodosia”: “O, Theodosia, can’t I go with you? I must go!”; then, “O, Theodosia, I can do anything now!” (“Tommy” 7). During a trip to a neighboring town, however, she calls Tommy not “Theodosia” but “Tommy”: “‘O, Tommy, I can’t,’ panted Miss Jessica, dismounting and sitting down in a little heap by the roadside. ‘You go on, Tommy, and tell him—tell him I hope it won’t fail, and I’d do anything to save him’” (“Tommy” 7). Here, Tommy is no longer her female friend “Theodosia” but is changed to the masculine “Tommy.”

sisterhood union and never because she is her kind—namely a girl becoming a New Woman—but because Jessica loves Jay, and feels a huge gap between them: “Poor Jess, anything but the one thing he needs. Well, *your kind* have the best of it generally, but in little affairs of this sort *my kind* come out rather strongly. We’re rather better at them than at dancing. It’s only fair, one side shouldn’t have all” (“Tommy” 7 emphasis added). Before they started, Tommy said, “Of course, we’re his only chance” (“Tommy” 7), using “we” to refer to Jessica and her; however, in the citation above, “we” does not refer to Jessica and Tommy any more. After she successfully deals with the problem at the bank, Tommy urges Jay to marry Jessica. She articulates the difference between Jessica and her as being “essentially romantic” and being not romantic—or, the sentimental and the unsentimental—and says, “as soon as it is convenient, Jay, I wish you’d marry her and be done with it, I want to get this thing off my mind” (“Tommy” 7). Though Jay reminds her of his proposing to *her* before she went to school (the situation is similar to the case of Jo and Laurie, whose proposal makes Jo leave for New York), she would not listen and insists they cannot because they are “grown up”: “Now, see here, Jay Ellington, we have been playing a nice little game, and now it’s time to quit. One must grow up sometime” (“Tommy” 7). Taken together, the story symbolically presents the transition from girlhood to womanhood, juxtaposing two options for a “girl”; on the one side of the “Divide,” one girl becomes “a young lady” who is to be married after a period of free time as Christy suggests in his book, *The American Girl*; the other girl becomes a New Woman and remains single. While the tomboy Jo marries in the end in *Little Women*, there is no scene which expects Tommy’s marriage in “Tommy: the

Unsentimental”; this even more vividly shows Tommy’s deviancy from the model of the American Girl.

“Tommy, the Unsentimental” was published in the August issue (1896) of the *Home Monthly*, of which Cather herself was an editor. Originally named the *Ladies’ Journal*, the *Home Monthly* was clearly an imitation of the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, and Cather rather disappointedly reported that it was “mostly home and fireside stuff about babies and mince pies” (Woodress 77). Considering this characteristic of the magazine, Cather’s story about an “unsentimental” tomboy/New Woman can be seen as a counterpoint to the sentimental and conventional mood of the magazine⁷⁷; at the same time, this story is not necessarily subversive in that Tommy gives up her relationships both with Jessica and with Jay and that Tommy identifies herself with men. As Judith Butler suggests, Tommy has to pay “the price of cross-identification,” namely, “the price of identifying with the *place* of the father” (161), and, in this respect, the story “remains in accord with the socially conservative editorial goals of the magazine” (Patterson 157). Tommy in a way stabilizes the “separate spheres,” in terms not only of gender but also of race and ethnicity. Patterson suggests that the

⁷⁷ In the next issue of the *Home Monthly*, in September, Cather published an essay titled “Two Women the World Is Watching.” In this article, Cather introduces two prominent female figures, Mrs. William McKinley and Mrs. William Jennings Bryan. Cather describes Mrs. McKinley’s development in youth: “After her return from abroad she became cashier in her father’s bank in Canton, Ohio, though that was rather before the advent of the business woman, and certainly before the ‘New Woman’ was dreamed of” (*The World and the Parish* 309). Mrs. McKinley’s life depicted here is closely linked with the image of Tommy in Cather’s story. Also, Cather celebrates Mrs. Bryan, who “organized the Lincoln Sorosis and has been an active worker in the State Federation of Woman’s Clubs” (*The World and the Parish* 312). Cather did participate in women’s clubs in Pittsburgh around the time when she wrote “Tommy.” She was invited to women’s club, asked to talk about Carlyle or about other things; club women, however, asked Cather so often to join them that Cather gradually felt distracted by them, and later she came to make poignant comments on “the futility of women’s clubs and the efforts of their members to acquire quick and painless culture” (Woodress 78).

issue of gender is replaced by that of ethnicity in this story, arguing that “Cather displaces Tommy’s dangerous sexual desire [. . .] through a series of regional and ethnic codes, which help to write New Woman desire as both a necessary performance in a western landscape and a safer idiosyncratic alternative than angry Bohemians with a dangerous group consciousness” (159); moreover, the issue of gender transgression can be seen as intertwined with that of racial transgression, both making unstable the “white, Anglo-Saxon, hetero-sexual America.” Tommy serves to make “separate spheres” stable—fixing the lines between the masculine and the feminine, between the immigrants and the native-born Americans, the sentimental and the unsentimental, between “them” and “us.” She becomes a matchmaker, promoting heterosexual marriage, and “ma[kes] a man of” Jay (“Tommy” 7), who has been a dandy, effeminate boy with a “white carnation in his buttonhole” (“Tommy” 6); in addition, she saves Jay and his bank from the group of Bohemians rushing to the bank with a possible threat of subverting the system. The drive works in two directions in the story: Tommy deviates from gender norms at the same time that she contributes to make the boundaries stable in terms both of gender and of ethnicity. Thus, the two poles are separated, and girls’ choice—whether to marry and become a wife/mother or to be a New Woman and remain single—is regarded as an “either-or” matter in Cather’s “American” girl story.

Next, Cather challenges the icon of the American girl in a different way in “The Profile” (1907). In the story, Aaron Dunlop, an American portrait painter in Paris, marries a rich American girl named Virginia. A daughter of “the Californian wheat empire” (“Profile” 139), she is a rich, white, young, and independent American

girl, and likes everything new; she is a perfect beauty except that she has a scar on her cheek. After the marriage, they have a girl named Eleanor but Virginia does not take care of her, and, when Virginia's cousin, whose name is also Eleanor, comes to visit them, Dunlop has a warm feeling toward the elder Eleanor. One night Dunlop mentions the scar to Virginia for the first time and Virginia leaves him; the next day, Dunlop comes back home to find that there was an explosion and both Eleanors got burned. After divorcing Virginia, Dunlop marries the elder Eleanor, who now has a scar on her face.

In this story, Cather breaks the type of American Girl in two ways: the heroine has a physical deformity and her scar embodies a traumatic memory of the portrait painter. Half of Virginia's face shows the typical image of American Girl: "What he [Dunlop] did see was a girlish profile, unusually firm for a thing so softly colored; oval, flower-tinted, and shadowed by soft, blonde hair that wound about her head and curled and clung about her brow and neck and ears" ("Profile" 137). The story is accompanied by illustrations by F. Walter Taylor, one of which shows a Gibson-Girl-like profile of Virginia (Figure 23). The other side of Virginia's face, however, has a scar caused by a burn that "drew the left eye and the corner of the mouth; made of her smile a grinning distortion, like the shameful conception of some despairing medieval imagination" ("Profile" 137). Here, the body—or the "nature"—of the American Girl breaks the type in a more striking way than in Wharton's novels. Considering that Cather ironically illustrates Virginia's "passion for dress and her feverish admiration of physical beauty" ("Profile" 138), the deformity in the American Girl in this story

seems to display Cather's ironic reaction to the obsession with physical beauty in the icon of the American Girl.



Figure 23. An illustration for "The Profile"

Meanwhile, it is important that Dunlop, a figure-maker, is haunted and at the same time attracted by the scar, which is linked with the character's traumatic past. Dunlop is from "the remote mountains of West Virginia," where his grandfather habitually whipped his wife ("Profile" 136). The traumatic memory of "the suffering of the mountain women" makes him "almost morbidly sensitive" ("Profile" 136).⁷⁸ Though he thinks he has escaped from the traumatic past, his meeting with Virginia gives him "a haunting sense of tragedy," which reminds him of women in his family ("Profile" 137). Then, when he finally mentions the scar on her face, he is linked with his grandfather: "He was frightened at the brittleness of his own voice; it seemed to whistle dryly in the air like his grandfather's thong" ("Profile" 140). Dunlop repeats what his grandfather did in his traumatic past, and the image of the deformed women haunts him as he is to marry another woman with a deformed face. Thus, in "The

⁷⁸ He not only sees himself romantically as a savior of suffering women but also sympathizes and almost identifies with women. The narrator relates that, escaping from his country to Paris, "his *stripes* were healed," while he becomes "the expiator of his mountain race" in Paris ("Profile" 136, emphasis added).

Profile,” the American girl not only presents the ironically transformed icon of the American Girl of the Gilded Age but also embodies the suppressed trauma regarding the “America” of Dunlop, the figure-maker, who has seemingly succeeded in escaping from it. Virginia’s face embodies the unbridgeable gap between two poles—the right side of her face presents the perfect portrait of the white, rich, and beautiful American Girl, and the hidden, left side shows a grotesquely deformed one—which corresponds to the gap Dunlop experiences between his old country and his new country.

The source of “The Profile” can be attributed to Cather’s actual acquaintance with a deformed American girl in Paris, as Mark Madigan thoroughly discussed;⁷⁹ at the same time, it can also be found at a more psychological level. The name of the American Girl in this story is Virginia, the name which is closely connected with Cather’s own childhood in Virginia and also with Cather’s mother’s name, Virginia, a former Southern Belle who continued to cherish her old tradition and memories of the Old South. The characterization of Virginia in “The Profile” bears a strong resemblance to Cather’s mother, who was highly “concern[ed] with appearance, beauty, and dress” (O’Brien 37). Just like Wharton’s Old New York, the Old South of Cather has “social conventions defining the role of the Southern lady” (O’Brien 43). Cather’s self-recognition, however, is not the same as Wharton’s “feminine *me*” (*A Backward Glance* 2); as a “tomboyish” child, Cather “felt bitterly that our [their] mothers secretly suffered from our [their] plain brown faces and stubby noses and

⁷⁹ Madigan closely examines the situation regarding the publication of “The Profile.” Discussing Cather’s complicated friendship with Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Madigan points out that Fisher stopped the publication of “The Profile” in 1904 because she feared the model for Virginia was Evelyn Osborne, who Fisher introduced to Cather in Paris in 1902 and who “had a similar scar and taste in clothing” (2).

wished we [they] were pretty like other children” (*The World and the Parish* 363). In a famous episode in Cather’s childhood, the little Willa shocks her mother, crying “I’s e a dang’rous nigger, I is!” in front of a Southern gentleman (Lewis 13). Here Cather compares her “tomboyish” nature to “a dang’rous nigger,” whiteness to the Southern lady. While Edith Wharton’s first recognition of self is “feminine *me*,” Cather’s could be seen as “black/white *me*” as well as “boy/girl” *me*, where the blurred boundary of gender and that of race are deeply intertwined. In “The Profile,” then, the color contrast between black and white is highlighted, and blackness is emphatically used in particular when Virginia’s scar is repeated in the burn of little Eleanor “with her dress burned, and her hands black” and in the burn of elder Eleanor “with her scorched hair, her face and arms badly burned” (“Profile” 140). In addition, Dunlop’s traumatic past can be read in the Southern context. His traumatic memories are compared to “the cruelties of vanished civilizations” (“Profile” 137), and, though his haunting past is based on sexual politics, the story can become a very Old-South-like one if replacing sexual politics by racial politics. After “The Profile,” Cather seldom illustrated such a deformed American Girl as Virginia nor wrote about her past in Virginia until her last novel, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, where she portrays another, totally different girl from the American Girl—a black slave girl—and where Cather appears herself in the epilogue as a white Southern girl. And yet, in her pioneer novels, Cather’s ambivalent attitude toward her Old World can be traced among others in her emphasis on the color line and in the figure of a Southern character.

Taken together, “American” girls in two of Cather’s early short stories deviate from the model of the American Girl in different ways. In “Tommy, the Unsentimental,” Tommy shows deviancy in gender roles, though she serves at the same time to stabilize the “separate spheres” in terms of gender, ethnicity, and girls’ choice. In “The Profile,” Virginia presents physical deviancy from the typology of the American Girl, and the unbridgeable gap of the two poles she embodies can be said to symbolize the gap between the Old World and the New World in the figure-maker, which might be partly shared by Cather. In Cather’s “not-American” girl novels in the 1910s, her negotiation of the boundaries in terms of gender and of nation, which are closely intertwined, is presented in a different way than it is in these “American” girl stories.

2. Cather’s “not-American” girls

When *O Pioneers!* was published in 1913, the novel had a frontispiece, the illustration of Alexandra by Clarence F. Underwood, one of the popular illustrators of the time (Figure 24). Underwood published a book of his illustrations in 1912 titled *American Types*, whose forward asserts that “everyone who knows Mr. Clarence F. Underwood’s pictures recognizes their wholesome Americanism” (Foreword to *American Types*) and where Underwood, just as Gibson and Christy had, presents a lot of figures of the “American Girl” as the WASP icon in various situations and with variations, often accompanied by “Mr. Mann.” Underwood’s portrait of Alexandra uses the popular typology of the “American Girl,” with Gibson-Girl-like alluring eyes looking at the viewer. Cather, however, found this illustration “incongruous” for her

novel and asked to have it removed from a new edition in a letter she wrote to Ferris Greenslet, her editor at Houghton Mifflin, on December 28, 1919.⁸⁰ Cather's request to drop this frontispiece is likely to suggest that she did not intend to show Alexandra as the icon of the American Girl that was popular in contemporary culture of the time.



Figure 24. The frontispiece in the first edition of *O Pioneers!*

Courtesy of the Willa Cather Archive.

The negative attitude toward the typology of the American Girl created in popular culture can be found in *The Song of the Lark*, which was published two years after *O Pioneers!* At the Christmas concert in Moonstone, when Thea Kronborg plays

⁸⁰ I thank Dr. Andrew Jewell for verifying the information in the letter referenced here.

a very artistic tune on the piano, Cather contrasts Thea with her rival Lily Fisher, whose name may remind readers of the popular girl image called the Fisher Girl. The narrator closely links Lily Fisher with the model constructed in popular culture:

“Thea’s rival was also a blonde, but her hair was much heavier than Thea’s, and fell in long round curls over her shoulders. She was the angel-child of the Baptists, and looked exactly like the beautiful children on soap calendars. Her pink-and-white face, her set smile of innocence, were surely born of a colour-press” (*SL* 57-8). Here the idea of “innocence” is completely regarded as a copied performance, and Lily’s figure embodies the American child formed by “a colour-press” such as magazines and manuals. In particular, the turn-of-the-century magazines had a lot of advertisements of soaps, which emphasized “whiteness” and was frequently linked with the imperialistic enterprise of building a “white” civilization (Figure 25). Also, soap advertisements often had illustrations of “white and beautiful” girls or children, which powerfully served to spread the standard of beauty in the country (Figure 26). The narrator’s reference to “soap calendars” clearly displays that Lily follows the standard model of beauty, and that people in the town, who celebrate Lily much more than Thea, believe in the unitary standard.⁸¹

⁸¹ *The Song of the Lark* has another female character who is negatively shown as the type of the American Girl: Mrs. Archie. The narrator introduces her as the former “Belle White”: “Mrs. Archie had been Mrs. Archie for only eight years, and when she was Belle White she was one of the ‘pretty’ girls in Lansing, Michigan” (*SL* 32). As a Belle, she acted coquettishly and selected Dr. Archie, who looked “the most promising”; he was “the big, handsome boy” with “confidence, his sober, radiant face, his gentle, protecting arm”—namely, Mr. Mann (*SL* 32). However, he could not remain “Mr. Mann” since he failed in the West, and the prettiness of Mrs. Archie, once “Belle White,” “vanished like the ornamental plumage which drops away from some birds after the mating season” (*SL* 32). Here Cather ironically presents what becomes of the “happy marriage” of the American Girl and Mr. Mann. Dr. Archie, who once sought “Belle White,” is now attracted by a Swede girl Thea.

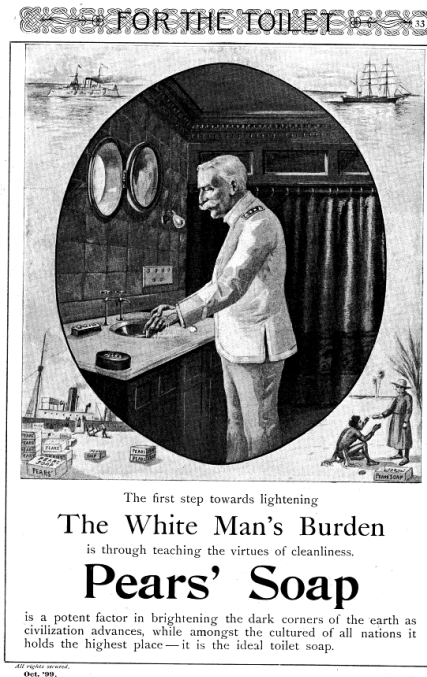


Figure 25. An advertisement of soaps (*Century*, October 1899)



Figure 26. An advertisement of soaps (*Ladies' Home Journal*, December 1902)

While turn-of-the-century American mass culture serves to incorporate the standard of “America” in terms of race, ethnicity, and gender and excludes something “foreign,” the two poles are not separated but are bridged in Cather’s “not-American” girls in her multicultural America. In *O Pioneers!*, the characters can be categorized according to how much they are “American.” At one pole are those characters who stick to the Old World, such as Mr. and Mrs. Bergson, Mrs. Lee, and Ivar: at the other pole are characters such as Oscar and Lou, who like to be Americanized. What distinguishes Alexandra, then, is that she has both of the two extreme polarities of nationality; she acts as an American heroine and is simultaneously attached to her Swedish roots. Alexandra’s story of pioneering is not basically warring with what historians see in the pioneering era of America: the act of making boundaries. After the gap of sixteen years between Book One and Book Two, Alexandra’s successful pioneering clearly divides wheat and corn, light and dark, the winner and the loser, making the fields “a vast checkerboard” (*OP* 39). Later again, through Carl’s eyes, Alexandra’s rich farm is described with the metaphor of a map: “[. . .] What a wonderful place you have made of this, Alexandra.’ He turned and looked back at the wide, map-like prospect of field and hedge and pasture” (*OP* 55). The idea of “mapping,” separating the land with hedges, coincides exactly with what Patricia Nelson Limerick says is the central act of conquest in the American West, “to define”: “Conquest basically involved the drawing of lines on a map, the definition and allocation of ownership [. . .] and the evolution of land from matter to property” (27). In order to become one of “independent landowners,” Alexandra chooses to follow “[a]ll the Americans” that “are skinning out” other immigrants’ land, saying,

“Let’s try to do like the shrewd ones, and not like these stupid fellows” (*OP* 34, 30, 35). She claims her and her mother’s rights on the land, invoking American law: “A third of the place belongs to you by American law, and we can’t sell without your consent. [. . .]” (*OP* 31). Moreover, Alexandra to a certain extent follows the American materialistic standard. After becoming rich as a landowner, she has her dining-room furnished with “highly varnished wood and colored glass and useless pieces of china [that] were conspicuous enough to satisfy the standards of the new prosperity” (*OP* 50). Her furniture dealer “had conscientiously done his best to make her dining-room look like his display window,” and Alexandra “was willing to be governed by the general conviction that the more useless and utterly unusable objects were, the greater their virtue as ornament” (*OP* 50). Though Alexandra is largely connected with nature outside the house, what she does here may remind readers of Veblen’s idea of “conspicuous consumption.”

Meanwhile, Alexandra’s achieving a material success in an American way is not necessarily synonymous with becoming a homogeneous “American.” Alexandra’s brothers, having “disliked to do anything different from their neighbors” (*OP* 24), are willingly absorbed by the American idea of assimilation. They try to expel Ivar, who “ha[s] never learned to speak English” and to send “crazy Ivar” to the institution “for people who are different” (*OP* 46, 48). They are subject to Americanization, whose principle is, as Ivar declares, “for all to do alike” (*OP* 47). In contrast, Alexandra is independent of assimilation, which paradoxically makes her called an “American” heroine by critics in the light of individualism.⁸² The focus of the novel shifts from

⁸² For example, Reynolds asserts, “Cather’s characters, especially Alexandra, seem to embody the ideology that underpinned the movement west: self-reliance, hard work, faith in

how Alexandra succeeds in farming to how she preserves her ethnicity after becoming a landowner. Her achievement as a landowner takes place early in the novel, and merely gives a starting point for her to be reborn as a Swedish-American. Succeeding in farming, she lives in a “big white house,” which serves as “an asylum for old-time people” (*OP* 42, 49). Like her mother, she reconstructs her Old World in her house, which Mrs. Lee, an old Swedish woman, regards as her spiritual home: “[f]or twelve years Mrs. Lee had always entered Alexandra’s sitting-room with the same exclamation, ‘Now we be yust-a like old times!’ She enjoyed the liberty Alexandra gave her, and hearing her own language about her all day long” (*OP* 97). In the figure of Alexandra, the Tocquevillian idea of America such as individualism is found in her “foreignness,” or her keeping her Old World heritage.

In *The Song of the Lark*, the Tocquevillian idea of America is again shown in the “foreignness” of Thea in contrast to the conformist idea, which Cather calls “American” in her novels.⁸³ Though Thea once “was very sensitive about being thought a foreigner” (*SL* 14), she gradually changes and comes to prefer being a “Swede.” She says to Dr. Archie, “Yes, I used to be ashamed of being a Swede, but I’m not any more. Swedes are kind of common, but I think it’s better to be something” (*SL* 77). A Swede girl Thea, who is frequently described as “individual,”

technology” (54). Also, Abate states that Alexandra has “such quintessential American qualities as a patriotic love of the land, a firm commitment to the Puritan work ethic, a Franklin-like aptitude for ingenuity and [. . .] a Whitmanesque commitment to individualism,” and despite the fact that she “is working class, foreign born and culturally ‘other’ at the start of the narrative, [. . .] by its conclusion she embodies the American Dream and is an exemplar of the national spirit” (101, 100).

⁸³ Critics have found in Thea American qualities in Tocquevillian sense. For example, Marilee Lindemann calls this novel “Whitmanesque” with “its celebration of the body in action and in the world” (*Willa Cather* 59), and Christine Dunn Henderson suggests that the novel is “a distinctively American work of literature in any Tocquevillian sense” and that “Thea’s rags-to-riches story might be thought to epitomize the American dream” (73).

is vividly contrasted with her sister Anna, who is called “American”: “‘Anna, she’s American,’ Mrs. Kronborg used to say. The Scandinavian mould of countenance, more or less marked in each of the other children, was scarcely discernible in her, and she looked enough like other Moonstone girls to be thought pretty. Anna’s nature was conventional, like her face” (*SL* 121). Anna’s face is more like Moonstone—or American—girls and fits the American standard of beauty, which the narrator ironically calls “conventional.” The narrator then negatively reveals that Anna’s “mind ha[s] really shocking habits of classification” and that she “fe[els] a grave social discrimination against the Mexicans” (*SL* 122). Anna’s preference of classification and xenophobia is similar to that of people of the town, where even children can tell “the social classifications of Moonstone, since these conformed to certain topographical boundaries” (*SL* 28); different from town people, Thea crosses the boundary, frequently going to the Mexican area, for which she is blamed by town people.

Not conforming to the type of the American Girl, Thea raises a question about the standard idea of beauty and replaces it with a different one in the scene at the Art Institute of Chicago. She disagrees with what people call beautiful: “Venus di Milo puzzled her; she could not see why people thought her so beautiful” (*SL* 181).⁸⁴ In a room of paintings, she passes the Corot without noticing it, and comes to one picture that she truly likes:

But in that same room there was a picture—oh, that was the thing she
ran upstairs so fast to see! That was her picture. She imagined that

⁸⁴ It may be also meaningful to note that turn-of-the-century America models and imitates classical Greek culture in building a nation; her preference does not agree with the model of “American civilization.”

nobody cared for it but herself, and that it waited for her. That was a picture indeed. She liked even the name of it, "The Song of the Lark." The flat country, the early morning light, the wet fields, the look in the girl's heavy face—well, they were all hers, anyhow, whatever was there. She told herself that that picture was "right." Just what she meant by this, it would take a clever person to explain. But to her the word covered the almost boundless satisfaction she felt when she looked at the picture. (*SL* 182)

In this famous scene, she confronts "The Song of the Lark," which becomes the title of this novel, and finds it hers. "The Song of the Lark" by Jules Breton shows a farmer girl standing barefoot with a reaping hook in her hand (Figure 27). Like a girl in those popular illustrations of the American Girl, a young girl stands straight, which shows her strength and independence; in contrast, the girl in Breton's picture has no accessories or a fancy dress, and is situated in nature. She is most literally "so much more a work of nature than of art" (*NYE* XVIII: 79), and thus James's idea of the American girl as "a child of nature" is found in Cather's "not-American" girls.

Cather's "not-American" girls do not only transcend the binary between "American" and "foreign" but also in terms of gender.⁸⁵ Alexandra, "a tall, strong girl" who wears "a man's long ulster" at the beginning of the novel (*OP* 4), inherits

⁸⁵ Some critics have linked the instabilities of gender in Cather's fiction to the author's probable lesbianism. For more on the issue of lesbianism and Cather, see for example Timothy Dow Adams, Butler, Judith Fetterley, Deborah Lambert, O'Brien, Joanna Russ, and C. Susan Wiesenthal. Also, Katrina Irving, from the standpoint to see Cather as a lesbian, suggests that "[t]he problem of ethnicity displaces that of homosexuality" (92). Daniel Worden, then, challenges critics' tendency of linking cross-dressing of heroines such as Alexandra and Antonia with lesbianism, argues that the heroines' masculinity should be regarded as "female masculinity," where masculinity is something performed.



Figure 27. “The Song of the Lark” by Jules Adolphe Breton (1884).

Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.

her father’s farm, works hard, and remains independent. Cather redefines the frontier as “a no man’s land” (Gilbert and Gubar 185), and creates a myth of women succeeding in the frontier, of “female awakening and freedom” (Rosowski, *Birthing*, 77).⁸⁶ Also, the Epilogue of *The Song of the Lark* shows that people in Moonstone celebrate Thea as a self-made girl: “A boy grew up on one of those streets who went to Omaha and built up a great business, and is now very rich. Moonstone people

⁸⁶ Critics have portrayed positively Cather’s rewriting of the myth of the West, “a narrative of male violence” (Tompkins 28) created by male writers like Owen Wister or Roosevelt, which was highly male-dominated and celebrated masculinity as a vital element in American identity. For similar arguments on individual works, see for example John J. Murphy and Mary Panிக்கா Carden.

always speak of him and Thea together, as examples of Moonstone enterprise” (SL 429). Ray Kennedy once calls her “Thee,” instead of “Thea,” because he once in Santa Fe had a friend named “Theodore, whose name was always abbreviated thus” (SL 54). The name Theodore clearly reminds readers of Theodore Roosevelt, and the link between Thea and Theodore serves to make Thea a female version of the “strenuous man.” As Susan Rosowski notes, Thea is not a “usual female Bildungsroman character” and her narrative follows “traditionally male patterns,” though Cather at the same time makes Thea’s “imaginative growth intensely female,” which is particularly emphasized in the scene in the Panther Canon (*Voyage* 69).

Taken together, Cather’s “not-American” girls embody Cather’s pluralist idea and revise in dual ways the popular type of the American Girl, which shows the homogeneous standard of nation and gender. While Wharton’s American girls serve as a critique of the type, Cather’s is done by making two counterparts coexist in a girl: Cather’s girls are foreign-American and male-female, two poles being “hyphenated.” In doing so, Cather’s “not-American” girls raise a question about the idea of “America,” rejecting the homogeneous idea of the progressive America and yet powerfully presenting the Jamesian, or Tocquevillian, idea of America, the latter of which is presented by their “not-American”ness.

Cather’s “not-American” girl stories are something different not only from the popular American Girl plot, which ends with a girl’s “happy marriage” to be a traditional wife/mother, but also from the ordinary New Woman plot, where a heroine rejects marriage in favor of profession or an independent life. Not following the conventional model, Thea is frequently described as different from a standard girl,

whose goal is to get married. Mr. Kronborg tells his wife that “Thea is not the marrying kind”: “I’ve watched ’em. Anna will marry before long and make a good wife, but I don’t see Thea bringing up a family” (SL 94); then, “A girl with all that energy has got to do something, same as a boy, to keep her out of mischief. If you don’t want her to marry Ray, let her do something to make herself independent” (SL 95). Later again, Fred tells her that she cannot live a standard American girl’s life: “A lot of girls go to boarding-school together, come out the same season, dance at the same parties, are married off in groups, have their babies at about the same time, send their children to school together, and so the human crop renews itself. [. . .] Why, you *couldn’t* live like that” (SL 327). The epilogue of *The Song of the Lark* again presents a fundamental contrast between the rivals, Thea and Lily; in 1909, Lily is now “a fair-haired, dimpled matron” with her twins in Moonstone while Thea is a prominent opera singer whose name is often in the New York newspaper—in other words, Lily follows the typical American Girl story while Thea does not (SL 425). Those citations cited above, where characters declare that “Thea is not the marrying kind” (SL 94), may sharply remind readers of characters’ seeing Nan Prince as “not the sort of girl who will be likely to marry” in Sarah Orne Jewett’s *A Country Doctor* (NS 234). In this respect, Thea (and also Alexandra) can be seen as New Women, who reject conventional gender roles and succeed independently.

At the same time, different from Nan Prince, who decides to seek her profession and refuses to have a conventional marriage, both Alexandra and Thea situate themselves in the marriage plot. Though Alexandra remains unmarried for the whole novel, there is a moment in the novel when she is about to marry Carl, which is

disturbed by her brothers, and at the end of the novel she is expected to marry Carl, one of the “dreamers on the frontier” (*OP* 155), in the near future. Then, Thea has a lover, Philip Frederick Ottenburg, “a beer prince: son of the big brewer in St. Louis” (*SL* 247), and would like to marry him, though they cannot because Fred has a wife from whom he cannot part. The epilogue reveals that later “the Denver papers announced that Thea Kronborg had married Frederick Ottenburg, the head of the Brewers’ Trust” (*SL* 485). Both Alexandra and Thea succeed in their profession and at the same time get married to Cather’s version of “Mr. Mann,” who is different from the popular type of “Mr. Mann” in that he has more interest in art than in business and has a foreign origin. Cather modernizes marriage in these novels, making it more egalitarian and therefore appropriate for her New Women. Thus, Cather makes her “not-American” girls stories different both from the conventional American Girl plot and from the ordinary New Woman plot; in Cather’s modern version of the American girl story in multicultural America, marriage and profession do not create “either-or” dilemmas any more, and the heroine achieves self-fulfillment and professional success as well as personal happiness. In her earlier “American” story, “Tommy, the Unsentimental,” Tommy deviates from gender norms, though she at the same time serves to make the boundary stable, separating the two poles between the masculine and the feminine, between the American and the foreign, and between the American Girl plot and the New Woman plot; in contrast, in her “not-American” novels, Cather makes her “not-American” girls bridge two poles and transcend boundaries.

While Cather celebrates these “not-American” girls who successfully and almost transcendentally bridge two poles and embody the vision of multicultural America, they are juxtaposed with those who cannot, which makes Cather’s version of “trans-national America” not totally stable. The subplot of *O Pioneers!* can be read as the story of Emil, who is often called “boy” in the novel, and, while Alexandra successfully bridges “American” and “Swedish,” Emil cannot, attached more to French and Bohemian people than Swedes. Also, Emil’s Old World heritage is not necessarily seen as positive because he resembles their father who fails and dies; Alexandra says, “It’s curious, too; on the outside Emil is just like an American boy,—he graduated from the State University in June, you know,—but underneath he is more Swedish than any of us. Sometimes he is so like father that he frightens me; he is so violent in his feelings like that” (*OP* 59-60). The Old World and the New World are not successfully bridged—or “hyphenated”—in Emil, partly repeating Dunlop in “The Profile.” In the subplot of *O Pioneers!*, moreover, transgressing the boundary is fatal. As Marilee Lindemann notes, Alexandra’s “healthy, wealthy, and ‘immune’” body is contrasted with queer bodies including Emil and Marie, who are expelled from the prairie “not only out of their transgressions against marriage but also their violations of a code that defines safe sex as intercourse with one’s own (ethnic) kind” (*Willa Cather* 44, 43). While Cather resists the standardized model of nation and gender in the novel, her “oppositionality is neither fixed nor simple, particularly on matters of race” (Lindemann *Willa Cather* 6).

In fact, it is significant that in both portraits of Alexandra and Thea whiteness is highly emphasized. Alexandra’s skin is “of such smoothness and whiteness as none

but Swedish women ever possess” (*OP* 45). Her skin’s whiteness is emphasized in contrast with Marie, a Bohemian woman, through Carl’s eyes: “They made a pretty picture in the strong sunlight, the leafy pattern surrounding them like a net; the Swedish woman so white and gold, kindly and amused, but armored in calm, and the alert brown one, her full lips parted, points of yellow light dancing in her eyes as she laughed and chattered” (*OP* 69). Different from Marie, who is Bohemian and brown, Alexandra succeeds “as a farmer and icon of whiteness” (Patterson 171). Swedishness is again closely connected with whiteness in the portrait of Thea from the beginning of the novel: “As he [Dr. Archie] lifted and undressed Thea, he thought to himself what a beautiful thing a little girl’s body was—like a flower. It was so neatly and delicately fashioned, so soft, and so milky white. Thea must have got her hair and her silky skin from her mother. She was a little Swede, through and through” (*SL* 9). Mexican boys, who have “never seen a Scandinavian girl before,” are fascinated by Thea’s “hair and fair skin,” find Thea “dazzlingly beautiful,” and exclaim, “‘Blanco y oro, semejante la Pascua!’ (White and gold, like Easter!)” (*SL* 212). Repeatedly linked with whiteness, both Scandinavian girls belong to “the white-skinned races” (*SL* 253). Thus, Cather’s Nordic characters can be racially “American” in the turn-of-the-century sense though Cather makes them culturally Swedish or European. At the same time, the uncertainty regarding the racial transgression and the emphasis of whiteness in Cather’s Nordic immigrants in her pioneer novels can be attributed to a certain extent to her own roots in her Old World. In *My Ántonia*, published three years after *The Song of the Lark*, Cather’s “not-American” girls are portrayed in a more complicated way in the layered structure, where the color contrast between a

Nordic girl and a Bohemian girl appears again, described through the eyes of a figure-maker from Virginia.

3. Paired portraits of girls in *My Ántonia* (1918)

When *My Ántonia* was published, the publisher Houghton Mufflin intended to put a frontispiece that might be similar to the frontispiece in *O Pioneers!*; Cather, however, rejected the idea. Instead of adopting a popular type frontispiece, Cather was eager to insert a series of drawings by W. T. Benda, and she not only selected the illustrator but chose which scenes to draw and even designed layouts of her book (Stout 132-3).⁸⁷ As a result, the tone of the illustrations is quite different from such a frontispiece as in *O Pioneers!*, which the publisher originally intended to insert in *My Ántonia*. Cather literally, or visually, revises the popular portrait of American Girl; while the frontispiece of *O Pioneers!* accords with the popular type of the American Girl who looks proudly at the reader without any background, a series of Benda drawings in *My Ántonia* shows each scene more vividly, and there characters are situated in nature without posing. As suggested in Cather's considerable concern with the illustrations for the novel, *My Ántonia* is closely related to the question about "the power of figure-making" (Lindemann "It Ain't" 116). In the Introduction, the narrator "I" and Jim Burden share warm feelings about their childhood memories in a prairie town, especially about a Bohemian girl Ántonia, and decide to write about Ántonia and to "get a picture of her" (*MÁ* xii); while the narrator cannot accomplish

⁸⁷ The book has eight drawings, though Cather's original plan was to have 12 drawings, which was not possible because of the limited budget from the publisher. Janis P. Stout acutely argues that Cather's choice of Benda may be attributed to her "seeking to emulate the illustrations to Mary Austin's *The Land of Little Rain*" (142). For the whole story about her choice of Benda's drawings, see also Jean Schwind.

it, Jim succeeds and brings his “picture” to the narrator. As male illustrators give their image of girls in the American Girl illustration, naming the drawings “Gibson Girl” or “Fisher Girl,” Jim succeeds in “get[ting] a picture” (*MÁ* xii) of *Ántonia*, which he titles “My *Ántonia*.”

Reflecting Cather’s pluralist America, Jim’s portrait of a Bohemian girl creates a Bohemian home on American soil. At the same time, however, she is different from immigrant heroines in Cather’s previous works in that she is a Bohemian immigrant, who belongs to the group of “new immigrants.” As Bohemian Marie’s brownness is contrasted with Scandinavian Alexandra’s whiteness in *O Pioneers!*, *Ántonia* is repeatedly described as “brown,” vividly contrasted with the Anglo-Saxon white Jim and also with Norwegian Lena.⁸⁸ The first thing *Ántonia* does after immigrating to the United States is to learn English from Jim, and the teaching lesson in some ways functions in emphasizing their racial difference:

She pointed up to the sky, then to my eyes, then back to the sky, with movements so quick and impulsive that she distracted me, and I had no idea what she wanted. She got up on her knees and wrung her hands. She pointed to her own eyes and shook her head, then to mine and to the sky, nodding violently.

“Oh,” I exclaimed, “blue; blue sky.”

⁸⁸ Also, Linda Lizut Helstern notes that Cather emphasizes the characteristic shapes of heads of Bohemian characters or of Blind D’Arnault, and discusses that Cather is interested in the turn-of-the-century Darwinian eugenic discourse. Meanwhile, the brownness in *My Ántonia* is not only linked with Bohemian ethnicity but rather with tomboyishness. For example, Mr. Shimerda and Yulka, *Ántonia*’s sister, are described as white and fair; in contrast, Frances, who is a New Woman, is “dark” (*MÁ* 145), and her sister Sally, who is a Swedish tomboy, is described as brown. See also note 100.

She clapped her hands and murmured, “Blue sky, blue eyes,” as if it amused her. (*MÁ* 25)

Here Jim’s blue eyes are contrasted to *Ántonia*’s brown eyes, which underlines their racial difference. While the Otherness of Verena, a kind of working girl, is linked with “transcendental Bohemia” by Olive (*Bostonians* 63), Jim finds Otherness in a Bohemian immigrant in Cather’s multicultural West; and, in *My Ántonia*, the issue of boundary, or of the “vagueness of boundary” (*Bostonians* 24), is more closely examined than in previous novels through the interaction between town boys and hired girls, or between the “American” town people and the “foreign” immigrants.

The increasing number of new immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe in the late nineteenth century was seen as threatening by the Anglo-Saxons, as new immigrants, having darker countenances, being Catholic, and hardly speaking English, destabilized the boundary of the “American,” which led to the incorporation of America, namely redefining the boundary of the “American.” In the late nineteenth century, “the new immigrant women played their part in weakening the borders between male and female spheres, foreshadowing the ideology of heterosexual interaction that would come to dominate postwar gender relations” by “mixed-sex dances and parties at neighborhood community centers” (Todd 3), and this situation is fully displayed in Book II, where the dance craze appears in relation to the immigrant girls’ threat to town boys. D’Arnault’s playing the piano in the Boys’ Home Hotel triggers the dance of American men and immigrant working girls, which is followed by the Italian Vannis’ dance lesson that “brought the town boys and the country girls together on neutral ground” (*MÁ* 197). In this democratic space, immigrant girls are

seen as threatening: “The country girls were considered a menace to the social order. Their beauty shone out too boldly against a conventional background” (*MÁ* 195). The three Bohemian Marys are “considered as dangerous as high explosives to have about the kitchen” (*MÁ* 196), and Tiny Soderball presents an even more modern figure than Lena, being “trim and slender, with lively little feet and pretty ankles” and wearing “her dresses very short” (*MÁ* 186)—which may lead to the image of the flapper of the 1920s. Together with these girls, *Ántonia* gradually changes. Though she seems “frightened” and keeps “looking questioningly at Lena and Tiny” during the first day of dancing (*MÁ* 186), she comes to be crazy about dancing. She comes to wear city clothes like Lena, putting on “gloves now, and high-heeled shoes and feathered bonnets” and “cop[ying] Mr. Gardener’s new party dress and Mrs. Smith’s street costume so ingeniously in cheap materials”; and *Ántonia* in city clothes—more Americanized *Ántonia*—is described with whiteness by Jim: “I used to think with pride that *Ántonia*, like Snow-White in the fairy tale, was still ‘fairest of them all’” (*MÁ* 208). Different from Lena and Tiny, however, the transgression of the city/country and American/foreign boundaries is almost fatal for *Ántonia*. Her dance craze advances to the extent that she has to leave the Harlings and go to the Cutters, where she nearly gets sexually assaulted. Her transgression of boundaries also leads *Ántonia* to the negatively changed American Girl plot, where *Ántonia* is to get married to Larry Donovan, an American man she sees as “Mr. Mann,” but it turns out that *Ántonia* is deceived and, after getting pregnant, is deserted by him.

In the end, *Ántonia* marries a man “of like nationality” (*MÁ* 154) and creates a “Bohemian” home, which gives her happiness and self-fulfillment and where *Ántonia*

is described again with brownness as “a stalwart, brown woman, flat-chested, her curly brown hair a little grizzled” (*MÁ* 321). The preservation and reconstruction of the old life are vividly illustrated in *Ántonia*’s family life found in Book Five. The family embodies a “bilingual communit[y]” (Reynolds 83) though it seems more “Bohemian” than “bilingual” at the same time, as they speak Bohemian in the house so that *Ántonia* “forgot my [her] English” and the little ones “could not speak English at all” (*MÁ* 324). They read “a roll of illustrated Bohemian papers” and *Ántonia*’s most beloved child Leo, whose “habitual skepticism was like a direct inheritance from that old woman [Mrs. Shimerda],” plays Mr. Shimerda’s violin (*MÁ* 348, 339). *Ántonia*’s children identify themselves as Bohemians in distinguishing Jim from them, saying, “Show him the spiced plums, mother. Americans don’t have those” (*MÁ* 328). While *Ántonia*, becoming the Earth Mother on American soil, to a certain extent bridges the two worlds as a Bohemian-American, she is more literally “not-American” than her Scandinavian sisters, and serves to observe the boundary in the end.

Critics have noted the difference between *Ántonia* and Cather’s Scandinavian girls; for example, “[u]nlike Alexandra, whose gender-bending behavior makes her a successful farmer and quintessential American, *Ántonia* is poor at the end of the novel” (Abate 114);⁸⁹ then, Cather’s “Slav or Alpine immigrant women are tied to home, hearth, and ultimately to the past, while her northern European, Nordic immigrants become independent, professionally minded New Women who transcend traditional gender roles and succeed in widening the scope of acceptable spheres for

⁸⁹ Abate connects Bohemianism with the new category of “Caucasians,” who are not regarded as white as the Anglo-Saxons or the Northern Europeans and therefore are not “Americans” but could symbolize “America” (117-18).

women” (Griffith 398). Indeed, in Jim’s narrative titled “My *Ántonia*,” the Bohemian girl *Ántonia* is related to a traditional role for women as well as to the past, and is in some ways similar to the image of “The Primitive Woman,” a mural displayed in the Women’s Building at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The mural portrays women who are doing chores traditionally charged to women such as nursing and carrying a jar; in Jim’s narrative, *Ántonia* is often seen to be in the kitchen, cooking, nursing, and serving men. Jim’s final picture of *Ántonia* as the Earth Mother in Book V strongly underlines her nature as “The Primitive Woman,” as Jim associates *Ántonia* with more ancient roots, universalizing and eternalizing her fertility: “It was no wonder that her sons stood tall and straight. She was a rich mine of life, like the founders of early races” (*MÁ* 342). Thus, Jim’s version of “not-American” girl story ends with a “happy marriage,” where the girl becomes a wife/mother as “The Primitive Woman.” At the same time, *Ántonia*’s marriage is not totally conventional in the power relationship. Though her husband Cuzak is a city man and “it [i]s n’t the kind of life he ha[s] wanted to live,” *Ántonia* has “managed to hold him here on a farm, in one of the loneliest countries in the world” (*MÁ* 355). The husband-wife relationship of the Cuzaks is a kind of inversion of the conventional one shown in the patriarchal model of the Harlings or in what Lena tells regarding their parents: “It must have been a trial for our mothers [. . .] coming out here and having to do everything different. My mother had always lived in town. She says she started behind in farm-work, and never has caught up” (*MÁ* 231). While the final scene presents the traditional model of “The Primitive Woman,” *Ántonia*’s agency makes her marriage different from the conventional model, and Jim feels that “Cuzak

ha[s] been made the instrument of *Ántonia's* special mission" (*MÁ* 355). Thus, there is a duality in *Ántonia*; while she shows the traditional model of "The Primitive Woman" in almost a mythic way, the point does not necessarily present limitations of women.

Meanwhile, at the Chicago Exposition, the mural titled "The Primitive Woman" is situated in contrast to the mural titled "The Modern Woman"—which illustrates women plucking fruits of knowledge, women artists, and women seeking fame; then, in *My Ántonia*, the picture of *Ántonia* is contrasted with another picture, which illustrates a girl who becomes the "Modern Woman": Lena Lingard. Though *Ántonia* is situated at the center of Jim's narrative, Lena presents herself as another "girl," who frequently creates a contrast with *Ántonia* and who relativizes Jim's portrait of *Ántonia*. Contrasted with *Ántonia*, Lena pursues her professional success, establishing herself by imitating standard ways of clothing or speaking. When first introduced in the novel, she is perfectly dressed and creates a "picture" by herself: "A plump, fair-skinned girl was standing in the doorway. She looked demure and pretty, and made a graceful picture in her blue cashmere dress and little blue hat, with a plaid shawl drawn neatly about her shoulders and a clumsy pocketbook in her hand" (*MÁ* 154-55). *Ántonia* and Jim are surprised to see Lena "brushed and smoothed and dressed like a town girl, smiling at us [them] with perfect composure" (*MÁ* 155). Stylishly dressed up and presenting a composed smile, Lena's figure may remind readers of those girls on the magazine covers. Later, when Lena visits Jim's room in Lincoln, she is dressed so fashionably that Jim at first cannot recognize her: "She was so quietly conventionalized by city clothes that I might have passed her on the street

without seeing her. Her black suit fitted her figure smoothly, and a black lace hat, with pale-blue forget-me-nots, sat demurely on her yellow hair” (MÁ 257). Looking for new fashion, Lena is “never tired of poring over fashion books” (MÁ 270). Lena’s seemingly conformist aspect is contrasted with Ántonia’s remaining a “foreigner”:

Lena’s talk always amused me. Ántonia had never talked like the people about her. Even after she learned to speak English readily there was always something impulsive and foreign in her speech. But Lena had picked up all the conventional expressions she heard at Mrs. Thomas’s dressmaking shop. Those formal phrases, the very flower of small-town proprieties, and the flat commonplaces, nearly all hypocritical in their origin, became very funny, very engaging, when they were uttered in Lena’s soft voice, with her caressing intonation and arch naïveté. (MÁ 273)

Unlike Ántonia, Lena is “conventionalized”—or Americanized—in fashion and speech, and participates in consumer culture.

Though Lena seeks fashion and is willing to be conventionalized, however, she is different from “conventional” Anna in *The Song of the Lark*. While conventionalizing her speech and fashion, Lena does not necessarily seek to be “American” but rather performs Americanness, just as Alexandra chooses to follow the American way to succeed. Lena identifies with other immigrant girls, and mentions her Lapp blood, regarding herself as one of “the Lapp girls” (MÁ 235). Lena is also distinguished from “American girls” by Jim, who sees her as a mature “woman.” Lena enjoys art, and Jim regards her as superior to other town girls in that

she understands and appreciates art: “As I walked about there I congratulated myself that I had not brought some Lincoln girl who would talk during the waits about the Junior dances, or whether the cadets would camp at Plattsmouth. Lena was at least a woman, and I was a man” (*MÁ* 267).

The most essential point that distinguishes Lena from “American” girls in the town is her sexuality. Embodying feminine beauty, Lena’s femininity is strongly linked with sexuality, which is suppressed in the ideal image of the American Girl during Jim’s childhood. On first meeting her in the prairie, the boy Jim feels that she is “undressed” (*MÁ* 160); then, in the famous dream of Jim’s, Lena appears before Jim “in a short skirt, with a curved reaping-hook in her hand” and solicits a kiss (*MÁ* 218). In Jim’s recurrent dream, it is Lena who has agency and Jim remains passive; Lena says, “*I can kiss you as much as I like*” (*MÁ* 218, emphasis added), not “you can kiss me as much as you like.” The dream suggests the fear/attraction to female sexuality of Jim’s, who imagines Lena’s potential possession of power and agency that he cannot control. Lena, though not always intentionally, traps men into her net; she is “accused of making Ole Benson lose the little sense he had” (*MÁ* 160-61) when she was a little girl; makes Nick Svendsen chasing her and “rushing you [her] pretty hard” (*MÁ* 157); makes Sylvester Lovett crazily love her and have a desperate runaway marriage with a widow; makes Old Colonel Raleigh and the Polish violinist Ordinsky love her and feel jealous of each other; and fascinates Jim to the extent that his mentor advises him to leave Lena, saying, “You won’t recover yourself while you are playing about with this handsome Norwegian” (*MÁ* 280).

Presenting “a figure of alluring and threatening feminine excess” (Lindemann *Willa Cather* 68), Jim’s portrait of Lena has something in common with a newer type of American Girl in the 1910s, when Jim (and Cather) writes the story. In the 1910s, while the Gibson Girl and the Christy Girl were still popular, a different image of the American Girl prevailed in popular culture, portrayed by such illustrators as James Montgomery Flagg and Coles Phillips (Figures 28, 29). The Flagg Girl and the Phillips Girl are sometimes called a “vamp” type, which shows a new type of playful and sexually alluring girl who becomes a threat and “a temptation to men that seemed irresistible yet was ultimately destructive” (Kitch 58). Appearing in popular magazines, the “vamp” type of girl wears not necessarily a white dress but a black one, and the “vamp” type is frequently linked with darkness, though they still present white-skinned figures: “She is dark, she is sexual, she is volatile, she is mobile, and, above all, she lives alone, outside the sphere of home and family” (Kitch 61). As the dance scene foreshadows the gender situation in the 1910s America, Lena’s sexual femininity does so as well, presenting modern femininity or modern female sexuality, which is contrasted with *Ántonia*’s traditional, vulnerable female sexuality.

While *Ántonia* is situated at the center of Jim’s narrative, she is vividly contrasted with Lena. Jean Schwind suggests that Benda’s illustrations in *My Ántonia* play a role as “the novel’s visual textual supplements” to Jim’s narrative (55). In fact, the Benda’s drawings show two “pictures” of a girl; and Cather’s artistic arrangement of Benda’s drawings functions in emphasizing the dichotomy of *Ántonia* and Lena. There is a pair of drawings, of *Ántonia* and Lena respectively, which make a stark contrast between the two girls. Figure 30 shows Lena knitting on the prairie, which

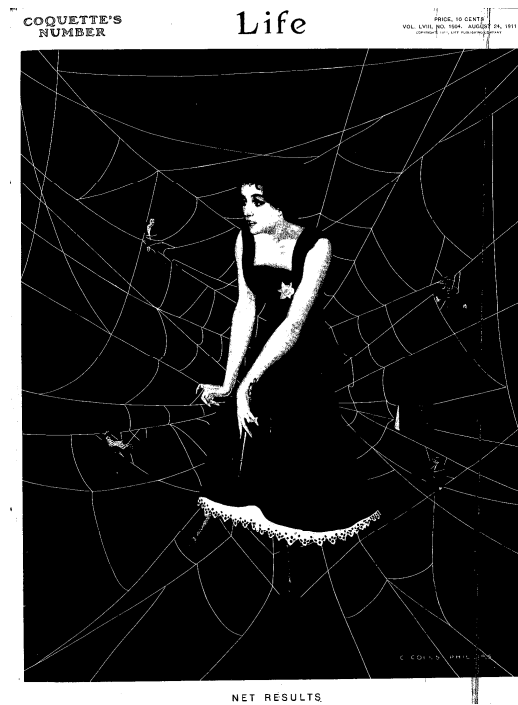


Figure 28. “Net Results” by Coles Phillips (*Life*, Aug. 24, 1911)



Figure 29. “Has This Ever Happened to You?” by James Montgomery
 Flagg (*Life*, July 11, 1912)

corresponds to Jim's description of her "out among her cattle, bareheaded and barefooted, scantily dressed in tattered clothing, always knitting as she watched her herd" and especially of her seeming "more undressed" (*MÁ* 159-60). Cather's letter to Greenslet shows that "she gloated over this drawing that Lena was fairly bursting out of her clothes" (Stout 141), and Benda's drawing thus literally plays a role of supplements, which visualize what Jim feels about Lena's female and sexual body and which at the same time show the real Lena with a long skirt, not a short one like that found in Jim's recurrent dream. Figure 31 shows *Ántonia* driving a herd in the snow, which accords with what Widow Stevens tells Jim: "After the winter begun she wore a man's long overcoat and boots, and a man's felt hat with a wide brim. [. . .] One day in December, the snow began to fall. Late in the afternoon I saw *Ántonia* driving her cattle homeward across the hill" (*MÁ* 308). Coming back home after being deserted by Donovan, *Ántonia* returns to a mannish girl, though she at the same time expects to be a mother. On the one hand, *Ántonia* is a man/woman; on the other hand, *Ántonia*'s sexuality is safely suppressed by male outfits so that *Ántonia* is not so much a man/woman as a man/mother, where threatening female sexuality is eliminated.

Schwind juxtaposes these two drawings, arguing that both *Ántonia* and *Lena* assert "the 'masculine authority,'" having a cattle whip and knitting needles respectively, which are "iconographic symbols of command, independence, and authority" (65, 63); at the same time, it will be no less important here to pay attention to differences between them. Though both of the two are depicted walking alone in the prairie, their portraits make a vivid contrast, showing summer/winter, knitting

needles/a cow whip, whiteness/darkness, and a girl looking like “undressed”/a girl whose body is tightly covered by man’s clothes. As Schwind suggests, there is some similarity between these two drawings and Breton’s “The Song of the Lark”; however, the portrait of Lena resembles Breton’s much more than that of *Ántonia*. In “The Song of the Lark” (Figure 27), it is summer and the girl is barefooted with a similar dress as in Lena’s portrait. Also, Jim’s recurrent dream of Lena can link her with Breton’s girl: “Lena Lingard came across the stubble barefoot, in a short skirt, with a curved reaping-hook in her hand, and she was flushed like the dawn, with a kind of luminous rosiness all about her” (*MÁ* 218). A barefoot figure with a curved reaping-hook and the image of dawn are so similar to Breton’s painting except that the girl in Jim’s dream wears a short skirt. Lena can be a sexualized version of Breton’s girl—or Cather’s previous self-made heroines like Thea. Indeed, while *Ántonia* shares Alexandra’s female masculinity and cross-dressing on the farm, Lena, like Thea, follows “traditionally male patterns” with female talents (Rosowski *Voyage* 69). Lena follows the rags-to-the-riches story through dressmaking and proceeds from the countryside to Black Hawk, then to Lincoln—just as Jim does—and finally goes to San Francisco. While Jim finds *Ántonia* “battered but not diminished” (*MÁ* 321-22) after twenty years, Tiny tells Jim in 1908 that Lena is “the only person” she knows “who never gets any older” (*MÁ* 294) just as the narrator “I” describes that Jim “never seems to me [her] to grow older” (*MÁ* xi). Also, just as Thea, who is criticized in girlhood for her friendship with the Mexicans, is to be admired in the end as one of the “examples of Moonstone enterprise” (*SL* 429), Lena, who is seen as “a bad one” in her girlhood, is to be “much respected in Black Hawk”

(*MÁ* 305, 290). Thus, Lena is another heroine in the novel. Creating a tension with Jim's "not-American" girl narrative of *Ántonia*, Lena's success story presents another girl's story in *My Ántonia* who could possibly be a different version of Thea.⁹⁰



Figure 30. Lena knitting on the prairie

⁹⁰ Lena's success, however, is not as much celebrated as such New-Woman-like characters as Alexandra and Thea. It might be attributed to Cather's long aversion to the contemporary popular culture based on materialism and commercialism, since Lena's success as a New Woman is inseparably linked with her pursuing fashion and popular culture by learning "conventionalized" fashion and speech.



Figure 31. *Antonia driving her cattle in the snow*

Furthermore, different from *Antonia* and even from Cather's previous girls, Lena, fully aware of limitations of women at home, openly rejects the traditional role of wife/mother. While *Antonia* adores her father, Lena is always "a good daughter to her mother" (*MÁ* 160). In the famous scene where Lena helps her brother choose a Christmas gift for her mother, her brother Chris does not know whether he should buy B for Berthe, his mother's name, or M for Mother, and Lena advises him to buy B, saying, "It will please her for you to think about her name. Nobody ever calls her by it now" (*MÁ* 166). Thus, Lena resists the idea that marriage gives a woman only a role of "Mother," which is vividly contrasted with *Antonia's* being a "natural-born mother" in the country (*MÁ* 310). Lena's aversion to married life is closely linked

with that to farm life: “She remembered home as a place where there were always too many children, a cross man, and work piling up around a sick woman” (*MÁ* 283); then, she says, “I’m done with the farm!” (*MÁ* 159). In the town of Black Hawk, the traditional role of a married woman as a mother is broken by Mrs. Gardener, “who r[u]n[s] the business and look[s] after everything” (*MÁ* 176). Different from Lena’s mother, who is always called “Mother” and not by her name, Mrs. Gardener’s name appears in many places: “‘Molly Bawn’ was painted in large blue letters on the glossy white side of the hotel bus, and ‘Molly’ was engraved inside Johnnie’s ring and on his watch-case—doubtless on his heart, too” (*MÁ* 185). Lena, who resists joining the conventional marriage system, chooses to go into business in an urban area for herself. In the scene of the picnic in “No-Man’s Land” (*MÁ* 226) at the end of Book II, Lena tells the other girls and Jim that she is going to build a house for her mother: “‘I tell you what girls,’ she sat up with sudden energy; ‘I’m going to get my mother out of that old sod house where she’s lived so many years. The men will never do it’” (*MÁ* 233). Here is shown a rare example where Lena, who is repeatedly described as “easy” and “soft,” declares her plan “with sudden energy.” After two years, she truly plans to build a house with her own money; Lena is definitely a self-made woman: “It seemed to me wonderful that she should have got on so well in the world. Certainly she had no one but herself to thank for it” (*MÁ* 259). Loving independence, Lena, coming out of the country, proudly tells Jim and Ántonia that she has “a room of my [her] own at Mrs. Thomas’s” (*MÁ* 158), while Ántonia tells Jim that she would “die of lonesomeness” in a city (*MÁ* 312). Lena insists on her economic independence, and “she would n’t have a school boy spending his money on her” at the theater (*MÁ*

263). Fully articulating limitations imposed upon women and openly rejecting conventional gender roles, Lena is a more critical New Woman than Cather's previous girls such as Alexandra and Thea.

Above all, what makes Lena different not only from *Ántonia* but also from other previous immigrant heroines of Cather's is that she remains single. She never wants to marry even though she is involved with heterosexual relationships.⁹¹ Asked by Frances about her relationship with Nick Svendsen, Lena tells her that she does not want to marry because she has "seen a good deal of married life" and she does not "care for it" (*MÁ* 157). Later in the novel, she repeats her unwillingness to marry, and her denial of marriage sounds unbelievable to Jim's eye as well as others', since she is "marriageable," using Lily Bart's term.

"Why, I'm not going to marry anybody. Did n't you know that?"

"Nonsense, Lena. That's what girls say, but you know better. Every handsome girl like you marries, of course."

She shook her head. "Not me."

"But why not? What makes you say that?" I persisted.

Lena laughed. "Well, it's mainly because I don't want a husband.

Men are all right for friends, but as soon as you marry them they turn into

⁹¹ Judith Fetterley, focusing on the issue of Cather's lesbianism, sees Lena as a lesbian: "her sexuality is neither conventionally female nor conventionally male but rather identifies an erotic potential possible only outside the patriarchal, heterosexual territory of rigid definitions and polar oppositions. Characterized by a diffused sensuality rooted in a sense of self and neither particularly aggressive nor particularly passive, Lena represents one model of lesbian sexuality" (159). Though Fetterley's essay is convincing overall and Lena's position is certainly unique, her view of Lena as a lesbian is not supported by the evidence, since she powerfully belongs to heterosexual order. She never wishes to marry and in this respect "stays outside institutionalized heterosexuality" (Lindemann *Willa Cather* 68); nevertheless, Lena is not a Gerty Farish, and never an Olive Chancellor.

cranky old fathers, even the wild ones. They begin to tell you what's sensible and what's foolish, and want you to stick at home all the time. I prefer to be foolish when I feel like it, and be accountable to nobody.”
(*MÁ* 282)

While Jim says, “[e]very handsome girl like you [her] marries,” Lena denies this, insisting she does not want a husband, someone who tries to control his wife. She is much more subversive than her New Womanish sisters in Cather’s earlier works; different from Tommy, who identifies with men, from Alexandra, who is a mannish girl in male clothes, and from Thea, who is said to be “not the marrying kind” (*SL* 94), Lena is almost excessively feminine and “marriageable,” and she resists the ordinary American Girl plot. In the end, Lena settles in San Francisco, having a store in the neighborhood of Tiny’s house. In Book V, Jim’s final reunion with *Ántonia* and her family in a Nebraska farm is preceded by his meeting “the two women together” in San Francisco—Lena and Tiny, who have a good relationship, supporting each other (*MÁ* 318).⁹² Though Lena and Tiny do not live together literally, the idea of sisterhood shown in the end presents quite a powerful alternative to heterosexual marriage—a modern version of the “Boston marriage.”

Thus, from the celebrated portrait of “My *Ántonia*” drawn by Jim emerges another portrait of a girl who becomes a New Woman, whom Jim cannot control and

⁹² Tiny is another New Woman character, who “lead[s] the most adventurous life and to achieve the most solid worldly success” (*MÁ* 291). Different from Lena, Tiny follows the “Mr. Mann” plot of going to the West and making money; In this respect, the title of Book IV, “The Pioneer Woman’s Story,” does not so much refer to *Ántonia* as to Tiny. Though achieving material success, Tiny is not depicted positively; in her, “the faculty of becoming interested is worn out” (*MÁ* 294). Cather’s treatment of Tiny suggests her negative attitude toward materialism and also it can be regarded as her de-romanticization of the Western Myth which Jim still seeks in the novel.

who serves to relativize Jim's nostalgic and romantic portrait of *Ántonia* as the Earth Mother. Cather presents her pluralism not only in the idea of nation but also in girls' options.⁹³ Lena says, "I should n't care for a family of that size myself, but somehow it's just right for Tony" (*MÁ* 319); Lena does not disagree with *Ántonia*'s choice and even comments favorably about her married life, which leads Jim to have a reunion with *Ántonia*. *My Ántonia* thus has two heroines and two portraits for girls, both having self-fulfillment, though Jim, who is more conservative than he thinks he is, can only illustrate a picture of one of them.

While Jim gives "a picture" of *Ántonia* as a goddess figure of the Earth Mother/the Primitive Woman, Jim cannot "get a picture" (*MÁ* xii) of Lena—a girl who becomes a New Woman. Lena is beyond Jim's power of control. Lena remains an enigma to Jim, who cannot understand why Lena succeeds ("Lena's success puzzled me" [*MÁ* 270]) or why Lena does not want to marry, and also, for Jim, "in contrast to Lena's overwhelming erotic energies, *Ántonia*'s maternal power is no threat to Jim's masculine discursive power" (Lindemann "It ain't" 127). Lena, nevertheless, has a powerful presence in Jim's narrative. As Lena in a sense deromanticizes Jim's picture of pastoral, so she does his romantic idea of the Muse—the female icon. At the beginning of Book III, Jim meditates on a phrase in Virgil's the *Georgics* about bringing the Muse, who has just immigrated, into the "patria"—"to his father's fields" (*MÁ* 256). Jim's association of the immigrant girls in Black

⁹³ In fact, in *My Ántonia*, Cather presents various options for girls. For example, Frances Harling, "[t]he grown-up daughter," is "her father's chief clerk, and virtually manage[s] his Black Hawk office during his frequent absences" (*MÁ* 145). Having "unusual business ability" (*MÁ* 145), Frances is another Tommy in "Tommy, the Unsentimental" and can be seen as a New Woman; and, after she gets married, she does not become a conventional wife staying at home but "manage[s] the Harling interests in Black Hawk" with her husband (*MÁ* 289).

Hawk with the Muse in the poetry of Virgil presents his attempt of mythically shaping those girls into his version of Columbia. The character who comes to Jim's room, however, is not *Ántonia*, who stands at the center of his picture of "patria," but Lena. Jim's meditation about the Muse is interrupted by Lena's full body and again by the recurrence of the dream of "Lena coming across the harvest field in her short skirt" (*MÁ* 262). Though Jim contains Lena into the image of the Muse at their first reunion, subsequent meetings with her let Lena's physical body burst out of the "image" of the Muse. Lena is "a figure of excess ('too plump,' 'too large') who cannot be contained and therefore must be abandoned" (Lindemann "It Ain't" 124) not only from his life but also from his narrative about the "not-American" girl. And yet, Lena stands at the center of Jim's narrative about his *Ántonia*; among the five Books in his narrative, the very middle chapter is titled "Lena Lingard"—and it is not "My Lena."

Jim to a certain extent presents the situation of middle-class Anglo-Saxon American men at the turn of the century, when Roosevelt encouraged them to be a "strenuous man." Michael Gorman, tracing the intertextuality in *My Ántonia* in relation to the Spanish-American War and the following American imperialism, sees "U.S. expansionism" in Jim's narrative and links Jim with "no American more than Theodore Roosevelt, a figure deeply associated with America's territorial expansion at home and abroad" (50). Gorman associates Jim's hostility to the old snake in the story with "rhetoric the American press and politicians voiced of Spain during the Spanish-American War" (43), and states that "Cather shapes Jim's Eurocentric sense of national and cultural identity through his association with Father Kelly and Charley

Harling, champions of cultural and martial imperialism,” especially through the episode of finding Spanish artifacts in the Nebraska Plains with Charley (47). But how much is Jim a Charley Harling, or a Theodore Roosevelt? In the episode of killing a snake, *Ántonia* admires him, saying, “You is just like big mans,” but it turns out that this is “a mock adventure” (*MÁ* 45, 48). Later, when Jim asks *Ántonia* for a kiss, and tells her that he cares for her most, *Ántonia* jokingly reacts, calling him “a kid”: “She laughed and threw her arms around me [him]. ‘I expect I will, but you’re a kid I’m awfully fond of, anyhow!’” (*MÁ* 217). Called a “kid,” Jim is thus made to remain a “boy” by *Ántonia*. Indeed, Jim is not quite parallel with Charlie Harling. Charlie is two years older than Jim and is “already preparing for Annapolis” when sixteen (*MÁ* 145). Mr. Harling “bought him guns and tools and electric batteries” (*MÁ* 145), and *Ántonia* admires Charlie, cooking and sewing for him, who is a future “Mr. Mann.” Later, Jim gets irritated, since Charlie is “already at Annapolis” while he is “still sitting in Black Hawk” and behaving “like the grammar-school children” (*MÁ* 210). When Jim comes back from the East in Book IV, Charley is “off in his battleship, cruising somewhere on the Caribbean sea” (*MÁ* 297). Considering the time span of this novel, it is likely that Charlie participates in the Spanish-American War. Unlike Charlie, Jim cannot get involved in this imperial war as a “strenuous man,” or “Mr. Mann.” Jim is not such a symbol of American imperialism, though he does try and wish to be.

Since the groundbreaking study by Blanche Gelfant on Jim’s sexual fears, critics have largely recognized Jim’s lack of masculinity and his inability to fit the

standard of middle-class Anglo-Saxon American man.⁹⁴ While he is “a sexual-linguistic gatekeeper, translator, and monitor of female and immigrant language and behavior” (Lindemann *Willa Cather* 64), he is at the same time attracted to immigrants and likes to be with them rather than with Lincoln—or American—girls, and his “contempt for conventional morality, art, and sexuality”—or “Bohemianism”—leads to his being called “queer” (Lindemann *Willa Cather* 65). Also, hating Mr. Harling, who seems to Jim “autocratic and imperial in his ways” (MÁ 153), Jim likes to be with Mrs. Harling and her daughters. Though he curiously notes once that “Charley Harling and I had hunted through these woods, fished from the fallen logs” (MÁ 226), there is no scene like that in the novel, and Jim seems to identify more with girls, enjoying a picnic in the “No-Man’s Land” (MÁ 226).⁹⁵

As race, ethnicity, and gender are closely intertwined in the novel, Jim’s lack of, or deviation from the standard of, American masculinity may be linked with the point that he is a Southern man, like Basil Ransom in *The Bostonians*.⁹⁶ Anne Goodwyn Jones points out the hidden presence of “Dixie” in Jim’s narrative in *My Ántonia*, connecting Jim’s gender troubles with his Southern connection, which she suggests is shared by Cather: “*My Ántonia* is [. . .] a novel that, while it openly

⁹⁴ Some critics have associated Jim’s problem of sexuality with Cather’s own. For example, Fryer relates his dream of Lena with a reaping-hook, which she calls “an encoded story within the story,” with Cather’s own problem about her sexuality: “Presumably, the issue is class, but for ‘Willie’ Cather, who in real life and in this story assumed the persona of a young man, the issue might also be sex--attraction to the lively immigrant *girls*” (377).

⁹⁵ Also, Jim is considerably feminized when he is nearly assaulted by Cutter, in place of Ántonia.

⁹⁶ In Jim’s experience in Nebraska, Cather’s own experience is reflected; at the same time, Cather changes some details. While Cather mentions her homesickness in her moving to Nebraska in the interview (*Willa Cather in Person* 10), Jim declares, “I don’t think I was homesick” (MÁ 8); also, unlike Willa, Jim is an orphan and hardly refers to his dead parents. Cather seemingly makes Jim separate from his Old World in the South.

embraces Nebraska and *Ántonia*, keeps a closet date with Virginia and Southern white manhood. The buried text of *My Ántonia* is the story of the burden of Jim's, and Cather's, Southern history, of how to relieve—and how to be broken by—that burden" (107). Though his Southern roots do not come to the surface, his traumatic rejection/attraction to his Old World can be traced in the novel. Partly similar to Dunlop in "The Profile," though he distances himself from his Old World on a conscious level, the text reveals several signs of Jim's secret connection to it; for example, his attachment to Mr. Shimerda, who on first meeting reminds Jim of "the old portraits I [he] remembered in Virginia" (*MÁ* 23) and who commits suicide from homesickness which Jim quite sympathetically understands; the appearance of "a country that looked something like Nebraska and something like Virginia" in his dream after listening to Pavel's haunting story about the Old World, the story filled with the black/white contrast (*MÁ* 59); the racist description of Blind D'Arnault, who has "the soft, amiable negro voice, like those I [he] remembered from early childhood, with the note of docile subservience in it [. . . and] the happiest face I [he] had seen since I [he] left Virginia," and who looks "like some glistening African god of pleasure, full of strong, savage blood" (*MÁ* 178,185).⁹⁷ Jones points out that Jim's repulsion to the snake with "[h]is abominable muscularity" (44) resembles that to Blind D'Arnault, and that to Wick Cutter. "The intensity of Jim's repulsion stems [. . .] from resistance to a Southern acculturation that associates violent penetration with masculinity," Jones argues; and so "Jim's identifications are so frequently with the

⁹⁷ At the hotel, what d'Arnault plays are "some good old plantation songs," and the men on the floor "gathered round him, as he began to play 'My Old Kentucky Home,' then sing together "one negro melody after another" (*MÁ* 179). Cather continues to make d'Arnault connected with the Southern plantation.

feminine position” (102). Jim’s repulsion toward excess masculinity, then, is linked to his lack of masculinity. Jim’s possibility of becoming a Mr. Man—a masculine American man like Charlie—is already at stake earlier in the novel; Mr. Shimerda, his surrogate father, promises to give him the gun he brought from Bohemia, but he commits suicide with that very gun from his strong homesickness. The Introduction reveals that Jim has sought to be Mr. Mann, continuing to get involved in the railroad project, which symbolizes the American/Western Dream, and getting married to a rich American Girl; however, “his success” as a “Western and American” man (*MÁ* xi) is marred by the fact that his marriage is not “happy.”

As the Southern tradition is inseparably connected with the issues of class and race, his portraits of immigrant girls are to a certain extent influenced by the perspective he acquired in his childhood in Virginia. *Ántonia* is characterized by her brown skin and eyes: “They [*Ántonia*’s eyes] were big and warm and full of light, like the sun shining on brown pools in the wood. Her skin was brown, too, and in her cheeks she had a glow of rich, dark color. Her brown hair was curly and wild-looking” (*MÁ* 22-3). Abate suggests that, in the portrait of *Ántonia* illustrated by Jim, “*Ántonia*’s white European ethnicity often becomes blurred with Southern racial blackness” (111). *Ántonia* works hard in the farm and also works as a servant at the Burdens and the Harlings, cooking, housekeeping, and nursing; and “[t]here was a basic harmony between *Ántonia* and her mistress” (*MÁ* 174). In addition, some elements regarding *Ántonia* can be linked with the image of the South. Jones suggests that Wick Cutter’s potential rape of *Ántonia* can be linked with Martin Colbert’s of Nancy in *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* (104). Moreover, the name of *Ántonia*’s

baby—Martha—who was born through a kind of “miscegenation” can be linked with the name of Blind D’Arnault’s mother, Martha, who gives birth to him probably through miscegenation in the plantation in the deep South.

Though critics have barely noted it, Jim’s Southern connection can be traced also in the portrait of Lena.⁹⁸ Lena, being “so quietly conventionalized by city clothes” (*MÁ* 257), can be viewed as an Americanized character; nevertheless, she is somewhat connected secretly to the image of the South in the novel. Frequently going out with her, Jim comes to keep company with the landlord of Lena’s lodging house and with a man living there. Her landlord from Kentucky, Old Colonel Raleigh, finds a Southern tone in Lena’s voice, though she is Norwegian, and adores her: “He said her [Lena’s] voice reminded him of Southern voices, and he found as many opportunities of hearing it as possible” (*MÁ* 275). Considering that Jim mentions Lena’s “soft” and sleepy voice quite often in his narrative, it is likely that he is attracted to Lena with her voice which—maybe unconsciously—reminds him of a Southern drawl. Jim goes to see plays with Lena, one of which is “a war play called ‘Shenandoah’” (*MÁ* 263).⁹⁹ “Dancing ‘Home, Sweet Home,’ with Lena was like coming in with the tide,” Jim notes; the dance with Lena is like “the waltz of coming home to something, of inevitable, fated return” (*MÁ* 215-6)—possibly to his suppressed past in the South, or his “patria,” of which Lena is the Muse (*MÁ* 256). Neglecting his study, Jim played not only with Lena but also with the Pole, who has

⁹⁸ Though Sarah C. Gardam discusses the similarity between Lena Lingard and Lena Grove in William Faulkner’s *Light in August* in relation to their transcendence of their “function as targets for the objectifying male gaze” (239), Gardam does not point out another essential similarity that both are seen as Southern women.

⁹⁹ The Shenandoah runs through the Northern part of Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley, where Cather’s Virginia home stood, was one of the main battlefields of the Civil War.

an old tradition of chivalry, and with the old Colonel, who “used to talk to me [Jim] about Lena and the ‘great beauties’ he had known in his youth” in the South (*MÁ* 280). Just as Dunlop’s ambivalent relationship with his Old World is reflected in two sides of Virginia’s face in “The Profile,” Jim’s memory of his Old World is suppressed but recurrently appears, and, in Jim’s portrait/narrative of *Ántonia*, there is a hidden portrait of Lena, who is closely linked with the image of the Southern Belle. Vividly contrasted with *Ántonia*, who has brown skin, Lena has “a miraculous whiteness”:

Her yellow hair was burned to a ruddy thatch on her head; but her legs and arms, curiously enough, in spite of constant exposure to the sun, kept a miraculous whiteness which somehow made her seem more undressed than other girls who went scantily clad. The first time I stopped to talk to her, I was astonished at her soft voice and easy, gentle ways. The girls out there usually got rough and mannish after they went to herding.” (*MÁ* 160)

While *Ántonia* has “brown legs and arms” and wears clothes “like a man,” Lena is seen as feminine, with her white legs and arms (*MÁ* 149, 120). In the contrast between *Ántonia* and Lena can be found Cather’s childhood categorization; darkness is linked with tomboyishness and whiteness is linked with femininity.¹⁰⁰ In this novel,

¹⁰⁰ Though critics have hardly noted it, there is another Cather-ish character in the novel: Sally Harling. “Sally, the tomboy with short hair, was a year younger,” Jim narrates, “She was nearly as strong as I, and uncannily clever at all boys’ sports. Sally was a wild thing, with sunburned yellow hair, bobbed about her ears, and a brown skin, for she never wore a hat. She raced all over town on one roller skate, often cheated at ‘keeps,’ but was such a quick shot one could n’t catch her at it” (*MÁ* 144-45). Sally’s figure as a “tomboy” with “a brown skin” sharply reminds readers of the child Willa. Sally also shares Cather’s liking of cross-dressing; when the Harling children and Jim have “a costume ball in the back parlor [. . .]

the Scandinavian whiteness of Lena could be linked with whiteness in the Southern Belle; and at the same time Lena's femininity, too sexual and volatile, challenges gender expectations for the Southern Belle. Cather might have been aware of the resemblance between the antebellum Southern image-making of the Southern Belle and the turn-of-the-century image-making of the American Girl, both using a sexually innocent white girl to symbolize the nation/region, establishing the standard of feminine beauty and racial superiority, and stabilizing the boundary of nation, race, and gender.¹⁰¹ In *My Ántonia*, the deviation from gender expectations in the turn-of-the-century America are linked with the image of the South; while it is impossible for Jim to acquire masculinity, Lena shows overtly abundant and sexual femininity, both subverting the gender norms not only of turn-of-the-century America but of the Old South.

Taken together, in *My Ántonia*, Jim's portrait of Ántonia as "The Primitive Woman" is juxtaposed with the (self) portrait of Lena as "The Modern Woman,"

Sally always dressed like a boy" (*MÁ* 169). Like Sally, Cather was a tomboy, liked cross-dressing, and, had such sunburned skin that she called herself "a dang'rous nigger." In fact, Sally is even linked with the image of this "dang'rous nigger"; while her mother plays European operas and her sisters play Swedish music on the piano, Sally "drum[s] the plantation melodies that negro minstrel troupes brought to town" (*MÁ* 153). She is such a potentially problematic figure in the novel. What becomes of Sally, however, is never mentioned; while Jim tells what became of other girls, readers cannot know what Sally grows up to be. The ambiguous presence of Sally quietly discloses Cather's complicated exploration of girls/women in the novel and of herself as a girl/woman, possibly connected with her traumatic past as a "dang'rous nigger."

¹⁰¹ A similar situation can be found in *A Lost Lady*, the last of Cather's pioneer novels published in 1923, where the former American Girl, Marian Forrester, is strongly linked with whiteness through Niel, who is from Virginia: "The frosty air had brought no colour to her cheeks,—her skin had always the fragrant, crystalline whiteness of white lilacs" (*A Lost Lady* 26). Marian, resisting the conventional role of wife and breaking Niel's fantasy of the (Southern) lady, symbolizes the change in America from the pioneer era to the industrial era, and to the progressive era in first getting married to a pioneer railroad man, then having an affair with a materialist business man, and then with "a rich, cranky old Englishman" who meets her in California and takes her to Buenos Ayres, the new frontier for the progressive America (*A Lost Lady* 148).

showing two options for girls and revealing a limited view in the “figure-making” of Jim, who cannot control Lena, the New Woman. Also, Jim’s ambivalent connection to his Old World can be found in the contrast between *Ántonia* and Lena, and, in this respect, Lena serves to subvert the gender model not only of turn-of-the-century America but also of the Old South.

Meanwhile, what makes *My Ántonia* more complex is that Jim’s narrative is a framed story, accompanied by the Introduction by another writer, who is one of the New Woman figures, being a professional writer and having her own apartment. Forming a kind of frame of the novel, the Introduction of *My Ántonia* plays an important role in disclosing the present situation of Jim in the 1910s. The narrator “I” reveals that Jim is “legal counsel for one of the great Western railways,” and remains romantic, following “those big Western dreams” (MÁ x, xi). What is no less important is that the narrator “I” discloses Jim’s unhappy marriage despite “his sympathetic, solicitous interest in women” (MÁ xi), which Jim omits revealing in his narrative. His cheerless marriage is contrasted ironically with *Ántonia*’s happy one. The narrator’s reference to Mrs. Jim Burden, however, has much more meaning than just the ironical characterization of Jim; on the contrary, the narrator’s depiction of Mrs. Burden presents another “picture” of a New Woman and also of a “Bohemian girl,” and serves to reveal Cather’s sharp critique of the 1910s radical New Womanhood in New York.

It is worth noting that when Cather revised the narrator’s Introduction in 1926 she cut a certain amount of information about Mrs. Burden, which originally included the specific reference to her participation in social movements:

Although Jim Burden and I both live in New York, and are old friends, I do not see much of him there. He is legal counsel for one of the great Western railways, and is sometimes away from his New York office for weeks together. That is one reason why we do not often meet. Another is that I do not like his wife.

When Jim was still an obscure young lawyer, struggling to make his way in New York, his career was suddenly advanced by a brilliant marriage. Genevieve Whitney was the only daughter of a distinguished man. Her marriage with young Burden was the subject of sharp comment at the time. It was said she had been brutally jilted by her cousin, Rutland Whitney, and that she married this unknown man from the West out of bravado. She was a restless, headstrong girl, even then, who liked to astonish her friends. Later, when I knew her, she was always doing something unexpected. *She gave one of her town houses for a Suffrage headquarters, produced one of her own plays at the Princess Theater, was arrested for picketing during a garment-makers' strike, etc.* I am never able to believe that she has much feeling for the causes to which she lends her name and her fleeting interest. She is handsome, energetic, executive, but to me she seems unimpressible and temperamentally incapable of enthusiasm. Her husband's quiet tastes irritate her, I think, and she finds it worth while to play the patroness to a group of young poets and painters of advanced ideas and mediocre ability. She has her own fortune and lives her own life. For

some reason, she wishes to remain Mrs. James Burden. (*MÁ* x-xi, emphasis added)

The citation, from the 1918 version of the Introduction, shows that the wife of Jim Burden, Genevieve Whitney—once a typical American Girl, the daughter of a wealthy man—had a reckless and gossipy marriage to Jim and now has an independent life. What should be noted is the italicized part: “She gave one of her town houses for a Suffrage headquarters, produced one of her own plays at the Princess Theater, was arrested for picketing during a garment-makers’ strike, etc.”¹⁰² Small as it is, this detail about Mrs. Jim Burden is highly important. First, Mrs. Burden offers her house for a Suffrage movement, and therefore she is its active supporter. Second, Mrs. Burden is a playwright, producing her own play at the Princess Theater, which was an actual theater founded in 1913 and was located at West 39th street in New York City. It was a small Broadway theater, and was known to show experimental plays. Thus, Mrs. Burden is not only a patroness but also engages herself in modern art. Lastly, the narrator reveals that Mrs. Burden joins social reform movements so actively and was arrested at a garment-makers’ strike. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were a lot of strikes in big cities such as New York and Chicago. Ladies garment workers founded the International Ladies

¹⁰² When Cather revised *My Ántonia* in 1926, Cather revised the Introduction, cutting out a considerable part of the description of Mrs. Burden. For one thing, it can be attributed to the change in the social situation. American women finally got their rights to vote in 1920, and the 1920s Greenwich Village was “no longer a seat of political rebellion for American expatriates in their own country” (Kazin 297). Instead of radical activists, those young writers who had been to Paris started to be settled in Greenwich Village in the 1920s, and “American Bohemia” itself changed. On the other hand, while Cather cuts out the scandalous story about Mrs. Burden’s marriage and the reference to her participation in social movements such as suffrage and strikes, she leaves in the information that Mrs. Burden is a patroness of radical and less talented artists.

Garment Workers Union which had many branches in major cities, and they had two big strikes in 1909 and 1910, which not only working women joined but a number of wealthy women supported (Figure 32). Sharing these characteristics, Mrs. Burden can be seen as a typical social activist in the urban space in the 1910s.



Figure 32. “Strikes, ladies tailors, N.Y., Feb. 1910, picket girls on duty.”

Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Indeed, the portrait of Mrs. Jim Burden as a radical, or political, New Woman who participates in social movements as well as modern art can be associated with the image of radical New Women in Greenwich Village in New York, where Cather lived when she wrote *My Ántonia*.¹⁰³ Greenwich Village was the center of radical movements regarding both social problems and art at the beginning of the twentieth century, and was called “Bohemia,” or “New Bohemia” especially in the 1910s

¹⁰³ Cather moved to New York in 1906, living in an apartment in Greenwich Village, which became the center of radical social movements including suffrage in the 1910s. After the publication of *O Pioneers!* in 1913, she received a number of letters from various women’s group in a short time; and Cather cried, “Perish all social clubs for women!” (Sergeant 117). For more about radical reform movements found in Greenwich Village between 1912 and 1920, see Levin, Chapter 7.

(Levin 339). “Many feminists, like other cultural radicals, gravitated toward a major cultural phenomenon of the early twentieth century, the little ‘bohémias’ of major cities, most especially New York’s Greenwich Village, where low rents attracted artists, writers, political and social radicals, and hangers-on who liked the talk and the atmosphere” (Matthews 110), and, especially from 1912, radical movements in Greenwich Village became remarkable with, for example, the creation of the Liberal Club and radical women’s group Heterodoxy. Though there is no direct reference to Greenwich Village in *My Ántonia*, it will be meaningful to link social situations of the 1910s in Greenwich Village and how the narrator “I” describes Mrs. Burden, whose characteristics have much in common with radical “Bohemian girls” found in Greenwich Village when Cather lived there.

One of the prominent “Bohemian girls” in Greenwich Village was Mabel Dodge, who “offered her elegant apartment at 23 Fifth Avenue” for a salon for free conversation in Greenwich Village from 1913 (Levin 356). Dodge was “a wealthy and unconventional patron of advanced art and radical politics” (Matthews 110), supporting strikes and picketing, though some people saw her talent as limited and criticized that she was “a little frivolous and a little empty-headed” (Stansell 107). Those invited to her salon consisted of members from various fields and positions, such as trade unionists, anarchists, suffragists, poets, lawyers, modern artists etc., and they discussed freely such topics as art, the labor problem, suffrage, free love, and birth control. Mrs. Burden’s maiden name, Genevieve Whitney, can be also linked with another actual figure Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, the daughter of the king of the railroad, Cornelius Vanderbilt. Gertrude Whitney was a prominent figure in New

York society, who was a patroness of modern art and, with her great fortune, collected art works which were to be exhibited later in the Whitney Museum of American Art. She was an artist (sculptor) herself and had a studio in Greenwich Village; also, she got engaged in the advancement of women in the field of art, and, without her husband's help, "took the lead in everything she did" (McCarthy 215). Accordingly, sharing a lot with these wealthy and radical patrons of Greenwich Village, Mrs. Jim Burden can be seen as a so-called "Bohemian girl" in American Bohemia.

Andrew Jewell thoroughly examines Cather's relationship with Greenwich Village, where she lived from 1906 to 1927. In discussing "Coming, Aphrodite!" (1920), which is set in Greenwich Village, Jewell investigates how Cather distinguished "Local People" and "Villagers," and how she preferred the old Greenwich Village with "the refined artistic sensibilities of 'Jamesians'" to the new Greenwich Village (64). Jewell examines Cather's negative reaction to Greenwich "Villagers" chiefly in "Coming, Aphrodite!"; then, it is no wonder if this idea already appears in *My Ántonia*, which was published two years earlier than "Coming Aphrodite!." Through the portrait of Mrs. Jim Burden, Cather negatively presents the radical New Womanhood created in New York, especially in Greenwich Village, or American Bohemia.

Considering that Greenwich Village was often called "Bohemia" and the villagers were called "Bohemians," the contrast between Ántonia and Mrs. Burden is highly essential in *My Ántonia*, which can be seen as a story about two Bohemias with two "Bohemian girls": one is a Bohemian space in the rural area of Nebraska,

which is linked to European Bohemia through the Shimerdas and the Cuzaks (especially by *Ántonia*); the other is American Bohemia in New York (or Greenwich Village), where Mrs. Jim Burden belongs. The most marked differences between the two kinds of Bohemia are regarding art and motherhood among others. First, European Bohemia is described as culturally rich, linked with the European tradition. Mr. Shimerda used to play the violin with his friends in his old country in Europe, and the violin is the essential link between him and his home in Bohemia. After coming to the United States, however, he never plays the violin; later, this violin appears in the novel again when Leo, a son of *Ántonia*, plays it in front of Jim at the reunion of Jim and *Ántonia*. In Book V, *Ántonia*'s husband Cuzak brings a Bohemian newspaper from the town, and they talk about news of a Bohemian singer, Maria Vasak, who is characterized as a world-famous artist and of whom Cuzak has a personal memory. Cather positively shows the connection that Bohemian immigrants have with art, which is presented as genuine and is linked with old, European tradition. Here can be found Cather's idea of American civilization, which has something in common with that of James and with those of such thinkers as Kallen and Bourne, presenting the idea that "'American civilization' may come to mean the perfection of the cooperative harmonies of 'European civilization'" (Kallen No. 2591, 220). In contrast, the cultural enterprise Mrs. Jim Burden develops in New York is depicted negatively. The narrator points out the lack of artistic sense in Mrs. Burden's cultural activities, criticizing that she is a patroness to "a group of young poets and painters of advanced ideas and mediocre ability" (*MÁ x*). In the 1910s Greenwich Village, "the New Bohemians were the first to connect their art, literature, and

personal lifestyles to the cause of organized labor and the socialist movement” and, since art was “for the sake of life, not strictly for the sake of art,” their art was sometimes regarded as vulgar (Levin 340, 348); in this respect, the narrator’s negative comments on Mrs. Burden’s art can be seen as Cather’s negative reaction to the new art created in “New Bohemia.”

Another essential difference between two “Bohemian” women can be found in the theme of motherhood. The two women are vividly contrasted, *Ántonia* as the Earth Mother figure having a large family and Mrs. Burden as a childless wife and active reformist. *Ántonia*’s high fertility is fully shown in the last Book, especially through the dramatic image of her children coming out of the cave. Jim feels “dizzy,” seeing “a veritable explosion of life out of the dark cave into the sunlight” (*MÁ* 328), which leads to Jim’s final picture of *Ántonia* as “The Primitive Woman.”¹⁰⁴ Around the turn of the century, while the birthrate of the Anglo-Saxons decreased and while feminists and those radical groups supported birth control, immigrants and minorities had large families with a lot of children; and Theodore Roosevelt warned that the white, middle-class, Anglo-Saxons had a risk of committing what the sociologist Edward A. Ross called “race suicide” (Matthews 38). In the contrast between *Ántonia* with “a family of that size” (*MÁ* 319) and Mrs. Burden, Cather to a large extent adopts the popular discourse of “race suicide.” Cather, then, distances herself from both of these two “Bohemian girls.” Though she portrays *Ántonia* much more favorably than Mrs. Burden, *Ántonia*’s excessive fertility underlines her Otherness as an immigrant.

¹⁰⁴ The goddess image of *Ántonia* as a fecund Earth Mother can be seen as European; Henry Adams notes, the goddess in Europe “was reproduction—the greatest and most mysterious of all energies; all she needed was to be fecund” (321).

Taken together, the novel presents another pair of portraits in the vivid contrast between two “Bohemian girls,” between two Bohemias: Cather shows the cultural richness linked with European tradition in European Bohemia, and the Bohemian girl here is portrayed as the “Primitive Woman” to almost a mythic sense; in contrast, the “Bohemian girl” in American Bohemia represents the radical feminist and reformist New Woman and Cather negatively depicts the “New Bohemia” she represents. *My Ántonia* is thus in dual senses a story about the “Bohemian” girl. In Jim’s narrative, Jim romantically celebrates Ántonia, narrating a “Bohemian” girl story where a girl from Bohemia becomes the Earth Mother in America; in the Introduction, the narrator, contrasting two kinds of “Bohemian girls,” favorably remembers Ántonia, whom she once “admired,” while she publicly declares her aversion to Jim’s wife, saying “I do not like his wife” (*MÁ* xi, x). While her “own story [about Ántonia] was never written” (*MÁ* xiii), the narrator “I” in the Introduction does “get a picture” of another “Bohemian” girl (*MÁ* xii), relativizing Jim’s picture of his Bohemian girl in a different way from Lena’s. The introduction functions in contextualizing Jim’s nostalgic, retrospective narrative and in situating his narrative in the 1910s gender situation in America, where men tried to seek—or restore—their masculinity in their imperial enterprise and their romantic myth of the West, while women became more independent and rejected the traditional role of wife/mother.

Not being an American Bohemian or a European Bohemian, Lena Lingard is worth examining again, since she reflects Cather’s complicated attitude toward the idea of New Womanhood and her certain separation from the two “Bohemias” in the novel. Lena is a fairly subversive New Woman and could be a radical feminist by

nature in claiming women's limitations in a domestic space, but she never actively joins radical social movements. In this respect, it is meaningful that Cather makes Lena a dressmaker. In major cities in turn-of-the-century America, the garment industry flourished and a number of factory girls worked under poor conditions, producing "ready made," and these terrible conditions led them and social activists to garment-makers strikes, as mentioned before. Lena, however, does not work at a garment factory as a factory girl but runs a dress shop as a dress designer herself. She has talent and never joins the labor union or strikes. In the narrative portrayed by Jim, Lena is depicted as seductive and rather threatening while *Ántonia* is positively celebrated; nevertheless, Lena represents a powerful portrait of a modern woman who never fights politically but successfully overcomes the limitations of women in the patriarchal social system. Cather's idea of New Womanhood is something in common with what Henry James presents in Doctor Prance in *The Bostonians*. Doctor Prance, not joining such social movements as Mrs. Farrinder pursues, still shows the powerful figure of New Woman by practicing the movement in a literal sense, and "whatever might become of the movement at large, Doctor Prance's own little revolution was a success" (*Bostonians* 39). Like Doctor Prance, Cather's New Women—Lena (and the narrator "I," who also makes Jim's narrative unstable by giving it a "frame")—succeed in their "own little revolution" (*Bostonians* 39).

In short, Cather revises the typology of the American Girl of the progressive era by portraying "not-American" girls who embody the multicultural idea of America. Her early "American" girl story, "Tommy, the Unsentimental," presents a

girl who becomes a New Woman, though, in the story, boundaries in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and girls' choice are fixed; then, the American girl in "The Profile" deviates from the icon of the American Girl and also serves to embody the unbridgeable gap between the Old World and the New World of the portrait painter. Then, in her "not-American" novels, immigrant girls successfully bridge the two poles (American and foreign, male and female, the American Girl plot and the New Woman plot), and present what Randolph Bourne calls "Trans-national America," which is linked with the European tradition, and also present the Jamesian idea of America in their "foreignness." At the same time, though Cather's "not-American" girls transcendently bridge the Old World and the New World, the celebrated model is frequently juxtaposed with the failed model in her works, which may be linked with her ambivalence toward her own connection to her Old World in the South. Cather's negotiation of the issues of nation and gender appears more complexly in *My Ántonia*, where Cather portrays a Bohemian immigrant through the eyes of a Southerner and where not only girls' options but also different ideas of New Womanhood are juxtaposed. In Jim's "My Ántonia," the portrait of a Bohemian girl who has a happy marriage and becomes the Earth Mother is juxtaposed with a (self) portrait of another girl, Lena, who becomes a New Woman and who is situated at the hidden center of Jim's narrative. Then, at the level of the "frame," the narrator "I" presents another picture of a "Bohemian girl," which is sharply contrasted with Jim's "Bohemian girl" as well as with the portrait of Lena. Contrasting two "Bohemias"—American Bohemia and European Bohemia—Cather favorably portrays the latter, though she distances herself from both Bohemias. The narrator "I"'s negative portrait

of Mrs. Burden also suggests Cather's negative critique of radical New Womanhood and "New Bohemia" in 1910s Greenwich Village, which is contrasted with such a New Woman figure as Lena, who does not fight for causes but powerfully overcomes limitations of women in patriarchal society and challenges conventional gender roles.

After *My Ántonia*, Cather's exploration of the American Girl is to shift to another direction. In her last pioneer novel, *A Lost Lady* (1923), Cather portrays a former American girl who embodies the change in turn-of-the-century America through the eyes of a Southern boy. In other works published in the 1920s, including *The Professor's House* and *My Mortal Enemy*, Cather shifts her attention from pioneer days and immigrant heroines and focuses instead on "American" girls and women who live in a modern, urban life. "The world broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts," Cather says later (*Not Under Forty*, v), and the change in American society after the World War I seems to have led Cather to another dimension in her critique of America. At the very end of her career, then, Cather explores the image of the American girl from a totally different perspective. In *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* (1940), she returns to her childhood life, her roots in Virginia, and writes a novel where she deals for the first time with a black, slave girl and where she herself appears as a white, Southern girl.

Conclusion

Around the turn into the twentieth century, when the United States went through a range of social, economic, and geographic changes, the meaning of “America” shifted during the process Alan Trachtenberg has termed “the incorporation of America.” In this period, the image of the American Girl among others functioned in the standardization and unification of the norms of nation and gender. The WASP icon of the American Girl helped to define the “American” race, and represented the ideal of the progressive and materialistic America of the Gilded Age; in addition, though the image of the American Girl shows the new model of young women in contrast with the Victorian model of the “Angel in the House,” it is still not subversive in that the American Girl is situated within the institution of heterosexuality and serves to make various boundaries stable. The three writers I dealt with in this dissertation—Henry James, Edith Wharton, and Willa Cather—have something in common with the turn-of-the-century myth-makers of the American Girl in that their “American girls” represent their notion of America as well as of girls; however, they challenge the icon of the American Girl and the ideas it embodies, raising questions about ideas of nation and gender.

Chapter one briefly examined several examples of American girls in late-nineteenth-century American literature, and showed that, while the popular image of the American Girl almost always expects the happy marriage, the idea of girlhood became complicated around the turn of the century, when a girl can—or should—“choose” whether to marry or not, whether to have a profession or not, whether to

have a heterosexual marriage or a Boston marriage, or whether to become American or not. Then, the following chapters explored how the three writers' representation of girls challenges the popular icon of the American Girl and raise questions about the ideas of nation and gender; the three chapters examined how Henry James revises his American girls (Chapter two), how Edith Wharton ironically plays with the type of the American Girl (Chapter three), and how Willa Cather presents her "not-American girls," who embody her ideal of a multicultural America (Chapter four).

A close examination of the three writers' representations of the American girl revealed the ways in which their awareness of complexity in the idea of girlhood in turn-of-the-century America leads to their critique and revision of the American girl story. Especially in the three works which this dissertation closely dealt with—*The Bostonians*, *The House of Mirth*, and *My Ántonia*—the three writers juxtapose two options for girls and make their novels different both from the popular American Girl story, which ends with the happy marriage, and from the ordinary New Woman story, where the girl chooses to pursue her profession or independence instead of conventional marriage. In doing so, these writers reveal the complex situation about the issue of girls' choice, which they make an open question.

Moreover, in raising questions about the idea of "America," these three writers can be seen as Americanists in a different sense from the materialistic and unitary one of the turn of the century. The notion of the "American civilization" these writers share is linked with cosmopolitanism and with the old, European tradition; they distance themselves to some extent from the new, progressive America, which is linked with popularization, materialism, and standardization. While the American

civilization of the Progressive Era is linked with artificiality, the Tocquevillian idea of America is linked with nature in their novels, and the idea—which is embodied by James’s American girl as “a child of nature”—comes to be represented in “foreignness” in the works of Wharton and Cather.

Thus, the three writers—James, Wharton, and Cather—negotiate the ideas of America and girlhood in their “American” girl in a different way from the one shown in the popular icon of the American Girl. While the turn-of-the-century icon of the American Girl functions in stabilizing the boundary and incorporating the standard of nation and gender, the three writers’ girls make various boundaries unstable and present plural options, revealing the complexity and instability in the idea of “America” as well as “girlhood” at the turn of the century, which are seemingly suppressed in the national enterprise of “the incorporation of America.”

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