Material Masterpieces:
Art Collecting and the Formulation of French-Jewish Identity, From Dreyfus to Vichy

by James K. McAuley
Somerville College
Candidate Number: 439274



A thesis submitted for the degree
Of Doctor of Philosophy in History,
14 January 2016

Superivsors: Dr. Ruth Harris and Dr. Martin Conway

Il voulait, en somme, une œuvre d'art et pour ce qu'elle était par elle-même et pour ce qu'elle pouvait permettre de lui prêter ; il voulait aller avec elle, grâce à elle, comme soutenu par un adjuvant, comme porté par un véhicule, dans une sphère où les sensations sublimées lui imprimeraient une commotion inattendue et dont il chercherait longtemps et même vainement à analyser les causes.

—Joris-Karl Huysmans, *À rebours* (1884)

Great nations write their autobiographies in three manuscripts—the book of their deeds, the book of their words, and the book of their art. Not one of these books can be understood unless we read the two others; but of the three, the only quite trustworthy one is the last. The acts of a nation may be triumphant by its good fortune; and its words mighty by the genius of a few of its children: but its art, only by the general gifts and common sympathies of the race.

—John Ruskin, *St. Mark's Rest* (1877)

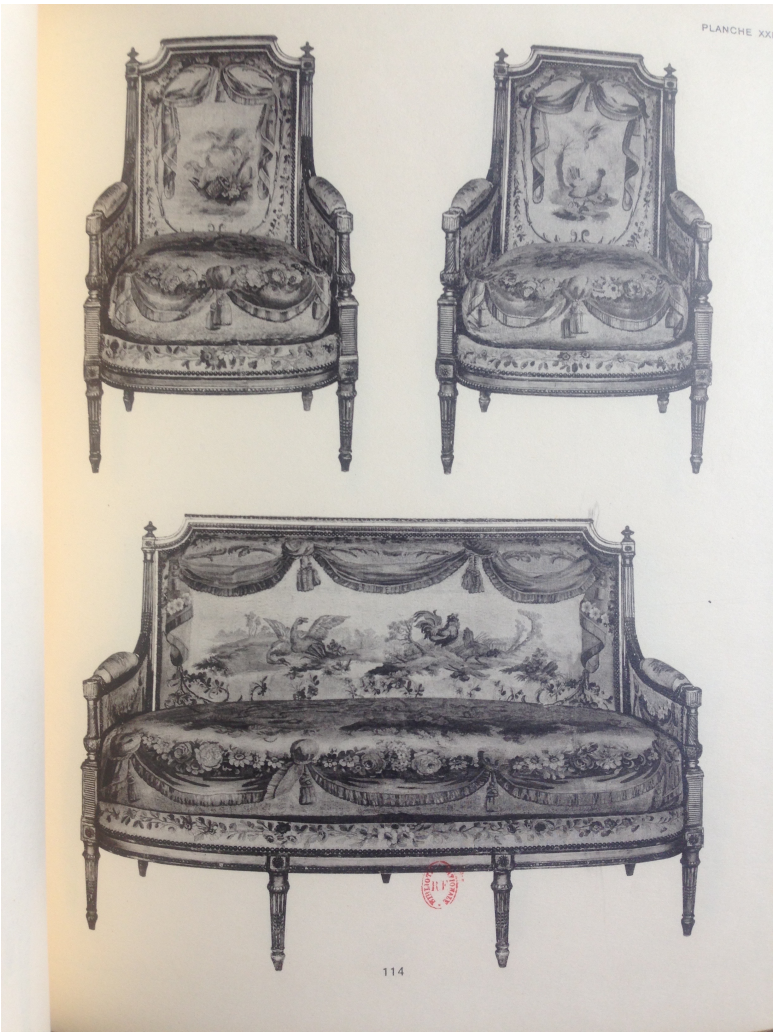

Figure 1. *Collection Hugo Cahen d'Anvers*, Galerie Jean Charpentier, Paris, June 1934, BNF.

ABSTRACT

This thesis relies on an extensive series of previously unexploited archival materials in France, Britain, and the United States to examine the role of art collecting among French-Jewish elites after Dreyfus and before Vichy. The families who constituted France's *fin-de-siècle* Jewish establishment—among others, the Rothschilds and the Reinachs, the Éphrussis and the Foulds, the Camondos and the Cahen d'Anvers—all shared an intense interest in collecting art and material objects. This interest they pursued with passion throughout a period in which the position of French Jews was increasingly uncertain. The Dreyfus Affair had challenged the promise of assimilation and the social station of the "*israélite*," while economic circumstances and waves of immigration from Eastern Europe had exacerbated extant French anti-Semitism. As plutocrats, many of these elite families were often even the targets of that anti-Semitism, yet they pursued their material interests regardless. Today, the collections they created—mostly of eighteenth-century French art—are their most enduring legacies, either in the form of individual public museums or as additions in other national museums. To that end, this thesis argues that material culture was central to the experiences of these families as Jews and as people in the French *fin-de-siècle*.

The central contention of this thesis is that material culture was a crucial way in which these elites experienced Jewishness in private and especially in public. Beginning with Hannah Arendt (1951) and Michael Marrus (1971), most of the many studies of this *fin-de-siècle milieu* have tended to consider these individuals in the respective discourses of politics and culture. Few have emphasized their actual lived experiences as people with complex inner lives. Collecting, as archvial materials suggest, was a means of achieving personal sanctuary and solace in the midst of significant personal tragedies as well as an increasingly hostile external environment. It was also a significant means of preserving public dignity. Even fewer studies, after all, have emphasized the way in which French anti-Semitism of the late nineteenth century—from the likes of the journalist Édouard Drumont and the critics Edmond and Jules Goncourt—was often expressed in the language of material culture: Jews were attacked for "inauthentic" aesthetic tastes and for "invading" the realm of French cultural patrimony. As this thesis argues, Jewish elites responded to that material critique in material terms, amassing exhaustive collections of art and objects that, in their eyes, celebrated France and its glorious past. As many of their last wills and testaments suggest, the network of museums they created in the 1920s and 1930s were all subtle arguments for the compatibility of Frenchness and Jewishness. The Holocaust, of course, fundamentally altered the meaning of these museums as well as the memories of those who established them. This dissertation concludes with a reflection on these museums as "*lieux de mémoire*," material manifestations not only of vanished people but also of a vanished culture.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing this thesis has been a challenge and a pleasure. I could never have completed it without the help, support, and kindness of more names than I can list here. To begin an incomplete list, I am grateful first of all for the incredible supervision I received at every stage, from Professor Ruth Harris and Professor Martin Conway. In terms of reading and thinking, both helped me in more ways than I can say. Both were also constant editors and provided feedback on every word I wrote with remarkable thought, speed, and patience. As ever, I remain indebted to Professors Patrice and Margaret Higonnet, my undergraduate advisors who continue to advise me on so much, and no longer just on French history. In Oxford, I have also benefitted tremendously from conversations with Professor Abigail Green, Professor David Rechter, and especially Professor Derek Penslar, who discussed this project with me from its inception and very kindly read significant portions of it in the terms that followed. During his sabbatical in Oxford last year, Tom Stammers shared his brilliant work with me and advised me as I was formulating my own thesis. His work on Drumont in particular greatly advanced my own thinking on the latter's "material" critique, and I am deeply indebted to Tom's sharp and astute insights. Additionally, Alex Katz, Julian Gewirtz, Deborah Friedell, Lisa Fine, Susannah Jacob, Julia Kete, Charlotte Smart, George Bogden, Geoffrey Shaw, Erin Fitzgerald, and Eli Martin were all an invaluable help throughout this process.

Outside of Oxford, I have benefitted from conversations with Arthur Goldhammer, Maurice Samuels, Susan Suleiman, Maya Jasanoff, Pierre Birnbaum, Judith Surkis, and Emma Rothschild. In Paris, I benefitted tremendously from the assistance of Sophie Le Tarnec at the Musée Nissim de Camondo, without whose encyclopedic knowledge of the Camondos I would never have been able to comb through the museum's wonderful archive. Philippe Landau at the Consistoire Central and Jean-Claude Kuperminc at the Alliance Israélite Universelle also helped me greatly over the course of my research. In Washington, Michael Abramowitz at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum kindly assisted in my research at the museum's archive. Of all those who helped in my research, however, none have been more helpful than Felipe Propper de Callejón and Renata Goldschmidt-Propper, who have shared with me every document, letter, and diary they own pertaining to the Fould family in France before 1940. More than that, they have shared with me their time—hours and even days on end, telling me the stories of their family and its dispersal from the cosmopolitan Europe of the past. I am grateful to count them as friends, and much of the archival breadth of this thesis is a function of their generosity.

Most of all, however, I am grateful in more ways than I can say to my parents, without whose support I would never have been able to complete this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION.
6

CHAPTER I.
A Community in Crisis:
The Inner Lives of French-Jewish Elites in the *Fin-de-Siècle*, 27

CHAPTER II.
The Goncourts, Drumont,
and the Material Anti-Semitism of the *Fin-de-Siècle*, 65

Chapter III.
Moïse de Camondo, Material Monarchy,
and the Petit Trianon of the Rue de Monceau, 89

Chapter IV.
Théodore Reinach, The Villa Kérylos,
and the Quest for Greek Beauty, 119

Chapter V.
Béatrice Éphrussi, the Villa Île de France,
and Materiality as Agency, 150

Chapter VI.
The Foulds, the Château Royaumont,
and the Ancien Régime Aesthetic, 181

Chapter VII.
From Private Collections to Public Museums:
Materal Arguments for French-Jewish Compatibility, 211

CONCLUSION.
255

BIBLIOGRAPHY.
267

INTRODUCTION.

"*…tel objet ne s'oppose jamais à la multiplication du même processus de projection narcissique sur un nombre indéfini d'objets, il l'impose au contraire, se prêtant par là à un environnement total, à une totalisation des images de soi, qui est proprement le miracle de la collection. Car on ne se collectionne toujours soi-même*."

—Jean Baudrillard, *Le système des objets* (1968)[1]

I. Principal Argument

This dissertation explores the expressive role of art collecting among the French-Jewish elite in the early twentieth century, a central but often overlooked dimension of the relationship between culture and identity formation in France after the Dreyfus Affair and before Vichy.

The Affair, of course, challenged the ideological underpinnings of essentially each faction of nineteenth-century French-Jewish society, each having reflected on the relationship between citizens and the state, the proper boundaries of communal particularity in a secular republic, and, finally, the nature of Jewish identity itself. As Aaron Rodrigue has shown in his analysis of six prominent French-Jewish intellectuals after 1906, the Affair did not necessarily lead to "the sudden crystallization of new identities" but rather "gave an impetus to a process of questioning and new identity formation that was to remain in flux over the next decades."[2] That process of "identity formation" after Dreyfus has mostly been investigated in communal terms, especially vis-à-vis the French-Jewish community's shifting responses to anti-Semitism and its contentious relationship to the emerging Zionist movement. Recently, however, scholarship has begun to explore Jewish self-understandings in cultural terms, before and after Dreyfus. Ronald Schechter, for instance, has shown that representations of Jews in eighteenth-century public discourse—by non-Jews but also by Jews themselves—often served as symbols for wider political debates.[3] Likewise, Maurice Samuels, focusing on the decades after the Revolution, has shown how certain French-born Jews relied on

[1] See Baudrillard, *Le système des objets* (Paris, 1968), p. 128.
[2] Aaron Rodrigue, "Rearticulations of French Jewish Identities after the Dreyfus Affair," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Spring-Summer 1996), pp. 1-24. Rodrigue's analysis focuses on Bernard Lazare, André Spire, Edmond Fleg, Henri Franck, and Jean-Richard Bloch.
[3] Ronald Schecter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (Los Angeles, 2003).

fiction as a laboratory for devising new formulations of French-Jewish identity between 1830 and 1870.[4] Finally, Nadia Malinovich has analyzed the relationship of Jewish cultural innovation to "the complexity and ambivalence of Jewish identity and self-definition" in early twentieth-century France and the aftermath of the Affair.[5] These studies, however, all tend to emphasize writers and intellectuals, at the expense of those French Jews who were not cultural artisans but who nevertheless relied on culture—and especially material culture—in their ambition of revising and designing post-Dreyfus Jewish identities. That is the project of this dissertation.

Although the conclusion of the Dreyfus Affair ultimately vindicated the wrongly accused Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935), the end of the unprecedented twelve-year social drama created a changed landscape in French public discourse, which had grown accustomed to an exacerbated nationalism, a predictable xenophobia, and a concomitant anti-Semitism. In 1906, French Jewry, in the most abstract sense, may have been affirmed, but the post-Dreyfus position that the community occupied was ultimately one of uncertainty if not anxiety. Of course, that "community" was diverse, multifaceted, and resistant to singular categorization. There were clear and significant divides between, for instance, the descendants of the old Sephardic trading aristocracy whose presence in France predated the Revolution and Paris's late nineteenth-century Ashkenazic elite, the faction that tended to dominate the leadership of the *Consistoire Central Israélite de France*, the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, and, in general, the institutional infrastructure of French-Jewish life. There were also divides—in economic, linguistic, and religious terms—between Jews who had been naturalized as French citizens by or before the mid-nineteenth century and those who had arrived *en masse* as refugees in the wake of the pogroms of the early 1880s. The former were often, in the words of Pierre Birnbaum, "*fous de la République*," proudly French and dreamers of the Republican dream.[6] The latter, by contrast, were Yiddish-speaking *Ostjuden* who clung to a particularity at fundamental odds with the Republican discourse of *laïcité*. Some of thsee Jews of Eastern European origins attempted to bolster Orthodox life in France, while others embraced the

[4] Maurice Samuels, *Inventing the Israelite: Jewish Fiction in Nineteenth Century France* (Stanford, 2010).
[5] Nadia Malinovich, *French and Jewish: Culture and the Politics of Identity in Early Twentieth Century France* (London, 2007).
[6] Birnbaum, *Les Fous de la République: Histoire politique des Juifs d'État de Gambetta à Vichy* (Paris, 1992).

fledgling Zionism of Bernard Lazare (1865-1903). Some, of course, abandoned Jewishness altogether. But yet another group sought a middle ground in what might be identified as a Republican Jewish culture, a culture that subordinated religious observance to the ideology of the secular state, emphasized the universality of the Hebrew prophets, and stressed the ethical affinity of Judaism with the French national project after 1789. It was from this relatively elite group that many French-Jewish leaders were drawn during and after the Affair and also within this group that many great art collections would emerge in the final decades of the Third Republic.

To date, a very significant omission in the considerable scholarship on this *milieu* has been the crucial role that material culture played in the lives of *fin-de-siècle* French-Jewish elites. They inhabited, after all, the Paris of Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, the "capital of the nineteenth century" in the sense that it was the continental epicentre of bourgeois fantasy, an urban tableau of displays and department stores and a veritable "universe of commodities." As depicted in the literature of the period, the denizens of this city were less citizens than they were consumers.[7] In the recent interpretation of Alexia Yates, Paris's transformation in the late nineteenth century relied on radically redefined conceptions of property that knew no bounds.[8] Everything in this environment, it followed, was seemingly for sale. Unsurprisingly, the French *fin-de-siècle* was also a period of what the critics and diarists Edmond (1822-1896) and Jules Goncourt (1830-870) would denounce as "*bric-à-bracomania*," the desire to accumulate, collect, and possess. Quintessentially bourgeois, this "mania" afflicted members of the wealthier strata of Parisian and French society in the period, seduced by what Benjamin would later call "phantasmagorias of the interior." These, he wrote, "represented the universe for the private citizen. […] His drawing-room was a box in the world-theatre."[9] This willing withdrawal into an illusory alternate reality, a built environment of material things, was a characteristic of French bourgeois life in the *fin-de-siècle*. But it was also a hallmark of French-Jewish bourgeois life in the period, and this has not been sufficiently explored.

---

[7] See Patrice Higonnet, "Three Literary Visions," *Paris: Capital of the World* (Harvard, 2002), pp. 261-288. Higonnet considers the works of Balzac, Baudelaire, and Zola, all of whom, especially the latter, emphasize the effects of materiality and commoditization on daily life in the city.
[8] See Alexia Yates, *Selling Paris: Property and Commerical Culture in the Fin-de-Siècle Capital* (Harvard, 2015).
[9] Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Twentieth Century," *Reflections* (New York, 1978), p. 155.

Beginning most likely with Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) but continued throughout the general rediscovery of the European Jewish experience in the 1960s,[10] a considerable amount of attention has been paid to French Jews at the time of Dreyfus. Many of these studies, however, tend to remove these French-Jewish subjects from their immediate socio-cultural context, and they become the embodiments of abstractions—citizenship and assimilation, community and universality. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, the central question in the historiography was, understandably, whether France's Jewish community and, especially, its elites were sufficiently forceful in responding to the anti-Semitism unleashed during the Affair. The anti-Semitism that emerged during Dreyfus, many have insisted, amplified in the period following the First World War, took decisive form under Vichy, and culminated in the introduction of the *Statut des Juifs* and the deportations of some 76,000 French and foreign-born Jews to Nazi camps. This was the view of Hannah Arendt, who had herself been a refugee in France, had nothing but disdain for what she regared as the craven and collaborationist stance of French-Jewish establishment, and who would largely set the tone for much of the debate that would follow.[11] Michael Marrus, in the next serious study of subject, *The Politics of Assimilation* (1971), essentially adopted Arendt's view.[12] In subsequent generations, Arendt's and Marrus's interpretations have been convincingly challenged by historians such as Paula Hyman,[13] Nadia Malinovich,[14] Michael Graetz,[15] Lisa Leff,[16] and others who have advocated versions of the view that French Jews of the *fin-de-siècle*

[10] On this 1960s "rediscovery," especially in a French context, see, among others, Samuel Moyn's *A Holocaust Controversy: The Treblinka Affair in Postwar France* (Boston, 2005). Moyn focuses on the aftermath of the 1966 publication of Jean-François Steiner's *Treblinka*, a book that, in his assessment, inserted the Holocaust into a prime place in public discourse and academic inquiry. As Moyn shows, the book, published just a few years after the trial of Adolf Eichmann, had a considerable impact beyond France, especially in Israel and the United States.

[11] See Hannah Arendt, "Antisemitism," *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1973).

[12] See Michael Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation: The French Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (Oxford, 1971).

[13] See Paula Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley, 1998).

[14] See Nadia Malinovich, *French and Jewish: Culture and the Politics of Identity in Early Twentieth-Century France* (Oxford, 2012).

[15] See Michael Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth Century France: From the French Revolution to the Alliance Israélite Universelle* (Stanford, 1996).

[16] See Lisa Moses Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity: The Rise of Jewish Internationalism in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford, 2006).

were a stronger community than previously considered, successfully navigating a commitment to French Republicanism and the threat of anti-Semitism.

As illuminating as these studies have been, the debate in which they are circumscribed asks only a certain set of questions. And indeed there are others to ask. Among them is the actual nature of the lived experiences—as Jews and as people—of the elites so often held accountable for the fate of their community. Rather than asking, yet again, what they did and did not do—or what they could and could not have known—how did these elites understand themselves, their Frenchness, and their Jewishness? In which of these categories did they feel themselves to belong most comfortably? How did they experience anti-Semitism, not as communal leaders but as real people with inner lives and emotional subjectivities? How, in the early decades of the twentieth century, did they understand the changed nature of their world and, on a personal level, their own places within it? This line of inquiry requires a return to the specific socio-cultural context of the *fin-de-siècle* rather than a departure from it. These French-Jewish elites were not metaphors for abstract concepts. Like their non-Jewish contemporaries, they were members of a certain interconnected set of families, residents of certain exclusive sections of Paris, and, perhaps most of all, designers of Benjamin's "interior phantasmagorias." In short, they lived material lives in a material world. This material element was far from peripheral in either their private or public lives. It was central to both.

As this thesis will seek to demonstrate, in their private lives, many French-Jewish elites were passionate, lifelong art collectors and home designers. Of course, it was a passion that they embraced along with many who shared their social station, but, for them, it bore special significance. As numerous archival materials suggest, in the wake of various personal tragedies and in the midst of a vocal anti-Semitism, the objects they arranged and the homes they designed provided a profound sense of solace and sanctuary. In the private spaces they created and decorated, they had total control and absolute authority, a security they never enjoyed in the outside world. In their public lives, as this thesis will also show, material culture was perhaps even more important. It was through the projection of their material collections that members of this French-Jewish elite sought to present themselves and their values to the external world.

It is rarely remembered that Édouard Drumont (1884-1917), France's so-called "anti-Semitic pope," had been an antiquarian prior to writing *La France juive*, his 1886 invective against what he considered to be the Jewish erosion of his beloved *patrimoine*. In fact, as Drumont would later confess, *La France juive* itself grew out of his earlier material interests, especially his doleful, nostalgic study *Mon vieux Paris: Hommes et choses* (1879).[17] As Tom Stammers has written, the attacks against Jews in his bestselling and oft-quoted text—as well as in the diaries of the Goncourts and the memoirs of the *bon vivant* Boniface de Castellane (1867-1932)[18]—have an unmistakably material character.[19] For Drumont, the Jewish crime was primarily the way it attacked the *bon vieux goût français*, the style that to his mind best embodied the aesthetic achievements of French cultural heritage. He loathed when Jews collected items that, in his eyes, they, as foreigners, should not have owned, and he abhorred when they lived in the historic homes that belonged to a national narrative in which Jews did not belong. Consider, for instance, his pages on Ferrières, the chateau owned by the Rothschilds, which would later become the official site of France's surrender to Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in 1871. Drumont's only substantial illustration of the Rothschilds' foreignness was his

---

[17] Grégoire Kauffmann makes this point, albeit briefly, in the latest biography of Drumont: "La nostalgie de l'ordre ancien, le rejet du monde moderne caractérisent également son livre *Mon vieux Paris*, publié en 1878. Drumont y décrit les quartiers anciens et les vieilles maisons de la capitale, les hôtels aristocratiques du faubourg Saint-Germain, les abbayes médiévales," Kauffmann points out. "La grande Babylone surgie de la révolution haussmannienne a englouti l'ancienne cité, symbole d'une société traditionnelle dont Drumont veut fixer les scintillements." See Kauffmann, *Édouard Drumont* (Paris, 2008), pp. 51-52. On Drumont's admission of the material origins of *La France Juive*, inspired by his earlier work on *Mon vieux Paris*, Kauffmann cites an 1892 article he wrote for *La Libre Parole*, "Notre oeuvre et la calomnie." In that article, Drumont wrote that, in the throes of his research on the first book, "*…la lumière se fit dans mon esprit. Je fus frappé par la terrible puissance qu'avait cette race qui, en quelques années, avait mis sous ses pieds la race des anciens Français*." See Kauffmann, pp. 60-62.

[18] Boniface de Castellane—known as "Boni"—was married to the American heiress Anna Gould (1875-1961) and was one of the *fin-de-siècle's* arbiters of taste. His own home, the Palais Rose on the Avenue Foch, was a painstaking recreation of the Grand Trianon at Versailles. Of Jewish collectors, however, he had the following to say: "*Les israélites, qui ont de grands talents pour ce commerce et moins de scrupules, sont souvent des démolisseurs. Ils sont inconsciemment attirés par le désir d'enlever un objet de sa place pour le transporter ailleurs. Ils triturent les belles choses, leur font subir de graves mutilations, et les utilisent à des destinations pour lesquelles elle ne sont pas faites. J'ai de l'arrangement une toute autre conception. Je pense qu'il faut décorer suivant un ordre, une hiérarchie et une mesure, et non entasser des antiquités sans rime ni raison*." See *Mémoires de Boniface de Castellane, 1867-1932*, ed. Emmanuel de Waresquiel (Paris, 1987), p. 271.

[19] I am deeply indebted, here, to the line of argumentation begun by Stammers in his recent article, "Collectors, Catholics, and the Commune: Heritage and Counterrevolution, 1860-1890," *French Historical Studies* Vol. 37, No. 1 (Winter 2014), pp. 53-87. It is my hope to expand and develop Stammers's interpretation throughout the thesis, especially in Chapter II.

evisceration of "*leur mauvais goût ordinaire et leur peu de sympathie pour nos artistes français*."[20] Just as damaging as their invasion of France was their invasion of French material heritage: "*Au milieu apparaît, comme un trophée*," he observed in one room of the house, "*l'incomparable clavecin de Marie-Antoinette, qu'on a le cœur serré de retrouver dans cette maison de Juifs*."[21]

At the same time, French-Jewish elites in the *fin-de-siècle* relied on material culture as a means of expressing their fealty to the French national project, at least as they understood it. As Leora Auslander has argued, the aesthetics of everyday life in nineteenth-century France were fundamentally linked to politics.[22] And Jewish elites maximized the political potential of their houses and collections to a very significant degree. Although there were differences between their individual collections, by and large, they championed the aesthetic of the *ancien régime*, a style with clear conservative political connotations[23] and a style that, in their eyes, represented the pinnacle of French cultural grandeur. In the 1920s and 1930s, a good number of them donated their collections and their homes to the French state, as private museums. These were often some of the most exhaustive collections of eighteenth-century French art. But they were also, as was particularly evident in the Musée Nissim de Camondo, opened in 1936, subtle arguments for the compatibility of Frenchness and Jewishness at a time when many sought to present those two identities as incompatible. In the words of its founder, the collector Moïse de Camondo (1860-1935), the museum was a monument to the "*gloires de la France durant la période que j'ai aimée entre toutes*."[24] As portraits of Camondo and other collectors will show, the material personae that these French-Jewish elites so carefully cultivated—as private collectors and public benefactors—were central to their lived experiences, diverse as they otherwise were. At least to some extent, it was

[20] Édouard Drumont, *La France juive: Essai d'histoire contemporaine*, t. II, (Paris, 1886), p. 108.
[21] Ibid., pp. 109-110.
[22] See Leora Auslander's stimulating study, *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (Berkeley, 1998). Auslander traces the changing meanings of furniture from the mid-seventeenth century to the early twentieth century, a project that benefits significantly from her own past experience as a cabinetmaker.
[23] Miriam Levin has discussed at great length the ideology of art in the Third Republic. See Levin, *Republican Art and Ideology in Late Nineteenth Century France* (Ann Arbor, 1986).
[24] Moïse de Camondo, Last Will and Testament, 20 January 1924, pp. 1-3, Archives of the Musée Nissim de Camondo (AMNC), Paris.

through the material lens that this rarefied *milieu* constructed and articulated Jewishness, in public and in private.

II. The Value of "Collecting" for Historical Inquiry

To collect is to create. Of course, when people amass objects, what they primarily create are "collections"—unified wholes of which each part shares some functional, thematic, or historical commonality. On a fundamental level, there is little difference between the child who loves stamps and the banker who loves Rothko: both create, whether in the scrapbooks they fill or the walls they cover. Collectors do not so much arrange or even possess objects as transform them. In a collection, each object becomes an artefact, something entirely different from what it was before. After all, an object's meaning changes when it finds a new home in a new place among other objects and in the possession of a person who desires it. Its value shifts, and so does its context. It is no longer just a "thing": it is a metaphor, a material embodiment of something important to the collector—a childhood memory, perhaps, or maybe, as is often the case, a particular chapter of history that the collector wishes to restore. Few understood this better than Benjamin himself, who was an impassioned collector of books. "The most profound enchantment for the collector," he wrote in a 1931 essay, "is the locking of individual items within a magic circle in which they are fixed as the final thrill, the thrill of acquisition, passes over them."[25] In the lines that followed, he even compared an object's acquisition to its "rebirth."[26] Yet what collectors create is not merely the "magic circle" of transformed, reborn objects that Benjamin describes. What collectors create are themselves.

A presentation of self, the sociologist Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) memorably contended, was the inevitable result of any collection. "*La collection est faite d'une succession de termes, mais le terme final en est la personne du collectionneur*," he wrote in *Le système des objets* (1968). "*Réciproquement, celle-ci ne constitue comme telle*

[25] Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York, 1968), p. 60.
[26] Ibid., p. 61.

qu'en se substituant successivement à chaque terme de la collection."[27] The specific person of the collector, then, is the final object on display in any collection, and every object is thus a synecdoche of the person that chose it. Whether they realise it or not, collectors see in the objects they pursue some aspect of themselves. If, as Benjamin insists, acquisition is rebirth, it is also self-recognition. Traditionally, studies of collecting have been confined to the contents of certain collections, usually from the perspective of singular disciplines—most commonly, Archaeology and the History of Art. It is well known, for instance, that Richard Seymour-Conway (1800-70), the Marquess of Hertford, built one of the most impressive collections of Old Masters and Dutch art in modern history[28] and that the socialite Peggy Guggenheim (1898-1979) did much the same with Abstract Expressionism in the mid-twentieth century.[29] But much is lost when we merely ask what people collect without asking why. Why, exactly, did Seymour-Conway and Guggenheim choose those specific periods to collect? What stories were these elites telling about themselves and about their worlds? As Baudrillard suggests, collecting is not only a matter of material consumption. It is also, significantly, a question of identity construction and, as such, of individual psychology.

Granted, this psychological motivation has characterised almost every memorable depiction of collectors in literature, especially in the literature of the commoditized nineteenth century. There, collecting appears as a veritable disorder. Balzac's Sylvain Pons, Proust's Charles Swann, and, most of all, Huysmans's Jean des Ésseintes are all presented as victims of an insatiable material affliction, the obsessive compulsion to collect. This was true across the Atlantic world. Henry James, the expatriate American novelist, observed much the same in *The American*, his 1877 portrait of Christopher Newman, an American businessman in search of European grandeur. When Christopher buys his first picture, James writes, he encounters "the germ of the mania of 'the collector'" and is convinced that collecting is "a fascinating pursuit." The purchase is indeed a "germ," the first sign of an inevitable addiction to come. As James continues,

[27] Baudrillard, Ibid.
[28] In 1897, the Marquess of Hertford's collection became London's Wallace Collection, housed in Hertford House, the family's London home.
[29] Guggenheim's collection is now the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, housed in her Dorsoduro palazzo, facing the Grand Canal.

Christopher "had taken the first step; why should he not go on?"[30] In a British context, William Hazlitt (1834-1913)—the grandson of the essayist—would echo the notion of collecting as an uncontrollable and inadvisable urge in *The Confessions of a Collector* (1897). In his words, the practice was a "strange, inexplicable cacoëthes, which leads so many to gather together objects of art and curiosities."[31] As Bill Brown[32] has pointed out, in 1906, *The Atlantic Monthly* went even further in an article entitled "The Tyranny of Things," declaring nothing less than a state of material emergency. "The passion for accumulation is upon us," the article read. "We make 'collections,' we fill our rooms, our walls, our tables, our desks with things, things, things."[33] These "things," the piece warned, had a troubling power. "We realize that we do not possess them; they possess us."[34]

In recent years, this psychological—and perhaps even pathological—perspective of collecting has made its way into academic studies of this bizarre human tendency. Susan Stewart's 1993 study, for instance, is well encapsulated by her title, *On Longing*. In her view, collecting is a deliberate, personal withdrawal into a nostalgic past: "The collection," she wrote, "seeks a form of self-enclosure."[35] In his 1994 study, Werner Muensterberger, a psychoanalyst by training, presented collecting as a process by which individuals replace attachment to other people with an attachment to things. For Muensterberger, the nearly claustrophobic proliferation of material objects throughout Balzac's life and *oeuvre* suggested the novelist's longing for the parental affection that he

---

[30] Henry James, *The American* (New York, 2005), p. 13. For more on American attitudes toward collecting in the late nineteenth century, see Neil Harris's excellent study, *Cultural Excursions: Marketing Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America* (Chicago, 1990). Particularly of note is his contention that in the period a "true collector" was not at all a distinction reserved for the exclusive social province of elites: workers, he writes, could also be recognized as such, even with tchotchkes and *bric-à-brac*. They, it followed, were not immune from the affliction that strikes James's Christopher Newman.

[31] William Carew Hazlitt, *The Confessions of a Collector* (London, 1897), p. 2.

[32] Bill Brown's work on collecting has greatly advanced my thinking on the subject. See, for instance, *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of Amerian Literature* (Chicago, 2003) and *The Material Unconscious: American Amusement, Stephen Crane, and the Economies of Play* (Harvard, 1996). Additionally, his essay, "The Collecting Mania," was also tremendously helpful introduction to the vast secondary literature on collecting. See Brown, "The Collecting Mania," *The University Chicago Magazine*, Vol. 94, No. 1, (October, 2001).

[33] Anonymous, "The Tyranny of Things," *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1906, p. 716. Brown also quotes portions of this article in "The Collecting Mania," see above.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Duke, 1993), p. 151.

had been denied as a child.[36] The following year, the historian Susan Pearce's *On Collecting* (1995) attempted a similar project, a history of collecting as something far more than material consumption. For her, collecting offered furnished the potential for profound and new "investigation into an aspect of human experience."[37] The writer and historian Philipp Blom further developed that idea in his own 2002 study, which he called "an intimate history." Collecting, Blom contended, is primarily an attempt to fill a void in one's life and to confront the terrifying certainty of one's own mortality.[38]

But, if collecting is primarily a function of individual psychology, it is also profoundly social and often political. This sense emerges in the useful distinction that Baudrillard provides between collecting and mere accumulation:

> *Le stade inférieure est celui de l'accumulation de matières: entassement de vieux papiers, stockage de nourriture—à mi chemin entre l'introjection orale et la rétention anale*[39]*—puis l'accumulation sérielle d'objets identiques. La collection, elle, émerge vers la culture…sans cesser de renvoyer les uns aux autres, ils incluent dans ce jeu une extériorité sociale, des relations humaines*.[40]

Collecting may be an act of self-fashioning, but this is ultimately a self-fashioning rendered through objects the availability, value, and meaning of which all determined by

---

[36] Muensterberger, *Collecting: An Unruly Passion* (Princeton, 1994), esp. "Two Collectors: Balzac and His *Cousin Pons*," pp. 101-135.
[37] Susan Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation Into Collecting in the European Tradition* (Oxford, 1995), p. 4.
[38] Philipp Blom, *To Have and To Hold: An Intimate History of Collectors and Collecting* (New York, 2002).
[39] Here Baudrillard is engaging with an extensive literature on collecting inspired by Freud's biological drive model. Following Freud's lead, a good number of mid-twentieth-century psychoanalysts and scholars were keen to illustrate continuities between childhood experience and adult life. This was particularly relevant, in their eyes, *vis-à-vis* infant sexual stimulation, largely related to sphincter control and anal retention. Likewise, the production of feces they viewed as a precursor to all future production—material and cultural alike. As the psychoanalyst Karl Abraham (1877-1925), Freud's "best pupil," wrote in 1927: "A passion for collecting is frequently a direct surrogate for a sexual desire." Ernest Jones (1879-1958), the British psychoanalyst and Freud's official biographer, made this point even more directly: "All collectors," he wrote in 1938, "are anal-erotics, and the objects collected are nearly always typical copro-symbols: thus, money, coins (apart from current ones), stamps, eggs, butterflies…." Otto Fenichel (1897-1946), another student of Freud's, would say much the same in 1945: "A patient with the hobby of excerpting everything he read and arranging the excerpts in different files enjoyed in so doing…an anal-erotic pleasure." See Lynn Gamwell, "A Collector Analyses Collecting: Sigmund Freud on the Passion to Possess," in *Excavations and Their Objects: Freud's Collection of Antiquity*, ed. Stephen Barker (Albany, 1996), pp. 1-13. Jacques Lacan quotes Karl Abraham's lines on collecting in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Alan Sheridan (New York, 1981), pp. 158-9. See Ernest Jones, "Anal-Erotic Character Traits," in *Papers on Psychoanalysis* (Baltimore, 1938), pp. 413-447. Otto Fenichel's lines are quoted in Susan Pearce, *On Collecting*, p. 7.
[40] Baudrillard, pp. 147-8.

external social factors that transcend individual psychology. As Russell Belk has argued, collecting is a "consumption activity that is shaped by the same cultural processes that affect other types of consumption activities."[41] Moreover, it is not only individuals who collect; institutions such as museums, universities, and governments do as well. If collecting affords private solace, then, it also provides significant potential for projecting a public image, even for individuals. This was a line of argumentation pioneered by Susan Crane in *Collecting and Historical Consciousness in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany* (2000), in which she demonstrated that, by amassing collections of certain objects from the German past, ordinary citizens and state institutions waged a nationalistic rebellion against Napoleonic invaders.[42] "To renew the old world," wrote Walter Benjamin, "that is the collector's deepest desire when he is driven to acquire new things."[43] Personal satisfaction aside, it is easy to see how this "renewal" can carry with it an obvious political motive. Recent scholarship has emphasized this capacity. As the historian Tom Stammers has shown, for instance, after "*l'année terrible*" of 1870-71, French conservatives embraced the material remnants of the *ancien régime* as a means of preserving French cultural patrimony in the midst of what they perceived to be a social decline.[44]

Collecting thus exists at the intersection of the psychological and the social, the personal and the political. On one level, it tells us how individuals understood themselves and how they constructed the images they then presented to their societies and their worlds. But it also tells us about the nature of those societies and those worlds, their cultural currencies, their value systems, and their mores. It allows us to approach questions we would otherwise struggle to answer. If "material culture," as the anthropologist James Deetz famously defined it, "is that segment of man's physical environment which is purposely shaped by him according to culturally dictated plans,"[45]then collecting is an invaluable window into the role that material culture plays

---

[41] Russell Belk, *Collecting in a Consumer Society* (Oxford, 1995), p. 1.
[42] See Susan Crane, *Collecting and Historical Consciousness in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ithaca, 2000), esp. "Collective Collecting in 'The Age of Associations,'" pp. 60-105.
[43] Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library," p. 61.
[44] See Stammers, "Collectors, Catholics, and the Commune: Heritage and Counterrevolution, 1860-1890," *French Historical Studies* Vol. 37, No. 1 (Winter 2014), pp. 53-87.
[45] James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life* (New York, 1977), p. 7.

in human life. Essentially, a focus on collecting provides a new means of undertaking studies of certain individuals inscribed in given periods of time. Objects, after all, can supplement—and even surpass—the insights of texts, the traditional source for most historical analyses. Texts, the historian Laurel Ulrich has written, are "severely limited," in the sense that only certain societies produced them and that written records take us only so far back.[46] Objects and things, however, represent a certain universality as well as a timelessness. Additionally, as the fruits of cultural production, they have histories of their own. In the present, however, they attract consumers for a host of intimate, cultural, and political reasons. They are portals, signifiers, and, in the words of Carlo Ginzburg, "clues,"[47] invaluable tools for deducing how and why people understand themselves as they do.

Yet in the writing of history, material culture has not fared particularly well. Of course, some historians have indeed relied on objects in a variety of subject areas and methodologies, but this has only become a major preoccupation in certain historical fields, such as the early medieval period—where there is a dearth of text-based sources—and the history of the Italian Renaissance.[48] As Leora Auslander observed as recently as 2005: "Historians are, by profession, suspicious of things."[49] In the same essay, Auslander sounded something of a clarion call for the historical discipline, emphatically defending objects and things as source materials. Most suggestive, however, were her lines on the ways in which objects often go beyond the boundaries of language:

---

[46] See *Tangible Things: Making History Through Objects*, ed. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Ivan Gaskell, et. al. (Oxford, 2015), p. 3.

[47] Carlo Ginzburg, "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm," *Theory and Society*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (May, 1979), pp. 273-88. See also Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore, 1992).

[48] There are far too many examples to list in full, but a brief survey might include Ferand Braudel's *Capitalism and Material Life, 1400-1800*, trans. Miriam Kochan (London, 1974); Simon Schama's *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (Berkeley, 1988); Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *The Age of Homespun* (New York, 2001); and Timothy Brook's *Vermeer's Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World* (London, 2008). Given his interest in elucidating the structures that governed human life, Braudel paid significant attention to what he called "material life," by which he meant the objects, foodstuffs, and tools that were essential for daily survival. This, of course, was a different emphasis from a reliance on the material as a window into the subjective and the personal. For Braudel, the material was merely structural, little more. Ulrich is perhaps the closest to Auslander's injunction. As she began her recent study, *Tangible Things*: "How can we approach aspects of the past that written words do not record?"

[49] Leora Auslander, "Beyond Words," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 110, no. 4 (October 2005), p. 1015.

> …people's relation to language is not the same as their relation to things; all that they express through their creation and use of material objects is, furthermore, not reducible to words. That particular relation to things means that even highly literate people in logocentric societies continue to use objects for a crucial part of their emotional, sensual, representational, and communicative expression. Artifacts, therefore, are differently informative than texts even when texts are available; texts, in fact, sometimes obscure the meanings borne by material culture.[50]

The French-Jewish elite comprised precisely such "highly literate people" in a decidedly "logocentric society." But, in the end, the texts that these highly literate people produced reveal only so much. In some cases, of course, members of their ranks were astonishingly prolific, writing histories, academic articles, newspaper editorials, art criticism, and, in some cases, diaries and letters. These, however, were not always the modes they employed in the project of self-expression. But material culture often was; above all, it is the objects they amassed and the collections that they created that have survived into the present. Their materiality, in other words, has proved to be their most enduring legacy. By focusing on the collecting habits of five individuals from this *milieu*, this dissertation, following Auslander, attempts to use objects, art, and built environments as windows into the "emotional, sensual, representational, and communicative expression" of the French-Jewish elite.

III. The Collectors: A Rarefied Milieu

The late nineteenth century—in Europe in general but especially in France—was also something of a "golden age" for the sale and purchase of fine art and *objets d'art* available for the first time in a newly created market that had emerged from the dissolution of private collections that had been for generations the almost exclusive province of the nobility. Facilitated by a network of Paris and London-based dealers—including Joseph Duveen (1867-1939), Nathan Wildenstein (1851-1934), Jacques Séligmann (1858-1923), Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler (1884-1979), and Paul (1881-1951) and Léonce Rosenberg (1879-1947)—art collecting, especially of pieces with a noble provenance and history, became an important preoccupation and pastime for an upwardly mobile financial and industrial *haute bourgeoisie*. Indeed, some of the most substantial

[50] Ibid., p. 1017.

and significant art collections in modern European and even American history were assembled in the late nineteenth century. Many of them remain intact today as additions to public museums or as the heart of private museums devoted to the legacies of individual collectors.[51]

In late nineteenth-century France, it is striking that a significant proportion of serious art collectors came not merely from a newly enriched economic *haute bourgeoisie* but from a specifically Jewish financial elite, who were also fundamentally tied to institutions of French-Jewish communal leadership, politics, and cultural life. Between the end of the Dreyfus Affair and 1940, the Reinachs, the Rothschilds, the Éphrussis, the Camondos, the Cahen d'Anvers and the Foulds—all of them families intimately engaged with formulating the future of French Jewry—began collecting with a renewed energy and vigour. With the same devotion that seems to have characterized their involvement in Jewish life and Jewish philanthropy in *fin-de-siècle* France, these collectors pursued art collecting with an impressive passion, which operated in parallel with their other decidedly public activities and enterprises in Jewish philanthropy. Ultimately, however, these parallel lines of private and public life would intersect, as the majority of the major collectors of that first generation bequeathed their collections to the French state to be converted into museums that would bear their names and exist in their memories. Moïse de Camondo donated his home at 63, rue de Monceau and his collection of seventeenth-century *objets d'art* to the state in 1935, when it became the Musée Nissim de Camondo. Théodore Reinach (1860-1928) left his Villa Kérylos, a painstaking recreation of a Greek villa at Delos, to the *Institut de France*, which opened it to the public after the Second World War. Béatrice Éphrussi de Rothschild (1864-1934) did the same with her Italianate villa at St. Jean-Cap Ferrat in 1934. Edmond de Rothschild (1845-1934) collected Old Master drawings and paintings, which he bequeathed to the Louvre upon his death; Louis Cahen d'Anvers (1837-1922), an early patron of Auguste Renoir, re-created a seventeenth-century chateau at Champs-sur-Marne that his son, Charles, donated to the state in 1935. Art was an integral part of the life of

[51] Numerous examples include the Wallace Collection, London, established in 1897; the Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris, established in 1913; the Barnes Collection, Philadelphia, established in 1922; and the Frick Collection, New York, opened in 1935.

this elite and even plutocratic *milieu*, and it remains today the material manifestation of its memory.

To that end, the principal question that this dissertation attempts to answer is why this was so, and how these pillars of interwar French-Jewish life considered the relationship between their art collecting and broader external historical events. What specific meanings did art—and, with it, art collection—have in the context of this very defined, tightly interconnected social world?[52] To what extent did the material relate to the personal, and in what ways did these collectors consider their collections to be expressions of themselves, self-portraits in their own right?[53] Finally, amid the fraught politics of the 1930s, what were their motives in establishing public museums to showcase their collections? Through substantial engagement with family and national archives pertaining to collections designed and established by a network of six interconnected and intermarried prominent French-Jewish families between 1906 and 1940, the dissertation's principal argument will posit that the collections enable an understanding of the complex, multifaceted, and often contradictory nature of French-Jewish identities in the period.

Through the respective collections of Théodore Reinach, Moïse de Camondo, Edmond de Rothschild, Béatrice Éphrussi de Rothschild, Louis Cahen d'Anvers, and Leon Fould, the dissertation will establish and consider, in the style of Jean-Francois Sirinelli and others, a prosopographical generation[54] of individuals to probe how their

---

[52] This is a question that an emerging field of historical inquiry—namely, the history of art collecting—attempts to answer in a variety of different times and places. As mentioned above, Stammers, of course, has examined the conservation and collection activities of conservative activities in the wake of 1870-71. Directly related to the focus of this dissertation, however, Véronique Long has explored, in an article, the network of Parisian Jewish collectors during the Third Republic. See Long, "Les collectionneurs juifs parisiens sous la Troisième République (1870-1940)," *Archives Juives*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (2009), pp. 84-104. Similarly, in his popular—and somewhat nostalgic—family memoir of the Éphrussis, Edmund de Waal uses a series of Japanese *netsuke* figurines as a means of accessing the rich material world of his family. The memoir is not a history of art collecting *per se*, but it is perhaps the most recent work that emphasizes the presence of art, material culture, and collecting among Jewish elites during the early decades of the twentieth century. See de Waal, *The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance* (New York, 2011). See also Bruce Chatwin's *Utz* (London, 1988), a brief novel that depicts the collecting habits of Kaspar Utz as refuge from the enchroaching totalitarian regimes of Nazism and, later, Communism.

[53] The consideration of the collector—and museum benefactor—as self-portraitist is an interpretation formulated largely by the art historian Anne Higonnet. See Higonnet, *A Museum of One's Own: Private Collecting, Public Gift* (Reading, 2010).

[54] Sirinelli has studied at great length the concept of the "generation" (mostly with regard to intellectuals) and its value in historical inquiry. See, for instance, Sirinelli's *Génération intellectuelle. Khâgneux et*

intimate subjectivities and the tensions of their inner worlds were expressed and developed through the material and visual language of art.[55] In his or her own unique way, each member of this prominent group was a pillar of France's Jewish community after 1906. Théodore Reinach, perhaps the epitome of a Third Republic *intellectuel engagé* and the youngest of the three "Je Sais Tout" Reinach brothers, was arguably the most involved in the philosophical dimension of French Judaism, as evidenced in his *Histoire des israélites depuis la Ruine de leur Indépendance Nationale jusqu'à nos Jours* (1884), a volume which he continued to edit throughout the remainder of his life. Baron Edmond de Rothschild, a president of the *Consistoire*, was perhaps the most effective French Zionist of the late nineteenth century, responsible for creating and maintaining several prominent settlements in the fledgling *Yishuv*. The Constaninople-born Paris banker Moïse de Camondo, following in the footsteps of his father and uncle, was a crucial figure in the efforts of the *Alliance* to foster a French Republican education among poor Turkish Jews. Béatrice Ephrussi, who separated from her husband in 1904, was a strongly independent woman of independent means, an object of enduring fascination for both the French reading public and her own *milieu*, troubled but transfixed by the idea of an emancipated woman establishing her own life on her own terms. Louis Cahen d'Anvers was the banker whose family business ultimately became, after 1870, the Société Générale. Leon Fould was the scion of one of the most prominent Jewish families in France, a family intricately that held significant political power.

---

normaliens dans l'entre-deux-guerres (Paris, 1988) and *Intellectuels et passions françaises. Manifestes et pétitions au XXe siècle* (Paris, 1990). With regard to the notion of prosopgraphy—and especially on the theme of "kinship"—I have relied on the works of historians such as David Sabean and, more recently, Emma Rothschild as models. See, for instance, Sabean's *Neckarhausen: Property, Production, and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700-1870* (Cambridge, 1990) and, especially, *Kinship in Neckarhausen, 1700-1870* (Cambridge, 1998), which is essentially an argument for the value of "kinship" as an analytical category. See also Emma Rothschild's *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Princeton, 2011), a network analysis of the British Empire through the lens of one particular family, the Johnstones.

[55] Moïse de Camondo married Louis Cahen d'Anvers' daughter, Irène, in 1891; their daughter, Béatrice de Camondo, married Théodore Reinach's son, Léon, in 1918. Edmond de Rothschild was the uncle of Béatrice Éphrussi (née Rothschild), and Béatrice, by marriage, was also a cousin of Théodore Reinach, her neighbor in Beaulieu-sur-Mer, and the niece of Edmond de Rothschild. Additionally, Charles Éphrussi, of a previous generation, mentored many of these individuals, especially Moïse de Camondo and Louis Cahen d'Anvers, in the art of collecting, and he bequeathed his estate to Théodore Reinach and his wife, Fanny, upon his death. Aside from familial relations, the majority of these families also inhabited the plaine Monceau *quartier* between Paris's eighth and sixteenth arrondissements, which intensified the proximity in which they existed, personally and professionally.

Drawing on extensive archival materials pertainting to each collector, this thesis argues that, for these elites, material culture was an essential medium in the negotiation, interpretation and resolution of the relationship between Jewishness to Frenchness after Dreyfus and before Vichy.[56] Furthermore, if the particular collections represent the self-ascriptions of an exclusive, plutocratic social stratum, their subsequent conversion into museums in the mid- to late 1930s universalized the collections into public monuments that showcased specific works of art but also the subjectivities of the collectors and their respective interpretations of national and personal identities, as well as their compatibilities. Finally, with relations in urban centres throughout Europe (and beyond), the majority of these individuals were fundamentally cosmopolitan Europeans at a moment when ethno-nationalism sought to recast fluid, individual identities into the confines of singular categories, a tragic project that, in large part, was accomplished by 1945. Collecting, this dissertation will also suggest, afforded these individuals the opportunity to maintain that obsolescent fluidity, enabling the creation of complex public identities that were themselves works of art, created with art itself. In the course of the Holocaust and the Second World War, this elite network of families was decimated: many of its members were exiled or murdered in the Nazi concentration camps, and, for those who survived, their prewar family cultures evaporated entirely. Today, for instance, the Camondos, the Reinachs, and the Cahen d'Anvers no longer exist; descendants of the Éphrussis and the Rothschilds have assimilated into different social worlds that no longer privilege family ties or Jewish communal solidarity. The collections—and, today, the museums they comprise—are therefore all that remain of that vanished prewar world, and the dissertation will posit that, in that sense, these spaces also function as "*lieux de mémoire*," literal signifiers of an evolving discursive relationship between the French and Jewish pasts.[57]

---

[56] Over the past few years, I worked in the Archives Nationales, the Archives of the Institut de France, the Consistoire Central, the Alliance Israélite Universelle, the Musée Nissim de Camondo, the Musée Albert-Kahn, the Villa Kérylos, the Villa Île de France, the Rothschild Archive in London, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and, finally, the Propper Family Archive in New York City.
[57] I refer here to Pierre Nora's oft-cited concept of the "*lieu de mémoire*," a literal symbol that evokes the nature of community through its memory. The museums that survive from these collectors and their collections, I think, are interesting case studies of the ways in which the meanings of those "sites" can evolve over time, as the parameters of communities shift and certain memories emerge (while others fade).

IV. Collecting and the "World of Feeling"

To make these claims, the dissertation builds on significant bodies of scholarship, both on the relation of Jews to art and on the particular value of visual images and material objects in historical analysis. With regard to the former, art has typically been overlooked in Jewish history, reflecting the centrality of texts and the written word in Jewish religious tradition. Although Leopold Zunz (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*) did encourage the study of visual arts—and, specifically, Jewish visual arts—in his 1818 treatise on the Jewish past, Hermann Graetz did not agree, insisting that the Jewish people had devoted itself to more noble aspirations than any material realm could convey. Art, for Graetz, was a sophisticated form of paganism, irrational and superstitious. Consciously or unconsciously, Graetz's opinion seems to have been maintained by generations of scholars of modern European Jewish history, and the centrality of the Holocaust in postwar Jewish history has tended to prioritize the macro-historical narratives of political history over aspects of cultural history. Only in the mid-1980s did historians begin to consider the role of the arts in European Jewish life. The invaluable works of Richard Cohen, Ezra Mendelsohn, Elliot Horowitz, and Michael Berkowitz, among others, are all important foundations of the field.[58] The majority of these, however, emphasize artworks that Jewish artists and, especially, Jewish musicians[59] created or

---

See Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Constructing the French Past*, Vols. 1-3, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York, 1996-1998).

[58] See Richard Cohen, *Jewish Icons: Art and Society in Modern Europe* (Berkeley, 1998); Ezra Mendelsohn, *Painting a People: Maurycy Gottlieb and Jewish Art* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2008) and "Jews, Communism and Art in Interwar America," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* No. 20, 2004, pp. 99-133; Elliot Horowitz, "Giotto in Avignon, Adler in London, Panofsky in Princeton: Some Reflections on the Story of an Illuminated Fifteenth Century Italian Manuscript and Its Meaning," *Jewish Art*, 1994, pp. 98-111.

[59] There has, of course, been a much more explicit recognition of a specifically Jewish contribution to Europe's musical life, and, conversely, of music's role in Jewish cultural life. Essentially from Gustav Mahler (1860-1911) onwards, this has taken the form of an interest in the respective contributions of Jewish composers, but especially in Jewish performers and conductors such as Mahler, Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), and Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951), among others. See, for instance, George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876), in which Jewishness is fundamentally linked to music and music-making. In the novel, Herr "Klesmer" is a German-Jewish musician whose expertise Gwendolen Harleth can never surpass; Daniel Deronda's mother—the key to his own Jewish identity—is an opera singer. For more synthetic studies of this relationship, see Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing European Jewish Culture* (Berkeley, 2002) and Philip V. Bohlman, *Jewish Music and Modernity* (Oxford, 2008). On Mahler

composed themselves, focusing on their experiences and the afterlives of their creations and compositions. By emphasizing collecting, this thesis attempts to understand how a network of prominent French Jews from a range of non-artistic professional backgrounds—finance, politics, law—considered art they *chose* rather than created, an emphasis that affords a rich potential for interpreting how a *milieu*, to borrow from Robert Darnton, "construed the world, invested it with meaning, and infused it with emotion."[60]

Of course, the proper place of visual images in historical analysis is an enduring debate among historians and art historians alike. In the wake of the emphasis that historians influenced by the *Annales* school placed on daily life, artworks—perhaps the epitome of cultural production—became obvious objects of interest. In the words of Fernand Braudel, if "daily life controls us without [our] ever being aware of it,"[61] naturally the material aspects of human existence, including photographs, buildings, and traditional works of art are all essential historical sources. The issue, then, is what to make of these sources, and what kind of sources they can be said to be. Many studies consider art as evidence akin to government documents or diaries, texts that provide an equally valid window into a particular social world. To cite just two such interpretations within the confines of French history specifically, Maurice Agulhon's study of Marianne makes a very compelling argument about the ways in which the French republican ideology became intimately linked with the feminine figure,[62] and Peter Burke's analysis of portraiture at the court of Louis XIV underscores the intersections between image and power in the functioning of an absolute monarchy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[63] But other historians, such as Roger Chartier and Francis Haskell, have taken issue with the singular employment of art as mere evidence in historical argumentation. For Chartier, cultural artifacts should not be reduced in their meanings to mere

---

specifically, see Talia Pecker Berio, "Mahler's Jewish Parable," in *Mahler and His World*, ed. Karen Painter (Princeton, 2002), pp. 87-111.

[60] Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York, 1984), p. 3.

[61] Richard Cohen quotes this line of Braudel's. See Cohen, *Jewish Icons*, p. 2.

[62] Maurice Agulhon, *Marianne au combat: L'imagerie et la symbolique républicaine de 1789 à 1880* (Paris, 1992).

[63] Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (Yale, 1994).

expressions of external social realities[64]; similarly, for Haskell, art exists in its own language "which can be understood only by those who seek to fathom its varying purposes, conventions, styles and techniques." Going even further, Haskell has exhorted historians to acknowledge that art is a function not merely of cultural production but also of individual "imagination."[65]

Heeding the cautions of Chartier and Haskell, this dissertation will consider the works of art that this generation of collectors acquired not merely as evidence of shifting social externalities in twentieth-century France, but rather as expressive elements in an intimate, interior emotional vocabulary deployed to respond to changing circumstances, both personal and political. The various art collections considered will be considered as creations that suggest the emotive, imaginative universes in which these diverse and complicated individuals understood that world and, most importantly, their own places within it. Perhaps this dissertation's most ambitious goal is therefore to liberate five individuals—albeit individuals from the most elite social echelon—from the larger discourses of citizenship and politics, for the purpose of recovering and examining "the seemingly incoherent world of feeling"[66] that mediated their experiences of social life in the years before the events that would transform them all into fragments of memory.

[64] See, among other works, Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France,* trans. Lydia Cochrane (Princeton, 1987).
[65] Haskell, *History and Its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (Yale, 1993), pp. 9-10.
[66] Ruth Harris, *The Man on Devil's Island: Alfred Dreyfus and the Affair that Divided France* (London, 2010), p. 14.

CHAPTER I.
A COMMUNITY IN CRISIS: THE INNER LIVES OF FRENCH-JEWISH ELITES IN THE *FIN-DE-SIÈCLE*

During the early decades of the twentieth century significant changes occurred in the communal fabric of French-Jewish life. Although intricately connected, these changes were not entirely the consequence of the Dreyfus Affair, the subsequent public emphasis on the so-called "Jewish Question," or the exacerbated anti-Semitism the Affair had elicited. Rather, they were much larger: demographic and structural shifts that not only challenged the carefully cultivated social position of the nineteenth-century *israélite* but, on a more fundamental level, altered the composure and the identity of French Jewry itself. The waves of immigration that had begun in the 1880s—mostly of *Ostjuden* from Eastern Europe—increased after the turn of the century: between 1906 and 1939, roughly 150,000 to 200,000 foreign Jews settled in France, more than doubling the nation's extant population of 110,000.[67] This was not merely a staggering change in numbers. Although there was a small degree of diversity among this immigrant population—some of whom hailed from Ottoman territories or from North Africa—the vast majority came from Jewish communities in Eastern Europe that were Orthodox, traditionalist, and working class. The paradigm of Jewish life that these newcomers embodied was thus the diametric opposite of that which their more elite French counterparts had so painstakingly fashioned over the course of the nineteenth century, a model that encouraged assimilation and that, to borrow Pierre Birnbaum's famous phrase, made French Jews the *fous de la République* ("crazy for the Republic"). Many of France's "new Jews" were less in love with France than with Zionism, and more in love with Jewish communal activities than with French citizenship. This, as Paula Hyman has argued, presented the French-Jewish establishment with nothing short of a crisis, an existential threat to their "integrationist model" for reconciling Jewishness with the universalizing logic of the French Republic.[68]

But this external, structural crisis in French-Jewish communal life developed either in tandem or in conjunction with a decidedly internal, intimate crisis facing the

[67] Paula Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy: The Remaking of French Jewry, 1906-1939* (New York, 1979), p. 28.
[68] Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, p. 64.

more elite factions of French-Jewish society, especially with regard to their younger generations. Indeed, between the time of the Dreyfus Affair and the outbreak of the Second World War, the French-Jewish establishment was not merely concerned with advocating a specific image of Jewish life against an alternative image that had proved increasingly popular: it was also charged with convincing some of its own, enabled and emancipated, to continue living distinctively Jewish lives amidst an increasingly secular modernity. This is not at all to say that Jewish elites in the early decades of the twentieth century were struggling against the age-old anxiety that, as expressed in an old Yiddish saying, *Frankraykh frest yidn*, ("France devours Jews"). As Ruth Harris has shown, throughout the course of the Affair, these elites never abandoned their Jewish identities altogether as they attempted to carve out a place for themselves in mainstream French society.[69] And, as a considerable amount of recent scholarship has shown, "Jewish identities" could assume a variety of meanings, personal and public alike.[70] The cautious exhortation of the poet Judah Leib Gordon—"Be a man in the street and a Jew at home"—no longer applied.[71] But, if these elites and their children still mostly married other Jews from a similar social caste, nominally belonged to synagogues (mostly to Paris's *Temple rue la de Victoire*), and participated in Jewish communal leadership and philanthropic organisations, whether through the *Consistoire* or the *Alliance*, their *milieu* suffered not so much from a diminished engagement with institutional Judaism but rather from a dwindling sense of its importance in their private lives.

If Jewishness was no longer an anxiety-inducing identity to be hidden, protected, and cultivated, for some it had become normalized almost to the point of irrelevance—what Hannah Arendt would later call an "indisputable fact"[72] of life, but no longer an animating essence. As the private lives of the families that together composed this elite reveal, there was, in the early decades of the twentieth century, a significant erosion not

[69] Ruth Harris, *The Man on Devil's Island,* p. 66.
[70] See, for instance, "Discourses of Jewish Identity in Twentieth-Century France," ed. Alan Astro, *Yale French Studies*, no. 85 (1994).
[71] This is translated Judah Leib Gordon's Hebrew poem, *Hakitzah ami*, which appears in Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: 1979), p. 65.
[72] Arendt used this phrase in the course of her heated exchange with Gershom Scholem over the trial of Adolf Eichmann, which she interpreted in Eichmann in Jerusalem. In response to Scholem's insistence that she lacked "*Ahabath Israel*," love of the Jewish people, Arendt responded in turn: "To be a Jew belongs for me to the indisputable facts of my life, and I have never had the wish to change or disclaim facts of this kind." See Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, ed. Jerome Kohn and Ron Felman (New York, 2007), p. 466.

of their abstract affiliation with Judaism but—on a personal, intimate level—of the maintenance of traditional Jewish lives. Especially among this elite's younger generation, conversion, intermarriage, and the abandonment of family structures were relatively common, a central fact that has tended to be absent from previous studies of this *milieu* and its social world.[73] There was, after all, a significantly gendered dimension to this private communal crisis. As the historian Mary Louise Roberts has argued, the French *fin-de-siècle* bore witness to a "New Woman," an independent and often even professional character who was "profoundly subversive" with regard to traditional societal mores.[74] Women in the tightly stitched network of elite Jewish families, of course, were rarely professionasl, but they nevertheless began to "act up" against the strict gender roles they perceived to be imposed on them both by the Jewish religion and by nineteenth-century bourgeois mores. Relying on their considerable financial resources, they began to emancipate themselves into a world where their lives would be arbitrated by no laws except those of their own creation. By contrast, the men in this network were profoundly influenced by their respective experiences of the First World War: the patriotic collectivism of the war effort appears to have challenged the *israélite* sensibility in which they had been raised. Was it still even necessary to "integrate" Jewishness into Frenchness, or was that the battle of a previous generation?

Of course, all of the principal art collectors in this milieu came from that previous generation—Théodore Reinach (b. 1860), Moïse de Camondo (b. 1860), Edmond de Rothschild (b. 1845), Béatrice Éphrussi de Rothschild (b. 1864), Louis Cahen d'Anvers (b. 1837), and Leon Fould (b. 1860). These men and women existed in a social network that was interconnected and interwoven in innumerable ways, both professionally and personally. Their lives were individual lives, but they also formed a prosopography, a

[73] Only recently has attention begun to be paid to these factors in the French-Jewish experience of the twentieth century. Yaël Hirsch, for instance, has recently published an illuminating study on the question of conversion in the twentieth century, focusing on prominent cases such as Simone Weil, Jean-Marie Lustiger, Édith Stein, and Henri Bergson. These individuals, of course, come from a diverse array of personal and socio-economic backgrounds, and they did not necessarily exist in a common social group, as was the case for the individuals considered in this thesis. Their decisions were thus largely personal and often devoid of the communal ramifications that conversion had within the intermarried, interwar French-Jewish élite. See Hirsch, *Rester Juif?* (Paris, 2014).

[74] See Roberts, *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Chicago, 2002). See esp. Roberts's chapter on the alliance between the "New Woman" and Jews during the Dreyfus Affair.

communal familial structure in which they were entirely inscribed and without which their own respective self-understandings would not have existed in the same way.[75] However, if community—and, to a certain extent, a carefully cultivated exclusivity—was the life-blood of this network, it must also be said that there was a considerable degree of challenge to the bonds—marital, religious, and familial—that allegedly tied these individuals together, which, in the end, proved more than breakable. Communal fracture was thus a common experience for this generation of collectors and their descendants in the same period as they amassed the bulk of their collections.

Moïse de Camondo and Irène Cahen d'Anvers were divorced in 1902; Irène converted to Catholicism and married Carlo Sampieri, an Italian who worked in the Camondo stables. Their daughter, Béatrice de Camondo divorced her husband, Léon Reinach, the son of Théodore Reinach, in 1942. (Eroding traditional family structures even further, Léon took custody of their son, Bertrand, while Béatrice took custody of their daughter, Fanny).[76] In 1904, Béatrice de Rothschild separated from her husband, Maurice Éphrussi, after his gambling debts significantly diminished their fortune and his infidelities led her to contract syphilis, leaving her unable to bear children.[77] According to archival materials pertaining to these families, conversion from Judaism and intermarriage were both highly prevalent. In addition to Irène Cahen d'Anvers, her son, Nissim de Camondo, much to his father's chagrin, had been engaged to a Catholic woman, Renée Dorville, at the time of his death in 1917.[78] Irène's sisters, Alice and Élisabeth Cahen d'Anvers, both married non-Jews: Alice only once, to Major General Sir Charles Vere Ferrers Townshend (1861-1924), the commander of the failed British expedition against Baghdad in the First World War and future member of parliament;

---

[75] I rely, here, on the model of "prosopgraphy" recently advanced by Emma Rothschild in *The Inner Life of Empires*, which relies on "the point of view of a large, odd, and enterprising family" to investigate "the changes of the [eighteenth-century] times" in which they lived. See Rothschild, *Inner Life*, (Princeton, 2011), p. 1. In my view, the families considered in this thesis—all intermarried and professionally connected—constitute precisely such a "family."

[76] See Nora Seni and Sophie Le Tarnec's definitive study of the Camondo, *Les Camondo ou l'eclipse d'une fortune* (Paris, 1997), pp. 265-270.

[77] The details of the couple's separation are detailed in Box 54, OE393 of the "Laffite Papers" in the Rothschild Archive, London; the details of Maurice Éphrussi's debts are detailed in Box 55, OE395, RAL.

[78] In the fall of 2014, the Archives of the Musée Nissim de Camondo received a great deal of letters between Nissim de Camondo and Renée Dorville, which detail the romance and engagement plans between the young count and his Protestant nurse. To date, no study of the Camondo family has featured these documents, and I am very grateful to Mme. Sophie Le Tarnec, the museum's principal archivist, for calling my attention to them. I have relied on these letters a great deal in the chapter that follows.

Élisabeth twice, first in 1896 to the Catholic Jean de Forceville, whom she divorced in 1901, and finally, in 1904, to the Protestant Alfred Emile Louis Denfert-Rochereau, a grandson of the celebrated "Lion of Belfort" during the Franco-Prussian War, whom she also ultimately divorced before her arrest and deportation in 1944. In theory, Joseph Reinach, Théodore Reinach's eldest brother and principal Dreyfus defender, would have married an Englishwoman had not "*le Gouvernement*"—what he jokingly dubbed his family—intervened.[79] Hélène Fould-Springer, during the Second World War, converted to Catholicism: Judaism, in her eyes, was responsible the terrible fate that had befallen her family and its world. Hélène Reinach-Abrami, Théodore's daughter, insisted on having a confirmation ceremony as a child only to distance herself in later years from Judaism, which she saw as a faith hostile to women.

It is therefore a curious reality that precisely at this moment of societal and personal crisis, a veritable generation of French Jewish establishment figures should have chosen to collect art with a renewed vigor and passion. Individually and collectively, this generation of collectors made judgments of taste that, as Pierre Bourdieu reminds us, were functions of their particular social position—judgments that in fact were themselves acts of cultivating and defending that position.[80] While subsequent chapters will address the development of certain aesthetic tastes among these Parisian Jewish elites after the Dreyfus Affair, the principal purpose of this chapter is to elucidate a crucial component of the *context* in which those judgments were initially made. Although—relatively speaking—the "history of art collecting" is a recently established area of inquiry[81],

---

[79] Ruth Harris cites a letter from Joseph to Salomon Reinach from the 1880s, in which the elder brother writes the following: "If the Gvt were intelligent, I would be married in a month to a ravishing, cultivated and intelligent English girl, a remarkable painter, from the best family, and rich…. The young girl in question is a Protestant but would accept a civil marriage. Oh! The Jews!" See Harris, p.188. I have also seen the original of this document in the Bibliothèque Méjanes in Aix-en-Provance, but Joseph's penmanship remains illegible. As a result, I have relied on the published translation.

[80] On the question of taste, see generally Pierre Bourdieu's *La distinction: Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris, 1979), which remains canonical.

[81] For years, perhaps the major work in the field was Francis Haskell's *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspect of Tastes, Fashion and Collecting* (Ithaca, 1980), which remains an invaluable resource, although only on the period through the 1870s. Gerald Reitlinger's three-volume *The Economics of Taste*: *The Rise and Fall of the Picture of Market* (London, 1961-1977), as its title suggests, is a comprehensive survey of the art market, but mostly from the perspective of economics and the transactions behind the major collections. Similarly, Colin Platt's *Marks of Opulence* (London, 2005) is a *longue durée* survey of patronage and wealth in Western art, and Rémy Saisselin's *The Bourgeois and the Bibelot* (Rutgers, 1984) examines how art became a consumer commodity during the nineteenth century. Only in recent years have scholars began to consider collections as expressions of the emotional lives and the inner subjectivities of collectors. The

perhaps most significant among its underlying assumptions has been the idea that a collection furnishes a space in which a collector can "stage a self," to borrow from the art historian Anne Higonnet. "These stagings," she has argued, "should be considered self-portraits."[82] If art collections can be considered as self-portraits, they can perhaps also be considered as expressions of subjectivities shaped and influenced by a host of internal and external factors that create the respective "worlds of feeling" that the collectors, as individuals, each inhabited. This chapter seeks to explicate a crucial influence on the subjectivities of the collectors as self-portraitists—namely, their experiences, as pillars of the French-Jewish establishment during and after the *fin-de-siècle*, of a moment when Jewish tradition, the orienting strand that had stitched their communal fabric together throughout the *longue durée* of the nineteenth century, began to lose its position of prominence in their social world. Their individual responses to this shared experience reveal the emotional intimacies from which they collected art and, ultimately, formulated a taste. If, once again, the collectors were self-portraitists, the changing personal worlds they inhabited in the early decades of the twentieth century, in all of their respective complexities, were ultimately the stimulus that compelled them to paint.

I. "*Ornement de Foyer*": Two Portraits and the Oppresive Feminised Ideal

On 14 September 1881, Lazare Isidor (1818-1838), then the Grand Rabbin de France, and Zadoc Kahn (1839-1905), then the Grand Rabbin de Paris but soon to succeed Rabbi Isidore on the national stage[83], delivered orations at the funeral of Meyer Joseph Cahen d'Anvers (1804-1881), the patriarch of one of France's most prominent banking families and a celebrated patron of the arts. It was in his household that Louis Cahen d'Anvers was introduced to the *ancien régime* aesthetic that would later inform

---

establishment of the Center for the History of Collecting at the Frick Collection, New York, in 2007—to "support the study of the formation of collections of fine and decorative arts, both public and private, in Europe and the United States from the Renaissance to the present day"—has subsequently prompted various art historians to study in greater detail what was collected in certain historical moments, with both sociological and cultural historical aims.

[82] Anne Higonnet, "Self-portrait as a museum," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No. 52 (Autumn, 2007), p. 199. See also Higonnet, *A Museum of One's Own: Private Collecting, Public Gift* (Reading, 2010).

[83] On Zadoc Kahn, see generally Julien Weill's *Zadoc Kahn* (Paris, 1912). Julien Weill was Kahn's successor and son-in-law.

the collections he amassed with is wife, Louise Morpurgo, in their homes at 2, rue Bassano in Paris and in the Chateau Champs-sur-Marne outside the city. In addition to what the two rabbis called his "*sentiment des belles choses, le goût des productions de l'art*,"[84] Isidore praised Cahen d'Anvers for his fidelity to the people of Israel: "*C'était un israélite de coeur, un israélite éclairé*," he said. "*Ah, messieurs, c'est le propre des grande âmes de se souvenir de leur origine, et loin de la renier, d'y rester fidèles et d'en être fières*!"[85] Zadoc Kahn—later to become the chief spiritual advisor of many of the collectors and other members of their extended *milieu*—eulogized Cahen d'Anvers as an exemplar of traditional Jewish family life:

> *Mais ce qu'il était surtout, avant tout, en digne enfant du judaïsme, c'était l'homme de la famille. Sa maison était une maison patriarchale, son intérieur un intérieur modèle. Là, entouré de sa femme, de ses enfants et de ces jeunes générations qui grandissaient près de lui, il se sentait véritablement heureux, la joie débordait de son coeur, et il remerciait Dieu de toutes ses faveurs. Dieu lui avait donné pour compagne une sainte et noble femme, modèle de toutes les vertus, qui a été le charme de son existence et l'ornement de son foyer.*[86]

The traditional image of family life Kahn offered is as clear in its consideration of gender roles as it is predictable: the ideal home, after all, is a "*maison patriarchale*" in which women and children are mere extensions of men, who remain the centre of these structures as well as their foundations. What is significant, however, is that in celebrating this especially aesthetically inclined patriarch, Kahn ultimately articulated the woman's place in this *haute-bourgeois* cosmology with the language of art: "*Dieu lui avait donné pour compagne une sainte et noble femme*," he said, "*modèle de toutes les vertus, qui a été le charme de son existence et l'ornement de son foyer.*" A woman who existed in the social world of the Cahen d'Anvers and their peers, it follows, was not merely a passive object but an *art object*, to be studied and admired and to remain, in relation to a male spouse, "*l'ornement de son foyer*." Kahn's words were more than rhetorical flourish: at the time of Cahen d'Anvers' death, the women who belonged to this particular "*maison patriarchale*"—even those among its younger generations—literally adorned the foyers of their fathers and grandfathers, their images reduced and stylized into feminized

---

[84] *Discours Prononcés aux obsèques de M. Le Comte Cahen (d'Anvers)* (Paris, 1881), p. 11. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.
[85] Ibid., p. 6.
[86] Ibid., p. 12.

portraits by leading artists of the day, such as Carolus-Duran (1837-1917), Léon Bonnat (1833-1922), and, most significantly, Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919). These portraits—each commissioned and painted by men—as well as their placements in respective family homes, mostly in prominent public spaces, suggest the way in which the "*modèle*" of the Cahen d'Anvers and their contemporaries relied on a certain aesthetic as a means of enforcing a gendered control over the women in their family's *milieu*. In these portraits, mostly from the 1870s and 1880s, women were often idealized, fashioned into art objects to be possessed and displayed.[87] In the early decades of the twentieth century, then, it was precisely this aesthetic that they rejected when they abandoned the traditional strictures of haute-bourgeois Jewish society for lives of their own designs.

This feminized idealization—which the art historian Debora Silverman has called "the celebration of female fecundity and decorative domestic intimacy"[88]—is perhaps most apparent in the case of Louise de Morpurgo (1845-1926), the Italian-born wife of Louis Cahen d'Anvers, with whom she had five children: Robert (1871-1931), Irène (1872-1963), Élisabeth (1874-1944), Alice (1876-1965), and Charles (1879-1957). The daughter of a wealthy Sephardic merchant family from Trieste, Louise was known for her delicate, Meissen-like beauty, which became, both for admirers and critics of the Cahen d'Anvers and their gilded, ostentatious lifestyle in the rue Bassano and at the Chateau de Champs-sur-Marne, the only relevant aspect of her personhood. Perhaps the best example of this sentiment appears in the recollections of Edmond and Jules Goncourt, who were frequent guests at Louise's salons in the 1880s and 1890s. Not without a considerable degree of anti-Semitism, the brothers made the following observation of their hostess in an entry from February 1880:

> *Les Juives gardent, de leur origine orientale, une nonchalance particulière. Aujourd'hui, je suivais d'un œil charmé les mouvements de chatte paresseuse avec lesquels Mme Louise Cahen pêchait au fond de sa vitrine ses porcelaines et ses laques, pour me les mettre dans la main. Puis quand elles sont blondes, les Juives, il y a au fond de leur blondeur, comme de l'or de la peinture*

[87] In much of my analysis of portraiture and femininity that follows, I have relied heavily on the insightful work of the art historian Tamar Garb. See, for instance, Garb's *Bodies of Modernity: Figure and Flesh in Fin-de-Siècle France* (London, 1998). See also *The Body in Time: Figures of Femininity in Late-Nineteenth Century France* (Seattle, 2008). Finally, see *The Painted Face: Portraits of Women in France, 1814-1914* (New Haven, 2007).

[88] See Debora Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology, and Style* (Berkeley, 1992), p. 145.

de la MAITRESSE DU TITIEN[89]*. L'examen fini, la Juive s'est laissée tomber sur une chaise longue ; et la tête abandonnée de côté et montrant au sommet un enroulement de cheveux qui ressemblait à un de nid de couleuvres, elle s'est indolemment plainte, avec toutes sortes d'interrogations amusantes de la mine et du bout du nez, de cette exigence des hommes et des romanciers demandant aux femmes qu'elles ne fussent pas de créatures humaines et qu'elles n'eussent pas dans l'amour les mêmes lassitudes et les mêmes dégoûts que les hommes.*[90]

What the Goncourts ultimately achieve in their evocation of this "*chatte paresseuse*" of a woman is a double alterity, the transformation of their subject into a foreign body on Jewish and gendered lines. This they accomplish by considering her as a piece of art akin to any other of the innumerable *objets d'art*, porcelain and lacquer, displayed in her vitrine. Louise is initially introduced in the passage as a Jew, which accounts for her apparently languorous disposition, a function, in the Goncourts' eyes, of what they imagine to be her eastern—and foreign—origins. Ultimately, however, the difference they see in Louise's physical being, especially with regard to her seemingly exotic blonde hair, can only be articulated "*comme de l'or de la peinture de la MAITRESSE DU TITIEN*"—in other words, via allusion to another existing work of art. In a sense, the allusion is fitting. The painting to which they refer, since renamed Titian's *La Femme au Miroir*[91], is a meditation on the Venetian ideal of beauty, a canvas that depicts a wealthy young woman being attended to by a manservant as she looks into a mirror. The servant combs her hair in front of *another* mirror, a situation that places the young woman at the intersection of multiple perspectives and gazes all of which she herself cannot see and over which she has limited control. In theory, Louise occupies the same position in the Goncourts' account: she is to be considered and regarded solely from the perspective of distance, a distance she herself does not decide. The same applies to her gender: her body is entirely sexualized, draped along a *chaise longue*, cast, again, into the fictive realm of art by "*cette exigence des hommes et des romanciers demandant aux femmes qu'elles ne fussent pas de créatures humaines*." The distance in this iteration is not between non-Jews and Jews but between a woman and all human creatures.

---

[89] Goncourt's own footnote, reproduced her, reads: "*Ancien titre donné à la JEUNE FEMME A LA TOILETTE DU LOUVRE, tableau intitulé aussi LAURA DIANTI ET ALPHONSE DE FERRARE.*"
[90] Edmond et Jules Goncourt, *Journal: Mémoires de la Vie Littéraire 1866-1886*, t. II, (Paris, 1956), p. 858.
[91] http://www.louvre.fr/oeuvre-notices/la-femme-au-miroir

As it does in Renoir's portraits of her daughters—Irène in 1880 and Alice and Élisabeth together in 1881—this same sense of distance manifests itself in Louise's portrait by Carolus-Duran from the 1870s. Partially in keeping with the style of the times and the predominant aesthetic of the Third Republic, especially in terms of portraiture, Carolus-Duran depicted his subject seated against an imperious black background in precisely the manner that Émile Zola would later attack in his treatise on contemporary art and its potential for regeneration. In the "old" portraiture, Zola insisted, artists merely attempted to please their sitters. "*On peut dire que leur grande affaire est d'effacer les traces de la vie,*" he wrote. "*Leurs portraits sont des ombres, des figures pâles aux yeux vitreux, aux lèvres de satin, aux joues de porcelaine*."[92] And so Louise appears, again a piece of porcelain as she was in the Goncourts' account, devoid of the emotion and the vitality of a "*créature humaine*." Of course, it was the case that most portraits commissioned by elites in the 1860s and even still in the 1870s were completed in the more academic, pedagogical template that Carolus-Duran employed in his rendition of Louise.[93] However, compared with many of the male subjects depicted both by Carolus-Duran and Léon Bonnat, a close friend of the Cahen d'Anvers family who would later paint Louise's sister-in-law, Madame Albert Cahen d'Anvers, Louise's portrait emphasizes the opposite of austerity and gravity: it depicts instead an embellished opulence, a woman posed in a regal chair, adorned with a bejeweled tiara and swathed in a sheath of fine black lace. The same can be said of Bonnat's portrait of Louise Warshawsky, who married Albert Cahen d'Anvers (1846-1903), the composer and pianist who himself later sat for Renoir. Similarly, Bonnat's 1891 canvas presents a full-bodied subject in a seeming void, removed entirely from any discernible signs of modernity and floating in an apparent, timeless ether. As in Carolus-Duran's depiction of her sister-in-law, Louise's gender—rather than her psychology or her emotional interiority—is the portrait's primary emphasis: she is inscribed within the confines of the female body, constricted in crinoline, transformed into a manicured ideal of perfection. Her skin has been enhanced to reflect a flawless white pallor, and her femininity

[92] Émile Zola, "Le Salon de 1875," *Écrits sur l'art*, ed. Jean-Pierre Leduc Adine (Paris, 1991), pp. 302-3. The passage is also quoted—in translation—in Colin B. Bailey, "Portrait of the Artist as a Portrait Painter," *Renoir's Portraits: Impressions of an Age* (New Haven, 1997), p. 2.
[93] Bailey, pp. 1-2.

accentuated with jewels at each curve in her figure. Like her sister-in-law, she appears less a woman than a female object imagined, rendered, and ultimately consumed by the eyes of men. Portraiture was power: Louise's husband hung Carolus-Duran's portrait of his wife in the octagonal foyer of the Château de Champs-sur-Marne, where it was perhaps a reminder of the role she was to play.



Figure 2. Carolus-Duran, *Madame Louis Cahen D'Anvers, née Louise Morpurgo*.

Much the same applies to perhaps the most famous portraits in the Cahen d'Anvers collection, Pierre-Auguste Renoir's renditions of Irène (1880) and of Alice and Élisabeth (1881), the latter entitled *Rose et bleu*. A considerable volume of scholarship in the last three decades has sought to elucidate the painter's complex relationship with women[94]: after all, portraiture was central to Renoir's oeuvre, and the vast majority of his portraits were of women, whether the Parisiennes of his Impressionist period, the society

[94] See, for example, Tamar Garb, "Renoir and the Natural Woman," *The Oxford Art Journal*, 8:2, 1985, pp. 3-15; see also Anthea Callen, "Renoir: the Matter of Gender," *Renoir: Master Impressionist*, exhib. Cat., ed. John House, Sydney (Queensland Art Gallery, 1994), pp. 41-50.

women and girls of his mid-career, or the Classical nudes of his later years.[95] As the art historian Ann Dumas has argued, Renoir's attitudes to women were often conflicting visions of "serene and sunny idylls" that often "went hand in hand with a deep dislike of educated and intellectual women."[96] Against the backdrop of the Third Republic's increasing acceptance of women's rights and education, Renoir seemed to maintain a certain animus for these causes that bordered on an outright misogyny. As his son, the filmmaker Jean Renoir, would record in his biography of his father, the painter considered professional women to be "monsters" and preferred women who could not read.[97] Whether these personal opinions connected to his treatment of female subjects on canvas is a matter of speculation, but the fact remains that he nevertheless did develop a feminine archetype that has come to be called the "Renoir type"[98]: a slightly plump—and typically blonde—woman with creamy, pink skin, a button nose, inviting lips, and the sexualized figure to match. In contrast to the naturalist aesthetic that characterized much Impressionist work, Renoir's portraits of women were highly gendered works of formalism, as suggested by his 1887-88 illustrations for Zola's *L'Assomoir*, in which, as Douglas Druick has shown, the character Nana, Gervaise's daughter and the frequent heroine of future Zola novels, coquettishly advertises her nubile, adolescent form as if she existed in a novel about something other than working-class malaise and alcoholism.[99] As evinced in canvases such as *The Green Jardinière* (1882) and *The Piano Lesson* (1889), Renoir's women are soft and seductive, confined to the realm not necessarily of reality but of ideal imagination. As contemporary photographs later revealed, Henriette Henriot, one of the painter's frequent models and mistresses, was far from beautiful, but Renoir nevertheless transformed her image to into his porcelain ideal of feminine perfection: the female body, in a certain sense, was a canvas of its own, awaiting the painter's male sublimation into art.

Of course, the portraits of the Cahen d'Anvers daughters require consideration in slightly more specific categories than merely that of "Renoir's women." First of all, they belong to the subset of portraits he painted for wealthy patrons in the 1870s and 1880s,

[95] Ann Dumas, "Renoir and the Feminine Ideal," *Renoir's Women* (London, 2005), 9.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Jean Renoir, *Renoir* (Paris, 1962), p. 88.
[98] Dumas, p. 10.
[99] Douglas Druick, *Renoir: the Artist in Focus* (Chicago, 1997), p. 35.

and, perhaps most importantly, they belong to a larger subset of portraits he painted of children, especially of young women and girls. Renoir was fascinated by children as subjects, mostly for their raw emotionality and their emotive potential: "their mouths utter only the words which animals would utter if they could talk," his son recalled him saying.[100] As Ann Dumas has pointed out, there is a certain naturalness and spontaneity that characterizes his numerous portraits of children, regardless of social class.[101] However, there is a crucially gendered dimension to this "naturalness": in the same way that the majority of Renoir's portraits were of women—and young women at that—the majority of his portraits of children were of young girls, innocent but rendered in the vessels of nubile, subtly eroticized female bodies. At the time of their double portrait, Alice and Élisabeth Cahen d'Anvers were five and seven years old, respectively. But, as is the case in many of Renoir's other portraits of girls this age, his subjects are not merely younger versions of the "Renoir type" reserved for their mothers and grandmothers. With skin more flushed than pallid, eyes more piercing than coquettish, and an emotionality more intense than performative, "Renoir's girls" often present more expressive figures than their older counterparts, far more suggestively feminine if not as sexualized.

[100] Quoted in Dumas, p. 40.
[101] Ibid.



Figure 3. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Rose et blue: Alice et Élisabeth Cahen d'Anvers*. d. 1881. Museu de Arte de São Paulo.

This is precisely the effect of *Rose et bleu: Alice et Élisabeth Cahen d'Anvers* (1881), in which the two sisters appear clutching each other's hands in sumptuously appointed salon, presumably in the rue Bassano, dressed in matching pink and blue sashes, already emblems of the same decorated feminine finery evinced in Carolus-Duran's portrait of their mother and Léon Bonnat's portrait of their aunt. Alice, in pink, appears on the verge of tears, her eyes glassy orbs; Élisabeth, in blue, regards the viewer with an almost tangible anxiety, her free hand pinching the lace of her dress. "Renoir's great achievement here," according to Ann Dumas, "is to preserve, despite the formality of setting and dress, the little girls' freshness and their particularly childish mixture of excitement and shyness."[102] Yet, the sisters' "freshness" cannot be separated from "the formality of setting and dress." The arresting power of the former is a function of the latter, a constraining externality in which the two young girls are inextricably inscribed. Their affluent context, in other words, is immediately and obviously apparent. *Rose et bleu* may be, as Colin Bailey has argued, "as radiant and affecting as anything in his [Renoir's] oeuvre,"[103] but the exquisitely rendered faces of the girls are registers of a certain unease, almost of pain. In *Mlle Irène Cahen d'Anvers* (1880), Renoir's depiction is less emotive, and his subject appears in profile, gazing outward beyond the left boundary of the canvas. Particularly striking in the portrait of the eight-year-old Irène, however, is her hair, auburn and ochre, strewn across her body as if in a kind of veil. Her hair blends into the green flora of the garden in which she sits, rendering the portrait's most significant contrast that between her face, pristine and seemingly lacquered, and its surroundings, raw and natural. In a certain sense, her face is framed within the existing dimensional frame of the canvas, fixed in a position that does not afford her the autonomy to confront the gaze of the viewer. Charles Éphrussi included an etching of Irène's portrait in the July 1881 issue of the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, where the vast majority of its viewers encountered it: the portrait remained in private collections until the aftermath of the Second World War. In the etching, the portrait's contrast is even more pronounced, Irène's face transformed into an object viewers regarded—and perhaps

[102] Dumas, p. 50.
[103] Bailey, p. 40.

even coveted—but with which they did not actively engage. What *Mlle Irène Cahen d'Anvers* depicts is a less a young woman than an inescapable passivity.



Figure 2. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Mlle Irène Cahen d'Anvers*. d. 1880.
Foundation E.G. Bührle Collection, Zurich.

By this period in his career, Renoir, largely through his acquaintance with the critic and collector Charles Éphrussi, had begun to accept commissions from a network of

predominately Jewish and Protestant financial elites, including, perhaps most prominently, the Cahen d'Anvers.[104] If Renoir's portraits of female subjects must be considered in the context of his particular feminine ideal, his portraits of Jewish subjects—and especially his female Jewish subjects—require a similar familiarity with the painter's attitudes toward Jews and Jewishness. As Philip Nord has written, the related but oft-conflicting strains of anti-Republican, Barrèsian, and anti-Dreyfusard sensibilities—which Renoir thoroughly espoused[105]—culminated in the Vichy regime's persecution of the Third Republic's political class as "a cabal of Protestants, Freemasons, and Jews." But it was "in just such circles that the new painters travelled," Nord observes, "and it is just these faces, in unprecedented number, who peer out from the canvases they painted."[106] What emerges in a careful reading of Renoir's correspondence from the period is thus an irascible frustration and an anti-Semitism perhaps less severe than rhetorical: the painter acknowledges his dependence on Jewish elites and their financial support, but he resents his perception of their cosmopolitan, capitalistic proclivities. This tension appears clearly in Renoir's private impression of Charles Éphrussi: "*Ne suivez pas mes conseils et écoutez Ephrussy,"* he wrote. *Ce juif plus que Bougeois a l'oeil qu'il faut pour ce qu'on appelle le Salon*."[107] With regard to his payment for the portrait of Alice and Elisabeth Cahen d'Anvers, he wrote the following in outrage to the collector and confidante Charles Deudon: "*Quant au quinze cents francs de Cahen, je me permettrai de vous dire que je la trouve raide. On n'est pas plus pingre. Décidément je lâche les juifs*."[108] The amount also happened to be the largest sum he ever earned for a single portrait.

The portraits of these women present a relatively clear image of the gender roles in this rarefied *milieu*, at least as they were conceived and imagined by men, both patrons

---

[104] Ibid., p. 11.
[105] In the Dreyfus Affair and the culture wars it sparked, Renoir decried the painter Gustave Moreau as having developed an aesthetic he called "Jew art," dismissed Pissarro for his Jewish roots, and minced no words voicing his view on the damage their presence in France could do to the nation: "They come to France to make money, but the moment a fight is on, they hide behind the first tree. There are so many in the army because the Jew likes to parade around in fancy uniforms. Every country chases them out, there is a reason for that, and we must not allow them to occupy such a position in France." See Philip Nord, *Impressionists and Politics: Art and Democracy in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 2000), p. 104.
[106] Ibid., p. 7.
[107] Renoir to Berard, from Algiers, mid-March 1882, quoted in Bailey, p. 8.
[108] Renoir to Deudon, 19 February 1882. Quoted in Marcel Schneider, "Lettres de Renoir sur l'Italie," *L'Âge d'Or I* (1945), p. 99.

and painters alike. They also underscore the notion in which, on a certain level, the act of collecting was itself a fundamentally gendered act, a practice in which male collectors both transformed their wives and daughters into images and art objects to be possessed and displayed as "*ornements de foyer*," precisely as Zadoc Kahn had considered women in the funeral obsequies of Meyer Joseph Cahen d'Anvers. If women could be recast into art objects, art objects could likewise be reinterpreted as feminine. This is well conveyed, for instance, in the memoirs of Hélène Fould-Springer, the granddaughter of Léon Fould and Thérèse Éphrussi (herself a Renoir subject[109] and a cousin of Charles Éphrussi), in which Hélène recalls in detail the tactile, almost sensual nature of her grandfather's relations with the material objects he collected in the 1910s and 1920s:

> Bonpapa was the living image of a grandfather of those days. He had lovely smiling blue eyes, a pink-coloured complexion and very soft white whiskers that curled round his cheeks. He was a great connoisseur of old china, porcelain and *objets d'art*. A few days before the New Year, he used to go and visit what the called '*mes petites amis*' meaning his art dealers. He would buy himself a gift—a cup and saucer or a Buddha or a vase or something. When he got home again, he would take a small step ladder, place his newly acquired treasure, still all wrapped up, on the top of the cupboard, right at the back. Then, on the first of January, he would take down a parcel from the top of the cupboard and produce this 'surprise.' The surprise was actually whatever he had bought himself the year before and of course he really had forgotten what it was. My brother and I often watched him unwrap the 'surprise.' Holding it with great care and love and a sweet smile on his face, he would say: '*Quel goût! Comme c'est joli!*' Even when he was going blind, he used to touch and feel the quality of a piece of china with the tips of his old fingers.[110]

That Fould referred to his art dealers as '*petites amis*,' a French expression for mistress, conveys the gendered—and sexual—persona collectors such as Fould often ascribed to art objects, which would then be unwrapped in a careful, tantalizing pace, all for the sake of preserving the 'surprise' they contained within.[111] Furthermore, the sexuality projected

---

[109] Thérèse sat for Renoir in 1880. Her portrait, Madame Léon Fould, hangs in the private collection of Felipe Propper de Callejón and Renata Goldschmidt-Propper in New York City.

[110] Hélène Fould-Springer, *I Loved My Stay: The Autobiography of Hélène Propper de Callejón* (London, 1997), p. 43-5. The Foulds were a wealthy French-Jewish banking family intermarried with both the Éphrussis, as in the case of Léon Fould and Thérèse Éphrussi, and with the Rothschilds, as in the case of Hélène's sister, Liliane Fould-Springer, who married Élie de Rothschild by proxy in 1941. Her memoirs were published privately before her death in 1997, under the supervision of her daughter, Elena Bonham Carter, and her sister Liliane de Rothschild. A copy of her memoirs—written in English—was given to me by her son, Felipe Propper de Callejón, in New York City in September 2013.

[111] This "sexual" relationship collectors could have with the items they pursued was a theme first advanced in the novels of Balzac. See a very insightful essay by John Patrick Greene, "Balzac's Most Helpless

onto a given object persisted even when a collector could no longer see. As Hélène writes of her grandfather, "he used to touch and feel the quality of a piece of china with the tips of his old fingers." The object, in a sense, becomes an iteration of a female body, sculpted and available for the possession and pleasure of men. The women in this network, at least through the conclusion of the *fin-de-siècle* period, remained inscribed within a deliberately cultivated aesthetic that essentialized their femininity at the same time as it denied them their individual specificity. In a certain sense, a number of particular works of art, such as the portraits of wives and daughters, evince the gendered mores of the community that commissioned them, while the vigour with which many (male) collectors approached the procurement of feminized art objects suggests the extent to which those mores were deliberately maintained.

II. Against the Traditional Jewish Family Structure

Even in the early generation of the *milieu*, the passive feminine subjects depicted on canvases and socialized in salons were neither accurate reflections of the women in the group nor of the ways in which they saw and understood themselves. Behind the literal and figurative male gaze that mediated their images in paint and also their lives as art objects, they possessed a considerable degree of autonomy that appears to have emboldened a significant number of these women to abandon the strictures of the *haute-bourgeois* Jewish society they inhabited in sexual, religious, and cultural terms. As much as the portraits of the Cahen d'Anvers women suggest the values of their social world, the choices of the Cahen d'Anvers women *themselves* suggest the extent of this internal communal erosion. In other words, the same faces imprisoned in a particular ideal of femininity in portraits by Renoir and Carolus-Duran were the same women who challenged, subverted, and even rejected that image in their own lived experiences. In fact, it could even be argued that the Renoir portraits of the Cahen d'Anvers daughters were relics not of traditional gender roles and their representation but rather of their abandonment altogether: the entire reason for their existence, after all, is that Louise

---

Heroine: The Art Collection in Le Cousin Pons," *The French Review*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (October, 1995), pp. 13-23. Léon Fould's actions fit well into Greene's analytical framework.

Cahen d'Anvers met Renoir through her longtime extramarital liaison with Charles Ephrussi.[112]

As her daughter-in-law, Sonia Warshawsky, later recalled in her memoirs, Louise Cahen d'Anvers did perform a certain standard of the public femininity her station required, careful to maintain the mundane rituals of *haute-bourgeois* life. "A custom in my day, strictly adhered to," she wrote, "was that a young married woman had to be introduced by her mother-in-law to all the acquaintances of her new family. […] I inwardly prayed that some ailment would prevent them from receiving visitors and that our visiting cards would suffice. Alas, their breathing remained unimpaired, and the ordeal had to be got through."[113] At any sign of disrespect for these customs, however, Sonia wrote that Louise would harshly discipline any who dared challenge them: "Once in the horse-drawn brougham with coachman and footman on the box, I was severely reprimanded and asked why I sat so dolefully, never uttering a word! My reply was that I had really nothing to say to people I hardly knew." Despite this outward fidelity to social custom, Louise—along with many of the other women in her immediate familial and social *milieu*—did not maintain the same fidelity to her community, its particular image of family life, and its vision of a woman's place within that narrative. Her affair with Charles Éphrussi was not a question of suspicion or rumour but rather a well-known fact in her circle, an item that elicited a considerable amount of interest and commentary.[114] The Goncourts, for instance, were delighted to mention the extra-marital liaisons of the so-called "*chatte paresseuse*" whenever they could. As Edmond de Goncourt wrote on 16 October 1878, the couple would often conduct their assignations at the Hôtel Sichel, "*où la Cahen d'Anvers, penchée sur une boîte de laque que lui fait admirer le jeune Ephrussi, indique à son amant le jour où il pourra venir coucher avec elle*."[115]

Although all of Louise's daughters would subvert the traditional strictures of their community, and, in a certain sense, the stylized ideals of their respective portraits, it was

---

[112] Louise Cahen d'Anvers persuaded Éphrussi to approach Renoir, and he completed the portraits of her daughters before his journey to Algiers in February 1881. See Bailey, p. 12.
[113] Sonia Warshawsky, *Baboushka Remembers* (London, 1972), p. 48. Sonia's memoir was published privately at the insistence of her grandson, Evelyn de Rothschild. She wrote it in English, and the only publicly available copy today is held in the Rothschild Archive, London (RAL).
[114] See, for instance, Edmund de Waal, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (London, 2011), esp. "Paris 1871-1899," pp. 21-97.
[115] Goncourt, *Journal*, t. II, (Paris, 1956), p. 1265.

her eldest daughter, Irène, who ultimately rejected the legitimacy of their community—its parameters as well as its mores—to the greatest extent. In October 1891, Irène, at the age of 19, married Moïse de Camondo, the 31-year-old scion of perhaps the most prominent Sephardic banking family, whose members occupied a pair of adjacent townhouses in Paris's "*plaine Monceau*" at 61 and 63 rue de Monceau, the latter of which Moïse devoted his later years transforming into an adaptation of Marie Antoinette's Petit Trianon. As nearly all of the marriages in this *milieu* were, the Cahen d'Anvers-Camondo union was primarily a means of consolidating financial power among members of an identical caste, compatible in terms of social position, wealth, and Jewish religious affiliation. The practice, as Balzac had observed in a study of one such banking family, was a survival mechanism, a means of ensuring the longevity and communal good fortune of each family in future generations: "*Pour pouvoir subsister*," the novelist wrote, "*le banquier doit devenir noble, fonder une dynastie*."[116] By the 1890s, Cahen d'Anvers was, after Rothschild, arguably the most prominent firm among the several that comprised Paris's *Haut Banque*: his father, Meyer Joseph, along with his Belgian Bischoffsheim relations, had founded Paribas, enabling him to become one of the major investors in the Paris Bourse by the late 1870s and, by 1882, during the bankruptcy of the Union Générale, to join forces with Rothschild, Camondo, and the Banque de Paris to raise more than 20 million francs to bail out other failing banks.[117] As a fellow investor in the Paris Stock Exchange, Camondo, the so-called "Rothschild of the East," was already significantly financially involved with Cahen d'Anvers; his marriage to his business partner's daughter was thus a means of solidifying an extant—and mutually beneficial—fiscal relationship. Women such as Irène in this *milieu* were often the means through which these relationships were transposed into kinship ties. This was a reality that, by the f*in-de-siècle*, many of them had begun to challenge, as Louise had done, or to ignore entirely, as Irène would do.

The "Contrat de Mariage" between Moïse de Camondo and Irène Cahen d'Anvers is a document that clearly betrays the transactional nature of the marriage as much as it subtly delineates the role that Irène is intended to play. Most significantly, the

[116] Honoré de Balzac, *La Maison Nucigen* (Paris, 2014), p. 16.
[117] See Hubert Bonin, *Histoire de la société générale 1864-1890: Naissance d'une banque* t. I (Paris, 2006), p. 316.

contract details that Louis and Louise Cahen d'Anvers paid Moïse de Camondo a dowry of 1,050,000 francs, including a number of shares in various holdings both in France and abroad.[118] What is also apparent throughout the document is the expectation of the material lives the couple will lead, and the clear notion that the young woman who entered the marriage ultimately entered as precisely the art object she had been depicted in Renoir's portrait: "*La future épouse apporte en mariage et se constitue personellement en dot*," the contract stipulates. "*Les robes, linge, bijoux, objets mobiliers à son usage personnel, le tout d'une values de dix mille Francs*."[119] But Irène did not remain confined to the parameters of this fixed, feminized ideal for long: she begun conducting an affair with Carlo Sampieri, a self-styled Italian aristocrat then in charge of the Camondo horse stables;[120] separated from her husband in 1897; divorced Moïse in 1902; and converted to Catholicism in order to marry Sampieri the following year. More than renouncing her role as "*ornement de foyer*," however, Irène also, according to most accounts,[121] abandoned altogether her role as a mother, which was in many ways the essence of female existence in her *milieu*.

Citing Irène's conversion from Judaism as a major concern, Moïse successfully retained custody of their two children, Nissim de Camondo (1892-1917) and Béatrice de Camondo Reinach (1894-1944).[122] The two children were raised in their father's house and only rarely saw their mother. Although there exist the memoirs of peripheral

---

[118] See Article Trois, "Contrat de Mariage de Monsieur le Comte Moïse de Camondo et de Mademoiselle I. de Cahen (d'Anvers)," 8 Octobre 1891, par M. Labitte, Notaire à Paris, Boulevard Malesherbes, 85, held in Archives de Musée Nissim de Camondo, Paris (hereafter AMNC).

[119] Article Deux, Ibid.

[120] Boni de Castellane, in his memoirs, described Sampieri thusly: "*J'avais confié la direction de mon écurie au comte Sampieri, amiable sportman, qui s'acquitta de sa tâche avec dévouement.*" See Castellane, *Mémoires de Boni de Castellane* (Paris, 1987), p. 156.

[121] See, again, Seni and Le Tarnec's *Les Camondos: Éclipse d'un fortune* (1997), without question the definitve study of the rise of the Camondo bank, the family's transnational past, and the characters that defined each of its three primary generations. Irène figures only slightly in their account, vis-à-vis her brief marriage to Moïse, but the book does mention that she ultimately abandoned her children and remained relatively estranged from them, especially from Béatrice. See their chapter "Moise," pp. 199-264. Likewise, in his 1999 imagined history of the Camondos, the writer Pierre Assouline casts Irène as something of an impetuous child, only in search of adventure. Assouline's account of their divorce is as follows: "*Irène, plus éclatante que jamais, était ailleurs. Par l'esprit et par le corps. Elle multiplait les aventures et cela se savait. Moïse souffrait d'être publiquement cocufié, mais n'en pouvait mais.* […] *Généreuse jusqu'à la prodigalité, cultivée et polyglotte, elle tempérait un caractère parfois abrupt par la grâce avec laquelle elle faisait de l'esprit, et par sa faculté à susciter les rires. Un jour, ce fut plus qu'un aventure*." See Assouline, *Le dernier des Camondo* (Paris, 1999), pp. 232-233.

[122] See Sophie Le Tarnec and Nora Seni, "From Istanbul to Paris," *The Camondo Legacy: The Passions of a Paris Collector* (Paris, 2008), p. 45.

members of the Cahen d'Anvers family and of members of its subsequent generations, there is very little that survives to contextualize the Camondo divorce in 1902, an event that shocked Parisian society. Similarly, the Camondo archives contain only one significant document related to Irène, which is the letter she wrote to her children, dated 4 March 1903, informing them of her decision to marry Sampieri:

> *Mes chères, Comme je vous l'ai dit l'autre jour, je vais m'absenter pendant quelques semaines en Italie. Je vous annonce une nouvelle qui ne vous étonnera pas, car vous y attendiez! Je me suis mariée avec Monsieur Sampieri. Vous savez tous les deux et vous comprendrez encore mieux en grand-dissant combine ma vie est seule maintenant et combien je souffrais de n'avoir personne autour de moi pour m'aider dans l'existence et me tenir compagnie et surtout beaucoup plus tard quand je serais vieille, que Béatrice sera mariée et que Nini sera un grand garçon qui circulera pour son propre compte. Enfin, mes chéris, vous savez combien je vous aime ! que si je vous gronde quelquefois c'est pour votre bien, parce que je vous voudrais plus sages et de meilleurs enfants que les autres ! Vous savez que vous êtes et que vous serez toujours mes enfants chéris et que M. Sampieri ne demande qu'à être un grand et bon ami pour vous. […] Soyez sages et dociles et obéissants, et surtout respectueux et gentils pour votre père qui vous aime tant et même trop.*[123]

There is a certain irony that runs through this account: the tone Irène employs seems to avoid the rupture of her decision and even perhaps to insinuate that there is no rupture at all. "*Vous savez que vous êtes et que vous serez toujours mes enfants chéris*," she wrote, as if the family ties that had bound her to her children would persist exactly as before, when her marriage to Moïse had already disintegrated and she had lost her claim to custody of Nissim and Béatrice. Similarly, she even perpetuates the very gender stereotypes she herself has actively and consciously broken, writing that she cannot be alone in old age because "*Béatrice sera mariée et que Nini sera un grand garçon qui circulera pour son propre compte*." In a sense, Irène emancipated herself from this social world, but she did not challenge the nature of the world, its customs, or its social practices. In fact, she concluded the letter with an emphatic exhortation that her children obey the laws of the family and the society she has both literally and figuratively escaped:

> *Dites à Mademoiselle que la pauvre tante Louisa sera très heureuse de vous voir mais seulement la semaine prochaine et si ce Dimanche vous avez quelques instants invitez Audrey à prendre le thé, elle est seule rue Bassano, il n'y a qu'à téléphoner. Oncle Charlie envois à Nini le couteau*

[123] Letter from Irène Cahen d'Anvers to her children, 4 March 1903, AMNC.

que est trop beau pour un enfant. Je recommande que Nini écris de suite un mot pour remercier ton oncle rue Bassano car tante Alice part ce soir pour Londres et elle emportera la lettre.[124]

III. "*Rester Juif*"?



Figure 4. Hélène Reinach-Abrami, undated. Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Judaïsme, Paris.

Irène Cahen d'Anvers was far from being an isolated case. As various family memoirs from the period attest, the abandonment of—and even, in some cases, conversion from—Judaism was a relatively common practice among members of this elite social world, especially among women struggling to reconcile their self-understandings with their respective places within the communal familial spheres they occupied. Hélène Reinach-Abrami (1887-1960), the eldest daughter of Théodore Reinach by his first wife, Charlotte Hirsch (d. 1889), considered Judaism an institution that advanced the extant gender disparities that characterized her reading of contemporary

[124] Ibid.

Parisian *haute-bourgeois* society. That these attitudes would emerge within the specific family culture of the Reinachs is especially significant. After all, of all the families in their *milieu*, the Reinachs—and especially Théodore Reinach—were perhaps the most concerned with formulating a Franco-Judaism that would emphasize the fundamental affinity between post-Revolutionary French Republicanism and the Jewish past. With the possible exception of Zola, Joseph Reinach was perhaps the most outspoken Dreyfusard; Salomon Reinach was a well-known scholar and antiquarian deeply involved in Jewish philanthropy and communal life; and Théodore Reinach, Hélène's father, was the polymath brother deeply engaged with the question of Franco-Jewishness and its future. As he argued emphatically in his *Histoire des Israélites depuis la ruine de leur indépendence nationale jusqu'à nos jours* (1884), discussed in Chapter IV of this thesis, to be French was to endorse, on some level, a fundamentally "Jewish" ethic, and to be Jewish was to recognize that secular France—and, more importantly, the type of emancipated (male) citizenship it offered—was a space that embodied more faithfully than anywhere else in continental Europe the exalted ideals of the Hebrew past. For Théodore Reinach, to identify as both Jewish *and* French was to adopt a secular universality accessed only through the embrace of a prior particularity: Jewishness, in essence, was the portal to the universal and even global aspirations that undergirded the identity of the French citizen after 1789.[125] That his own daughter would challenge and even abandon this worldview suggests a considerable degree of internal strife within what was at the time one of France's most important Jewish families.

Hélène Reinach-Abrami completed her book-length memoir, entitled *Le Bien-Aimée*, in 1934 and 1935, after her father's death in 1928. Written before the emergence of the personal and collective memories of the Holocaust in France, which would claim the lives of her brother, Léon, his wife, Béatrice de Camondo, and others in their *milieu*, her recollections offer an image of Jewish institutional life that neither responds to nor engages with the question of its near-destruction between 1942 and 1944. They are purely personal, the perceptive reflections of a woman recalling both her spiritual disillusionment at the young age of eleven as well as an increasing awareness of a

[125] For the intellectual and communal context that surrounded this idea, see generally Philip Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Harvard, 1995), esp. "Jewish Republicanism," pp. 64-90.

feminine alterity that separated her from her male relations and peers. She begins a lengthy chapter entitled "Religion" with her memories of a childhood spiritual awakening, an experience in which she regarded the sky as the tableau of an omnipotent god: "*Je le regardai si intensément, si longuement, avec tant d'amour, qu'une espèce de griserie s'empara de moi*," she wrote, "*mon corps devint léger, léger; je ne sentais plus le dur contact de la toiture de métal, je flottais, âme extasiée, dans la béatitude d'une communion divine….*"[126] This experience she sought to explore by asking her "mother"—her father's second wife, Fanny Kann—for "*leçons de religion*," which amounted to private lessons, mostly in reading Hebrew, with a young tutor from the Grande Synagogue. Although Théodore consented that his daughter receive these lessons, and although he was such an outspoken advocate of the Jewish diasporic experience as an historical antecedent for contemporary France, the Jewish religion itself, with its traditions and beliefs, was a subject that rarely featured in family discussions. According to Hélène's recollections, it was merely a reality of life that never warranted the intellectual scrutiny that Théodore Reinach and his brothers applied to nearly everything else. "*Papa et Maman et mes autres parents n'allaient au temple que pour assister à des mariages,*" she wrote, "*la religion était un sujet qu'ils n'abordaient jamais, sans doute parce que c'est un sujet trop sacré; je supposais qu'ils devaient, eux aussi, s'arranger avec Dieu sans intermédiaire... Il le faut bien quand on est israélite...*"[127] This particular relationship with the Jewish religion—private but automatically maintained— seems also to have informed the one piece of counsel Hélène remembers having received from her father on the question of faith: "*Rien n'est plus simple*," he told her. "*Le devoir, c'est toujours ce qu'il y a de plus désagréable*."[128]

For Hélène the maintenance of Judaism was not so simple: it was a faith that, in her experience and understanding, ultimately endowed her with a sense of otherness, both in an ethno-religious and a gendered sense. It is perhaps significant that she expresses each of these imposed alterities in terms of the dress she bought with her mother at the Magasin du Louvre for her confirmation ceremony at the Grande Synagogue de la

[126] Hélène Reinach-Abrami, *Le Bien-Aimée* (Paris, 1935), p. 103. *Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme*, Paris. (Hereafter, MAHJ).
[127] Ibid., p. 105.
[128] Ibid., p. 100.

Victoire. The dress was ultimately the item of clothing that separated her from her male peers in her cohort, the item that presented her in public in the same decorated finery that characterized the portraits of the Cahen d'Anvers women and daughters a generation before: "*Tu es plus grande que jamais avec cette robe longue*," she remembers being told by a friend when she entered the synagogue. "*Tu as l'air d'une mariée*!"[129] This equation of her confirmation with a future wedding further gendered the experience, which Hélène only noticed when the service began and she, along with all the other young women, was separated from the young men. Incidentally, the episode in which Hélène and her mother procured this dress was the first time in *La Bien-Aimée* that she discusses anti-Semitism and the notion of a decidedly Jewish alterity. The shopkeeper, she recalled, asked Hélène whether she was purchasing the dress for communion at St. Philippe-du-Roule, a nearby church in Paris's eighth arrondissement. Before she could reply, her mother cut her off and quickly paid. In a low voice outside the shop, Fanny quietly informed her that the shopkeeper did not recognize their religion. As Hélène wrote: "*Je m'y sentais de plus en plus étrangère*!"[130]

This rising sense of foreignness, of alienation, was exacerbated by her experience of the actual confirmation ceremony, performed by Zadoc Kahn, then Chief Rabbi of France: during the proceedings, Hélène recalled a feeling of incarceration within a gendered sphere of women, removed from actual engagement with the sacred texts and confined to a realm on the literal and figurative periphery of the synagogue:

> *On nous avait fait asseoir, nous les filles, sur les bancs de la travée gauche; les autres ayant ouvert leurs livres de prières, je fis comme elles, par contenance; je ne lisais pas, j'attendais, le cœur défaillant, mon tour de monter à l'autel. Mais ce tour ne vint pas, ni pour moi ni pour mes compagnes. Nous étions là, déguisées en communiantes, admises seulement à voir nos frères être reçus en qualité d'hommes dans la communauté d'Israël.*[131]

The female students, she writes, were permitted into the ceremony merely to watch their male counterparts join "*la communauté d'Israël*," a community the very essence of which, Hélène came to believe, was predicated on a gendered exclusivity. The anger she experienced at the age of eleven still clearly informed her prose when she wrote these

[129] Ibid., p. 113.
[130] Ibid., p. 112.
[131] Ibid., p. 114.

memories in the mid-1930s, and her bold declaration that "*seuls les hommes jouaient un rôle dans cette maison de Dieu"* gave way to a shift in her language, whereby Hélène situates herself, for the first time in her memoir, in a collective structure different from the collective structure of her family. In a sense, her confirmation was where, in her own narrative reconstruction, she became a woman:

> *Le dernier garçon avait regagné sa place, et, maintenant, le grand Rabbin, seul sur l'estrade, nous adressait un discours. Par politesse, il se tourna vers notre troupe blanche, nous appela ses chères filles, et nous recommanda toutes sortes de vertus, avec un accent alsacien très marqué; il faisait évidemment son possible pour ne pas nous traiter en intruses dans cette cérémonie; mais je sentais bien, moi, que nous y étions en surnombre; seuls les hommes jouaient un rôle dans cette maison de Dieu; nous ne comptions pas à Ses Yeux; nous n'étions destinées qu'au foyer, bonne comme les femmes de la Bible, à être additionnées avec les chameaux, les ânes et les vaches….*[132]

It is entirely coincidental, of course, that Hélène decried the fact that women were destined for the "*foyer*." It was, after all, precisely the term that Zadoc Kahn, who presided over her confirmation, had used to describe the ideal place for Jewish women during the funeral of Meyer Joseph Cahen d'Anvers in 1881. But a collective rejection of this confined, marginalized space seems to have characterized the lives of many women in the elite strata of Paris's Jewish community. Others, such as Louise Cahen d'Anvers and Irène Cahen d'Anvers, subverted this feminized ideal by abandoning the bourgeois sensibilities that governed the lives of women in their social class; others, such as Hélène, saw the culprit as Judaism, as *La Bien-Aimée* suggests. Despite her family's firm situation within the Jewish community, Hélène departed Judaism shortly after her confirmation: "*Le Dieu d'Israël m'aviat déçue au point que je m'en détachais tous les jours davantage*."[133] In the time of the Dreyfus Affair and the heightened xenophobic anti-Semitism that followed it, the world of the these Jewish families—the Reinachs and the Rothschilds, the Cahen d'Anvers and the Camondos, the Foulds and the Éphrussis—no longer faced only external hostilities. The battles they faced on the inside of their carefully constructed social universe were often just as intense.

[132] Ibid., p, 114-15.
[133] Ibid., p. 130.

IV. Interfaith Liaisons



Figure 5. Béatrice de Camondo, Louis Cahen d'Anvers, Nissim de Camondo, Irène Cahen d'Anvers, Louise Cahen d'Anvers, Chateau Champs-sur-Marne, 1916. AMNC.

If the upper echelon of the French-Jewish establishment was a community in the throes of a significant *internal* crisis in the *fin-de-siècle* and the opening decades of the twentieth century, this crisis typically manifested itself through individuals who abandoned the strictures of their community in private while nominally respecting them in public. As we have seen, in the same way that her mother, Louise Cahen d'Anvers, had publicly maintained social customs even as she privately rejected them, Irène Cahen d'Anvers insisted on her children maintaining a certain politesse throughout the proceedings of the divorce that destroyed the very family structure whose values had informed and arbitrated the substance of that politesse. The same was true of her son, Nissim de Camondo, who insisted on sustaining for his father, Moïse, and his sister, Béatrice, the illusion of a communal, even familial solidarity in his letters home from the

First World War, even as he flaunted those ties to propose marriage to a Protestant woman from a lower social class. What Nissim essentially accomplished in the numerous letters he sent his father and sister between his enlistment in 1914 and his death in 1917 was the construction of a narrative that depicted his experiences of the war solely in terms of the *milieu* to which his family belonged, the same *milieu* his father was insistent on maintaining in the years after his divorce from Irène Cahen d'Anvers. This narrative was deliberate, a careful construction that avoided any mention of Renée Dorville, his fiancée, and that sought to establish its author as a devoted custodian of the social ties to which his audience had assigned preeminent importance.

In a letter from December 1914, Nissim wrote the following to his father:

> *Papa chéri, […] Je ne comprends pas comment Hubert Stern réussit à envoyer des télégrammes ; j'ai essayé bien des fois et je n'ai jamais pu car tout est aux mains des télégraphistes Français ou Anglais que je n'ai jamais pu persuader ou corrompre. Mais je vais essayer de vous téléphoner. Julien Reinach, à l'Etat-Major, réussit de temps à autre à avoir, m'a-t'il dit, la communication avec ses sœurs, rue Hamelin et je vais lui demander de m'arranger celà. C'est d'ailleurs formellement défendu. […] Si j'étais toi je risquerai le paquet ! Qu'est-ce que tu risques ? rien et tu me ferais un bien grand plaisir. Béatrice aussi naturellement. Je crois qu'Hélène Reinach doit venir et, en tous cas, je sais que plusieurs officiers du régiment on fait venir leurs femmes (ce qui est absolument défendu) et les tiennent soigneusement cachées dans leurs chambres. Donc la chose est possible.*[134]

What emerges from letter is the close tie between the Reinachs and the Camondos even before they were officially linked by marriage in 1918, with the marriage of Léon Reinach to Béatrice de Camondo, a marriage that also ended in divorce in 1942. Nissim reports to Moïse that Julien Reinach, Théodore Reinach's son, used his position to help his friend maintain connection with his own father and sister by telephone: what he articulates is the exercise of a solidarity among members of their *milieu*. Likewise, Nissim declares that Moïse and Béatrice can visit because Hélène Reinach (later Hélène Reinach-Abrami) has already done so. The war, in his account, is conveyed almost exclusively through its impact on his *milieu*, which appears to exist in a position prior to the political and even the macro-historical circumstances that Nissim experiences and describes. These circumstances, Nissim's letters suggest, cannot thwart the social ties that

[134] Nissim de Camondo to Moïse de Camondo, 27 December 1914, AMNC.

bound the Camondos, the Reinachs, the Cahen d'Anvers, the Rothschilds, and the Foulds. As he wrote to Beatrice in November 1914: "*Chère Bella, […] La mort de Robert Aboucaya est navrante mais je le savais déjà, malheureusement, par Julien Reinach qui, étant de service au Quartier Général de la Division, a eu le bonheur, l'autre nuit, de pouvoir téléphoner longuement chez lui à Paris. Il a pu parler avec Hélène, Gabi, Hélène Kann, Louis Raynal, etc. C'est un veinard.*"[135] The letter is a testament to the ways in which their network could be mobilized for the transmission of news, even in the midst of a conflict that had challenged, and often even thwarted, the normal practices of communication. In other words, Nissim and Julien Reinach may have been at war, but, as the former's report to his sister suggests, they had not departed the social world the families inhabited. The ties that stitched that world's tightly knit social fabric together still held: "*J'ai rencontré aujourd'hui Charles Cahen d'Anvers,"* Nissim wrote to his father in September 1915, describing his uncle. *"Son escadrille est tout près d'ici et j'ai même été déjeuner avec les aviateurs; ils font un travail très utile, surtout grâce à la photographie*."[136] And, when tragedy ultimately did befall members of this decidedly bordered *milieu*, those extant social ties were seemingly drawn even tighter. Consider, for instance, Nissim's letter to his father, following the reports of Julien Reinach's injury, which expresses sympathy with his friend as well as his continued allegiance to the collective structure in which both soldiers remained inscribed:

> *Je t'écrirai plus longuement quand j'aurai des détails et quand j'y serai. Je savais déjà par les journaux la mort de Mr Decori et de Mme Ephrussi et j'écrirai dès que j'aurai une minute. Quant à Julien Reinach je ne savais pas qu'il fût blessé et j'espère qu'il guérira complètement. Quant au père Joseph, il ne s'est pas du tout trompé ; je lui ai, en effet, demandé le phonographe complet et je ne suis pas du tout fou ; mais je comprends cependant votre étonnement car il y a de quoi étonner les gens de l'intérieur.*[137]

[135] Nissim de Camondo to Béatrice de Camondo, 16 November 1914, AMNC.
[136] Nissim de Camondo to Moïse de Camondo, 29 September 1915, AMNC.
[137] Nissim de Camondo to Moïse de Camondo, 20 October 1915, AMNC.



Figure 6. Béatrice de Camondo, Aumont, 1916. AMNC.

Perhaps even more striking in Nissim's letters to his father and sister is the notion that he continued not only to maintain the social ties of their *milieu* but that its customs, its practices, and, in the abstract, its sensibilities persisted well into the war. This is perhaps most frequently conveyed in his numerous wartime letters to Béatrice that make mention of horses: his sister was an accomplished equestrienne, and riding was a central component of the family's prewar social activities both in Paris and at their estate at Aumont. Observing and commenting on the horses he encountered during the war was thus a means for Nissim to suggest that certain degree of normalcy had survived the outbreak of war and that the family's interests and habits were not entirely anachronistic. "*Dis à Béatrice que, par un hasard extraordinaire, Pickwick, le cheval des Kulp,*" he wrote his father, "*s'est trouvé revenir à Valgenceuse où il a été abandonné à moitié fourbu il y a une dizaine de jours*."[138] "*Ma chère petite Bella*," he wrote his sister the

[138] Nissim de Camondo to Moïse de Camondo, 22 September 1914, AMNC.

following month, "*Ce matin il y a eu revue des chevaux par le Colonel. Sur les 32 chevaux que j'avais en partant il m'en reste 11 est les autres 21 sont des chevaux que j'ai reçus depuis ; inutile de dire qu'ils sont de modèles les disparates*." This, it would follow, was the only news of the day: "*Le joli cheval gris de Baudrier fait la joie du sous-officier mitrailleur,*" he continued, "*et le grande jument baie de Valon est montée par un officier. […] Voilà, ma vieille Bamboula,*[139] *bien des nouvelles pour aujourd'hui, n'est-ce pas*."[140] As frequent as these types of letters were, however, perhaps the most expressive piece of Nissim's correspondence related to the endurance of the family's sensibility is a letter to Moïse from July 1917, just before his death, in which he repeats the family's decidedly Parisian attitudes toward Jews of a lower social station than their own:

> *Mon cher Papa, […] J. Seligmann, l'antiquaire, m'a sauté dessus ce matin et, avec une obstination et un esprit de suite remarquables, a réussi, malgré toute ma résistance, à me présenter à tous les gens qu'il connaît dans l'hôtel ; et Dieu sait s'il y en a ! Ce sont tous des Juifs de 4e classe avec l'accent tudesque, ou bien, au contraire, des princes exotiques aux noms ronflants. Leur âge varie entre 65 et 75 ans et, quand à leur femmes, mieux vaut n'en pas parler car, malgré leur âge respectable, elles sont toutes en bleu-ciel ou en rose pâle.*[141]

Nissim wrote his father from Vichy, where, at the time, he was recovering from a bout of appendicitis he had suffered earlier that summer. He describes meeting Jacques Seligmann (1858-1923), Moïse's close friend and principal antique dealer, presumably at the Grand Hôtel du Parc, and being introduced to acquaintances of the dealer's. On one level, of course, Nissim's encounter with Seligmann—and his eager report of the meeting to his father—suggests the degree to which the Camondo family's material interests persisted even in a time of conflict. On another level, however, Nissim's letter betrays the biases and even the snobbery of the Parisian Jewish establishment, the establishment of which Moïse de Camondo was a pillar. Nissim seems to look down on those whom he considers foreign-accented "*4^e^ classe*" Jews and their wives who, in his view, appear overly garish in their sky-blue and pale pink dresses. His use of the language as well does a great deal to accentuate their foreignness: "*l'accent tudesque*" emphasizes their German origins, which would likely have appeared a sign of inferiority to the scion of a wealthy Sephardic dynasty such as the Camondo. Furthermore, his comment "*princes exotiques*"

---

[139] "Bamboula" was one of Nissim's nicknames for his sister.
[140] Nissim de Camondo to Béatrice de Camondo, 29 October 1914, AMNC.
[141] Nissim de Camondo to Moïse de Camondo, 17 July 1917, AMNC.

does much to mock their social pretensions—pretensions, it follows, that Nissim and the Camondos felt that they and their peers alone deserved.

From the clear narrative that Nissim constructs in these letters, it appears as though he was equally as invested in the project of protecting and even consolidating his family's *milieu* and its borders as his father and the other patriarchs in the network undoubtedly were. But a recently discovered[142] body of correspondence between Nissim and Renée Dorville, a nurse he met in 1914, reveals that the tone he took in his letters to his father and sister was ultimately a performance, at least in part. Like his grandmother and his mother before him, Nissim de Camondo offered what he judged to be the necessary public allegiances to his social world while abandoning that world in his private life. His earlier intimation in a letter to his father that he respected the prohibition on sexual relations between soldiers and their wives or girlfriends—"*ce qui est absolument défendu*"—was a complete distortion of reality, and, as he must have known, the judgment he rendered on Seligmann's acquaintances and their wives was far less severe than the judgment his father would have rendered on his own choice of companion. Indeed, Nissim mentioned Renée Dorville not once in the hundreds of pages that survive of his letters to Moïse and Béatrice between 1914 and 1917. Neither is there ever mention of his engagement to Dorville, which occurred sometime between the autumn of 1915 and the summer of 1917, nor of the will he had drafted sometime in those years that left Dorville nearly the entirety of his inheritance—the majority of which Moïse ultimately paid her, on the condition that she never contact the family again. Although it was likely that Moïse knew of Dorville's existence before Nissim's death—Irène Cahen d'Anvers and Béatrice de Camondo had met her in 1915 at Vichy, where Nissim had briefly convalesced—this dimension of his son's life remained hidden, an intense, passionate relationship buried under the edifice of his community and its expectations.

In a certain sense, the juxtaposition of Nissim's letters to his father and sister with his letters to Dorville—at least in terms of tone—illuminates the disparity between his public and private lives: the former was the superficial, distanced but scripted

[142] The Camondo Museum received these letters from Renée Dorville's niece in 2014. Written between 1914 and 1917, the year of Nissim's death, the letters describe the young count's relationship with Dorville as well as his experiences in the war. Dorville died in 1971.

engagement he performed while the latter was closer to the irascible emotionality of a lovestruck, 25-year-old young man. In other words, Nissim had essentially departed his *milieu* before his relations had realised he was gone. The letters to Renée Dorville and the letters to Moïse and Béatrice are thus letters from two decidedly different men, one of whom, at the time of his death, had already embarked on a life of his own design, decidedly outside the boundaries of his family and the community in which it was inscribed. This, after all, was the Nissim who wrote to Dorville in November 1915, vulnerable and jealous, consumed, on a profound level, by a formidable emotional intensity:

> *Je croyais pauvre idiot, pauvre imbécile que je suis, que vous m'aimiez de tout votre être ; j'eus aurais donné ma tête à couper et j'aurais gifflé le premier qui aurait paru eu douter ; dans mon aveuglement je vous mettais au dessus de toutes les femmes sur un piedestal et je vous vénéré comme une déesse. J'étais heureux de me sentir aimé par le seul être qui compte dans ma vie depuis plus d'un an et je rompais des lances quand dans la conversation quelqu'un parlait de la femme comme d'une être faible qui n'a pas de courage et qui ne sait pas rester fidèle. Je me serais plutôt fait tuer sur place que de laisser passer une opinion comme celle-là, sans protester et dire bien haut que c'était faux. Autour de moi je voyais les gens sourire, ils se disaient « pauvre petit ; il a encore des illusions » et une fois le Commandant m'a dit : « Ah, Camondo, allez ne parlez pas trop vite ; vous recevez maintenant huit lettres par jour. Je vous souhaite d'en recevoir encore une par jour quand vous serez en campagne depuis un an. » J'ai souri mai en moi-même j'étais sur de recevoir mes lettres, sur de votre amour au bout d'un an comme au bout d'une mois. Et voilà que depuis une moi j'ai reçu tous les jours de moins en moins et que depuis 4 jours je n'en reçois pas—Que penser, que dire, que faire ? C'est épouvantable; mettez-vous à ma place, moi qui vous adore, qui suis seul et loin de tous. L'amour est aveugle ; je vous aime tant que je ne crois pas à mon malheur ; je viens de relire vos lettres et je ne peux pas admettre que ces phrases d'amour si tendres, si brulantes ne soient pas sincères ; ce serait trop horrible ; je n'y crois pas.*[143]

By contrast, Nissim had written his father earlier that same week in November 1915. His tone was essentially the opposite, and the impression to be deduced from his account was of a sense of calm, internal and external:

> *Mon cher Papa, Me voilà de nouveau en première ligne quelque part entre Vailly et Ficheux, au sud d'Arras. Nous sommes dans un secteur excessivement calme au point de vue artillerie […]*

[143] Moïse de Camondo to Renée Dorville, 15 November 1915, AMNC.

Pour la nuit le Commandant couche dans la cave et moi je vais coucher en première ligne dans mon abri. Au revoir, mon cher Papa. Je t'embrasse bien tendrement ainsi que Béatrice. Nini[144]



Figure 7. Nissim de Camondo and Moïse de Camondo, Paris, 1915. AMNC.

V. War and Death

In September 1917, Nissim de Camondo died in aerial combat somewhere over Lorraine. That Moise was devastated is evident in the silence that marked his otherwise continuous correspondence, which typically included at least one communication each day. In the extensive Camondo archive that survives, Moise never addressed the death of his son except on one occasion. This was in a letter written to an unnamed friend, likely the fellow collector and curator Carle Drefyus (1875-1952)[145], two weeks after he

[144] Nissim de Camondo to Moïse de Camondo, 8 November 1915, AMNC.
[145] Carle Dreyfus was another great Jewish collector of French eighteenth-century art and *objets d'art* in the *fin-de-siècle* and after. He published widely on the subject, including the well-respected volume *Le mobilier français* (Paris, 1921); his expertise was so widely regarded that he was named the Louvre's curator of *objets d'art* between 1933 and 1940. He was a close friend of confidante of Moïse de

received he received word from a Lieutenant Rotival that Nissim and his co-pilot had not returned from their mission and that "*il semble possible qu'une panne de moteur les ait amenés à atterrir dans les lignes ennemies*."[146] Every assurance that Nissim had given his father that the First World War would neither affect nor change their family's security had been terminally refuted. The disappearance of his son and heir likely appeared to Moïse as the conceivable end of the family's future, although he could scarcely have imagined the fate that awaited Béatrice, her husband, and their children a generation later. Nothing, in other words, could shield the family or its *milieu* from the bitter temporal realities of war—not their wealth, not their connections abroad, and certainly not their cultural cosmopolitanism. In the letter Moïse wrote, dated 19 September 1917, his tone was ultimately one of frustration, and perhaps even of magical thinking. He was still allowing himself, it seems, to entertain the possibility that his son might even return:

> *Cette épouvantable guerre est pour nous, hélas !, une source d'affliction, d'anxiété et d'angoisse. Je suis moi-même dans des transes extrêmes, mon fils, pilote aviateur, après un combat aérien, ayant disparu le 5 courant dans les lignes ennemies. Je n'ai eu, depuis, aucune nouvelle et les espérances que l'on a, pour plus grandes qu'elles soient, ne le sont jamais assez, la période d'attente, dans laquelle l'esprit se prête à toutes les conjectures, étant des plus déprimantes.*[147]

Other families in the interwar French-Jewish elite experienced the First World War in a similar fashion. Théodore Reinach served, largely on assignment in the United States. His nephew, Adolphe "Ado" Reinach, who shared his uncle's passion for antiquity and archaeology[148], died in the Ardennes in August 1914 at the age of 27. The pain that Moïse felt, in other words, was felt across the prosopographical network of families in which he was only a part. In a letter to her uncle, Salomon, Hélène Reinach-Abrami described losing Ado, who had been raised with her, as an experience of "*l'abattement, du*

Camondo's, and my sense is that Moïse was writing here to Dreyfus, who had sent him the most frequent—and arguably the most personal—letters after Nissim's disappearance.

[146] Rotival to Moïse de Camondo, 5 September 1917, AMNC.

[147] Moïse de Camondo to unnamed friend, 19 September 1917, AMNC. Seni and Le Tarnec also include portions of this particular letter, see *Les Camondo*, p. 246.

[148] "Ado" Reinach was already an accomplished architect at the time of his death, having worked with Raymond Weill (1874-1950) in Egypt for the *Société française des fouilles archéologiques*. Along with Weill, he is credited with having discovered the Coptos Decrees in 1910-1911, which are now in display in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. See, for instance, the remarks that Weill delivered to the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, of which both Théodore and Salomon Reinach were members, in January 1911. "Les décrets de l'empire ancien égyptien trouvés a Koptos en 1910," in *Comptes rendues des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (1911), pp. 268-275.

désespoir, au temps le plus cruel de ma vie."[149] As historians such as Philippe Landau and, more recently, Derek Penslar have shown, military service was often a means for Jews to demonstrate a mutual commitment to the French national enterprise and thus to protect the esteem of their families.[150] But if Jewish soldiers such as Nissim de Camondo and Ado Reinach could protect the images of themselves—and their families—as French, they could not always protect themselves. Nissim's body, for instance, was never recovered, and, despite his father's frequent entreaties,[151] the exact site of his death never known.

As this chapter has shown, Hélène's words—"*l'abattement, désespoir, temps le plus cruel*"—also apply to many other members of her extended *milieu* in the period, and not entirely as a result of the First World War. In addition to the anti-Semitism and the public censure that they collectively experienced during and especially after the Dreyfus Affair, the *fin-de-siècle* was also period of profound inner, personal turmoil for French-Jewish elites. This dimension has rarely been explored in the various studies of their social world, but it nevertheless provides an essential window into the nature of their actual lived experiences as complicated, nuanced individuals. Oppressive gender roles, failed marriages, antiquated religious practices, meaningless cultural traditions, lost children, and, finally, war itself all took their toll in different ways on the women and men in this rarefied *milieu*. As subsequent chapters will show, many of them would seek solace from these personal tragedies in the realm of material things. By collecting objects and artworks—and, especially, by designing new homes in which to display them—these elites could withdraw into worlds entirely of their own design. Most importantly, their collections and built environments furnished enclosures over which they had absolute control, private sanctuaries in which to distract themselves from personal pain as well as from the increasingly hostile society outside.

---

[149] Hélène Reinach-Abrami to Salomon Reinach, 25 October 1915, Bibliothèque Méjànes, Aix-en-Provence, Fonds Salomon Reinach, Boîte 1, no. 2.

[150] See Philippe Landau, *Les Juifs de France et la Grande Guerre: Un patriotisme républicain 1914-1918* (Paris, 1999); see also Derek Penslar, Jews and the Military: A History, esp. "The Armed Juif d'État," pp. 94-103 and "The Jewish Soldier of World War I: From Participant to Victim," pp. 166-195.

[151] See Correspondance Moïse, October-November 1917, AMNC. There are many letters in which Moïse writes to military leaders begging for more details as to the specific circumstances in which his son died.

CHAPTER II.
THE GONCOURTS, ÉDOUARD DRUMONT, AND THE MATERIAL ANTI-SEMITISM OF THE *FIN-DE-SIÈCLE*



Figure 8. Interior View, Salon Louis XVI, Chateau de Ferrières, undated. Courtauld Institute, London.

Especially in the wake of the Holocaust, the history of anti-Semitism has tended to be written as a teleological narrative that begins with Christian anti-Judaism and ends, inevitably, with Auschwitz. In the wreckage of what Jean-François Lyotard famously described as the "earthquake" that destroyed "not only lives, buildings, and objects but also the instruments used to measure earthquakes directly and indirectly," the so-called "Jewish Question" has become a device whose sole function in historical analysis is to contextualise *ex post facto* the "very great seismic force" that was the systematic,

mechanised destruction of the European Jews in the Second World War.[152] This is generally true of studies written in the immediate aftermath of 1945, but it remains true of many published even in recent years. In, for instance, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews*, his oft-cited 1968 analysis of French anti-Semitism, Arthur Hertzberg wastes no time in declaring his thesis: "The era of Western history that began with the French Revolution ended in Auschwitz."[153] Similarly, David Nirenberg, writing in 2013, nearly a half-century later, made a similar argument in the beginning of *Anti-Judaism*, his intellectual history of hatred against Jews:

> There may well be some historical relation between the gospels' ways of representing the 'Jewishness' of certain ideas and those of Germans in the twentieth century, just as there may well be a relationship between the Qu'ran's worries about the Sons of Israel and those of some contemporary Islamists. […] My long view into the past is intended to make these relations visible.[154]

French anti-Semitism, of course, occupies a crucial, prominent place in this *longue durée* narrative teleology. The French-Jewish community, after all, was the first to be emancipated in modern Europe, in 1790 and 1791. As Hertzberg has written, its experiences therefore serve as "a kind of microcosm"—a microcosm both for the Jewish experience in a secular Republic and, on a broader level, for the relationship between particular identities to conceptions of "universal" citizenship.[155] If France was the crucible of the Enlightenment, this perspective maintains, it was also the crucible of modern anti-Semitism. "It is in the land in which the emancipation of the Jews began," Hertzberg wrote, "that we must search for some clues with which to explain not only its successes but also its failure."[156] At first glance, that "failure" seems to have plenty of evidence. The French intellectual tradition, after all, produced Voltaire, the Enlightenment's leading intellectual anti-Semite, and it was in France—not in Germany or even in Eastern Europe—that the Dreyfus Affair, perhaps nineteenth-century Europe's greatest anti-Semitic scandal, erupted. From the socialists of the 1840s—Proudhon, Fourier, and even Marx—to Maurice Barrès, Charles Maurras, and, most of all, Édouard

---

[152] Jean François-Lyotard, "The Referent, The Name," *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis, 1988), p. 56.
[153] Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York, 1968), p. 5.
[154] David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism* (New York, 2013), pp. 10-11.
[155] Hertzberg, p. 8.
[156] Ibid.

Drumont in the 1880s, the tenor of French anti-Semitism was especially hostile. It is tempting, then, to consider all of these themes as progressive chapters in an unfolding chronology whose natural and inevitable end was Vichy collaboration and the willing deportation of some 76,000 French and foreign-born Jews by the end of 1944.

Yet if these chapters share the common theme of either anti-Semitism or anti-Judaism, they do not always share the same terms, as that distinction itself suggests. Any narrative that interprets these disparate elements merely as different stages in the "pre-history" of the Holocaust ultimately presents little other than an elision as inaccurate as it is problematic. Medieval anti-Semites hated Jews for their refusal to convert. Voltaire hated Jews for their refusal to abandon religion altogether. Fourier, Proudhon, and Marx hated Jews for their perceived capitalistic tendencies. Barrès hated Jews for their "cosmopolitan" subversion of his organic vision of *la France profonde*. Drumont, writing in the *fin-de-siècle*, hated Jews for the "race" he believed them to represent. None of these hatreds was the same. Considering them as such suggests that the Holocaust was a predetermined event beyond anyone's control—that it was, in some sense, the "sacrifice" that the Greek root of the word "Holocaust" itself implies.

More importantly, the monolithic uniformity that this narrative ascribes to each iteration of anti-Semitism obscures the lived experiences of actual Jewish individuals who confronted and responded to different prejudices in different historical moments and in significantly different contexts. In other words, there is no single "anti-Semitism"; there are "anti-Semitisms." Jews who lived and died before Auschwitz were not figurative Holocaust victims before the literal Holocaust: they were often victims of anti-Semitism, to be sure, but of different anti-Semitisms determined by the specific variables of the cultures in which they lived. This is especially true of the *fin-de-siècle*, the France of Dreyfus, the France of Drumont, and the France in which these Jewish collectors existed and operated. The rationale behind these collectors' public identities—and, most importantly, their embrace of material culture as a means of self-expression—becomes clear only when we consider the precise, specific nature of the *fin-de-siècle* anti-Semitism they experienced in the social world of the 1880s and 1890s. As this chapter will show, what they experienced was above all a material anti-Semitism, a prejudice that was

largely expressed through objects, historic sites, and a certain conception of French cultural patrimony.

The social world of the French *fin-de-siècle* was many things, but predominately it was a material world. French literature from the period—Émile Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883), Joris-Karl Huysman's *À rebours* (1884), and even Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927)—depicts an environment in which daily life becomes increasingly commoditized at the same time as the bourgeois desire to possess becomes an almost existential endeavor.[157] As in Zola's novel, the department store was a veritable temple for this secular, material age, and the arcade, as Walter Benjamin would later note, a fount of self-realization: commodity fetishism somehow blended into self-discovery. Edmond and Jules Goncourt would later call this mentality "*bricobracomania*," by which the bourgeois could escaped the ennui and the alienation of modern society through the world of objects.[158] But this *bricobracamania* went much further than the sphere of the individual. At least by the mid-nineteenth century, there was a certain sense in which the concept of the French nation itself was increasingly material, if only in terms of its invocation and expression. In the aftermath of the French Revolution, after all, much of the artistic patrimony of the Church and of the aristocracy—the items and the artefacts that represented an aesthetic heritage that was truly "French"—had made its way onto a new market, for new classes of consumers and dealers to buy and sell, respectively. Newly minted fortunes, mostly made in securities, real estate, and, of course, the *haute banque*, were quick to acquire these pieces.[159] Collectors could purchase what was obviously French, and, in doing so, present a certain image of Frenchness for themselves and for their families. The material realm, in other words, had become national: it furnished a plane of identity construction that was both personal and political.

---

[157] See Janell Watson, *Literature and Material Culture from Balzac to Proust: The Collection and Consumption of Curiosities* (Cambridge, 1999). Watson shows the remarkable extent to which material objects appear in nineteenth-century French literature, citing Balzac, Huysmans, Flaubert, Zola, Proust, Mallarmé, and the Goncourts, among others.

[158] See also Rémy Saisselin, *Bricobracomania: The Bourgeois and the Bibelot* (London, 1985). Saisselin discusses in depth the meaning of the Goncourts' observations.

[159] See Véronique Long, "Les collectionneurs juifs parisiens sous la Troisième République (1870-1940)," *Archives Juives*, 2009/1, Vol. 42, pp. 84-104.

Perhaps predictably, this period of *fin-de-siècle* "decadence"[160] was not without its ideological undercurrents, especially in the realm of material culture. As historians such as Tom Stammers have shown, "*l'année terrible*" of 1870-71 left a lasting mark in "crystallizing a conservative, elitist vision of the *patrimoine*, thematically aligned with the *ordre moral*."[161] The *semaine sanglante* of May 1871 had witnessed the destruction of numerous essential repositories of French cultural heritage, among them the archives of the Hôtel de Ville and the archives of the Louvre. A generation of collectors—including, as Stammers points out, Adolph Thiers, then the president of the French Republic—felt impelled to respond. Their response, Stammers writes, was to reignite "a political debate about who could—and who could not—be entrusted with care of the French past."[162] This debate was fundamentally a debate of reaction, imbued with considerable xenophobia and, even more so, with anti-Semitism.

A close reading of the actual language employed by leading anti-Semites such as the Goncourt brothers and, especially, Édouard Drumont reveals more than the racialist element that often characterizes scholarly interpretations of *fin-de-siècle* anti-Semitism. What a close reading betrays is a material anti-Semitism for a material age. In no small fashion, these critics articulated Jewish difference in terms of what they perceived to be a Jewish gaudiness and tastelessness. For them, Jews invaded the French nation first and foremost by invading its cultural *patrimoine*, the exclusive province of Catholic elites such as themselves. On a deeper level, however, these arbiters of *fin-de-siècle* anti-Semitism levied a more fundamental critique: no matter how many pieces of France's cultural heritage they bought and collected, Jews could never be aesthetically authentic. This, for anti-Semites like Drumont, was the essence of their Jewishness, a fact of crucial

---

[160] "Decadence" is indeed a difficult term. Usually invoked as a synonym for unbridled consumption, effete aestheticism, and elitist social stratification, it is frequently invoked in studies of the *fin-de-siècle*, especially in France. These various meanings do, of course, apply to the culture of those times, albeit for certain classes more than others. Yet, as Eugen Weber has convincingly written, any portrait of the French *fin-de-siècle* merely as "decadent" obscures its equal and opposite nature as a time of unprecedented social advancement, "when advantages previously reserved for the privileged began to be shared by the many." See Weber, "Decadence?", *France Fin de Siècle* (Harvard, 1986), pp. 9-27.

[161] Tom Stammers, "Collectors, Catholics, and the Commune: Heritage and Counterrevolution, 1860-1940," *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 37, no. 1 (Winter 2014), p. 61. I am deeply indebted for many conversations in Oxford with Stammers, who generously read chapters of this thesis and who shaped my thinking especially on the nature Drumont's critique.

[162] Ibid.

significance in any attempt to understand the specific nature of the *fin-de-siècle* and the material universe it fostered.

I. The Goncourts

Edmond (1822-1896) and Jules Goncourt (1830-1870)—the famous fraternal pair who never spent more than a day apart until Jules's untimely death—were essential fixtures of Parisian high society in the *fin-de-siècle*. Indeed, their *Journal*—which, in the end, was mostly Edmond's journal—is an indispensible text in any study of French cultural life in the 1880s and 1890s.[163] The Goncourts were not so much *salonniers* as they were the consummate guests and "men about town": they knew everyone worth knowing, and they were invited everywhere. Although their careers as critics and scholars existed at the highest level to which any Parisian aesthete could aspire, it was undoubtedly their *Journal*, a rare and exhaustive contemporary view of the period's cultural luminaries from the intimate perspective of the dinner table that has made them famous. One hears the observations of Proust the man as opposed to Proust the novelist, and one sees the studio of Rodin not so much as a site of cultural production as much as the laboratory of real innovation that it was in its day.[164] But if they were passionate advocates of *japonisme* and of the art of the French eighteenth century, the Goncourts were also, as the historian Michel Winock has recently argued, passionate anti-Semites.[165] Their anti-Semitism was a prime example of the material anti-Semitism that proliferated in the *fin-de-siècle*. This prejudice attacked Jews not so much for racial difference as much as for terminally bad taste and for failing to comprehend the true, harmonious nature of the *ancien régime* style that the Goncourts defended so fiercely. Art that Jews made or owned, they argued, could never transcend artifice.

Of course, the Goncourts were no strangers to general anti-Semitism, which was not necessarily related to objects and things but that was indeed related to many of these prominent Jewish collectors and their families. Many of them were in fact the very

---

[163] The *Journal*'s first volume is dated 1851, yet Edmond continued it well into the Dreyfus Affair: its last volume is of the year 1896.
[164] See Deborah Silverman's *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Aesthetics, and Style* (Berkeley, 1992), esp. "The Brothers de Goncourt between History and the Psyche," pp. 17-43.
[165] See Michel Winock, "L'antisémitisme des frères Goncourt," in *Les Goncourts dans leur siècle. Un siècle de "Goncourt"* (Paris, 2005), pp. 193-203.

targets of public censure. This was especially true of the Reinachs during and after the Panama Scandal, with which Edmond Goncourt was fascinated—as many future enemies of the Third Republic later would be. The Panama Scandal is widely regarded as the nineteenth-century's largest corruption scandal, in which nearly two billion francs were lost when the French government, in 1888 and 1889, covered up the dire financial situation of Compagnie Universelle du Canal Interocéanique, which managed the Panama Canal. The company, under the leadership of Ferdinand de Lesseps (1805-1894), had received a massive government contract to develop and operate the canal. Due to the harsh nature of Panama's climate, however, the company sustained high losses and never turned a profit on government investment. To avoid liquidation, its leadership simply bribed members of the French government, a strategy that succeeded while robbing some 800,000 French citizens of the funds they had invested.[166] As it happened, the lead organiser of these bribes was the financial advisor of Compagnie Universelle du Canal Interocéanique, Baron Jacques de Reinach (1840-1892), the uncle of Salomon and Théodore Reinach and the father-in-law of Joseph Reinach, who had married his daughter, Henriette Reinach. When the extent of the briberies he had facilitated was made public, Jacques de Reinach committed suicide, confirming, in the eyes of many, the existence of a Jewish cabal that controlled the French economy. Edmond Goncourt was certainly among them:

> *Dire—c'est indéniable—que pendant près de vingt ans, les trois maîtres absolus de la France ont été le baron de Reinach, Cornélius Herz, Arton, et que la France, éclairée sur le compte de ces trois personnages, garde pour se gouverner le personnel de leur administration, de leurs bureaux !*[167]

But the way in which Goncourt critiqued Jews was much more complicated than a modern iteration of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This was especially true in further remarks he made throughout his writing life on the Reinachs specifically, as well as on the other Jewish collectors in their *milieu*. In a sense, Goncourt's anti-Semitism was remarkable not for its existence but for the mode in which it was expressed. Jews, he maintained, may have been involved in schemes of financial domination, but, for

[166] On the Panama Scandal, see, among many other studies, Frederick Brown's recent interpretation. See Brown, "The Panama Scandal," *For the Soul of France: Culture Wars in the Age of Dreyfus* (New York, 2010), pp. 155-175.
[167] *Journal*, 17 February 1893, Vol. III, p. 798.

Goncourt, they were primarily interlopers in a decidedly French material world. Ultimately, a scrutiny of his *Journal* reveals that each critique Goncourt made of these individuals and their families was through the objects and things they either had no right to own or no capacity to appreciate. Consider, for instance, Goncourt's literary construction of this 1884 vignette, in which Joseph Reinach, a well-known lawyer, defends a family relation over the false provenance of a portrait he had purchased:

> *Oh! les républicains, les républicains, les intéressantes gens à portraire ! Une merveille, ce mot de Reinach père, que me rapporte Strauss ! C'est à propos du procès au sujet du portrait de Mme Geoffrin par Nattier*[168]*. Quoique avocat de la partie adverse, Strauss est amené par Reinach fils, avec lequel il est lié, chez son père, à l'heure où il est absent d'ordinaire, pour voir le portrait. Survivent inopinément le père, le type le plus parfait de l'homme commun, le gros Israélite, qu'on dirait « avoir devant l'estomac son éventaire de lorgnettes ». Discussion et discussion vive, à la fin de laquelle, comme Strauss lui disait : « Si c'est bien Nattier, qu'est-ce que ça vous fait que ce soit Mme Geoffrin ou Mme du Châtelet ? – Qu'est-ce que ça me fait ? Vous êtes bon, vous ! Vous croyez que c'est la même chose d'avoir, accrochée à son mur, une roturière ou une marquise? »*[169]

The obvious anti-Semitism of the passage—"*le gros Israélite*," "*l'estomac son éventaire de lorgnettes*"—relies on a decidedly material justification. What depicts the Strausses and the Reinachs as specimens worthy of criticism is hardly physical caricature alone. Goncourt condemned these Jewish elites for what he perceived to be their gauche treatment of a master of eighteenth-century French portraiture, regardless of whether the particular canvas in question was authentic. He relished including the following quotation, which, as it happens, does not exist in the transcript of the trial, and that therefore may be a deliberate figment of Goncourt's own willing imagination: "*Si c'est bien Nattier, qu'est-ce que ça vous fait que ce soit Mme Geoffrin ou Mme du Châtelet*?" The obvious implication is that only a Jew would think to ask such a question.

---

[168] Goncourt's own original footnote here read as follows: "*Les héritiers de l'expert A. Febvre avait fait établir le catalogue de vente de sa collection par Charles Georges, qui avait attribué à Nattier un tableau qu'il disait représenter la marquise du Châtelet. Le compte d'Estampes attaqua les héritiers Febvre et l'expert Georges : il prétendait posséder l'original du tableau, lequel représentait son aïeule, Mme Geoffrin. Joseph Reinach, qui avait acquis la toile, demanda l'annulation de la vente. L'affaire fut plaidée devant Ier chambre du tribunal civil la Seine les 11, 18 et 25 juin, et le 2 juillet 1884, Reinach et d'Estampes étaient déboutés*."

[169] *Journal*, 9 June 1884, Vol. II, pp. 1080-81.

Goncourt advanced the same association ten years later, in an entry from January 1894. Again through an attack on Joseph Reinach, his point was that Jews did not belong in environments where the finest French cultural patrimony was on display:

> *Aujourd'hui, la comtesse de Biron me demander mes conseils pour l'exposition de Marie-Antoinette, qui doit avoir lieu au musée Galliera. La Princesse a vraiment la maladie de la juiverie ! A dîner, ce soir, il y avait autour de la table un ménage Ephrussi, Charles Ephrussi et cet affreux Reinach, auz nez écrasé, aux deux yeux hors la tête comme des yeux de boxeur pochés. Vraiment, cet homme qu'elle n'a jamais reçu autrefois, est-ce bien le moment de le recevoir ? Ah ! cette femme-là a besoin d'un cornac pour la guider dans la vie !*[170]

II. The Goncourts and the "Rediscovery" of the French Eighteenth Century

Notably, what Goncourt called "*la maladie de la juiverie*" is only relatable in juxtaposition with the exposition he mentions on Marie-Antoinette. This is because, by the *fin-de-siècle*, the decorative style of the eighteenth century had come to represent a nostalgic vision of a lost France, a France that embodied the royalist ideals of the *ancien régime* and that was fundamentally disillusioned with the Revolution and its aftermath. If in its day the style of the *ancien régime* had connoted wealth and even a certain nonchalance, its nineteenth-century return was accompanied by an unmistakable ideology.[171] This was a point the art historian Francis Haskell made in his oft-cited 1976 study, *Rediscoveries in Art*, which emphasized the fundamental relationship between aesthetic taste and politics. Political connotation, in his view, was the rationale behind a "rediscovery." In fact, Haskell considered eighteenth-century French painting as his case study, considering its re-emergence in the context of a steady stream of reactionary royalism that only amplified as the nineteenth century progressed. And the same was of course true across partisan divides: as Haskell showed, the Rococo revival of the 1840s was linked to the political left.[172] By the *fin-de-siècle*, then, the art of the *ancien régime* was more than art: it had had become an aesthetic signifier for a quiet conservatism, a material embodiment of a value system jeopardized by all facets of modern life—democracy, universal suffrage, and citizenship. To collect in this period was thus to collect the remnants of better days, when France was truly France.

---

[170] Ibid., 31 January 1894, Vol. III, p. 913.
[171] See Miriam Levin, *Republican Art and Ideology in Late Nineteenth Century France* (Ann Arbor, 1986).
[172] See Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art* (London, 1976), ch. 2: "The Two Temptations."

There was also an element of defiance in embracing this particular style. In the aftermath of the Revolution, after all, the *ancien régime* aesthetic was considered prime evidence of corruption and, most of all, decadence. Under the *Directoire* and, later, the Empire, the style of Jacques Louis-David (1748-1825)—Neoclassical and historical—was imposed on the *Académie* and heralded as the future of French art. At the same time, pre-Revolutionary French art of the eighteenth century was vilified not only as aesthetically inferior but also as morally deficient.[173] Between 1801 and 1824, for instance, Charles Paul Landon (1760-1826), a painter and a curator at the newly established Musée du Louvre, published several editions of the *Annales du musée et de l'école moderne des Beaux-Arts*, a series of volumes that featured engravings of the important pieces in the museum's collection. The six volumes devoted to the French school into two distinct periods. First came a section that featured the old school, from Jean Cousin the Elder (1500-c.1593) to Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), Laurent de la Hyre (1606-1656), and Charles Le Brun (1619-1690). After these painters, Landon wrote, "*il y a eu un long intervalle, un long état de décadence, entre l'époque où l'art brillait en France de toute sa splendeur, et le temps où quelque peintres dont plusieurs existent encore, l'ont ramené progressivement à l'imitation noble et vrai de la nature*."[174] For Landon, the painters who returned French art to "*l'imitation noble et vrai de la nature*" were the likes of Joseph-Marie Vien (1716-1809); those responsible for the "*long état de décadence*" were, unsurprisingly, François Boucher (1703-1770), Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732-1806), and, most of all, Antoine Watteau (1684-1721), the master of the so-called *Fête Galante*. Similarly, Boucher was attacked in the *Encyclopédie méthodique*[175] and also in the *Académie de Peinture*[176] for perceived frivolity and hedonism.

---

[173] See Monica Preti, "The 'Rediscovery' of Eighteenth-century French Painting before La Caze: Introductory Notes," *Delicious Decadence: The Rediscovery of Eighteenth-Century Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 2014), p. 8.

[174] See Charles Paul Landon, *Annales du musée et de l'école moderne des Beaux-Arts* (16 vols, Paris, 1801-24). Quoted in Preti, p. 7.

[175] Pierre Charles Lévesque, 'Goût,' in Claude Henri Watelet and Pierre Charles Lévesque, *Encyclopédie méthodique* (3 vols, Paris, 1788), vol. I, pp. 341-44. Quoted in Preti, p. 8. The *Encyclopédie méthodique par ordre des matières* was published between 1782 and 1832: in roughly 210 volumes, it was an updated and much-expanded version of Diderot and D'Alembert's original *Encyclopédie*, published between 1751 and 1772.

[176] See Antoine Renou, *Dialogues sur la peinture, seconde édition, enrichie de notes, Paris imprimé chez Tartouillis, aux dépens de l'Académie, & se distribué à la porte du Salon* (Paris, 1773), pp. 104-106. Quoted in Preti, Ibid.

Despite these public and even official associations, taste for eighteenth-century art never completely evaporated after the Revolution. As Seymour O. Simches notably observed in his landmark 1964 study of the period, *Le Romantisme et le goût esthétique du XVIIIe siècle*, academies and their doctrines could not eradicate the diversity of private individual tastes, even when stigma was applied.[177] Consider, for instance, the case of Dominique Vivant Denon (1747-1825), the director of the newly renamed "Musée Napoléon," who all but banished eighteenth-century French art from his museum at the same time as he pursued it passionately for his own private collections. The four-volume, published catalogue of Denon's collection, the *Monuments des Arts du dessin*, even featured an extensive commentary on the Watteau canvases he owned: *L'Enchanteur*, *L'Aventurière*, and two smaller canvases that now hang in Scotland's Brodick Castle. Watteau, whose paintings often depicted aristocrats at play in leafy glades, was the epitome of the *ancien régime* aesthetic that Denon and his contemporaries sought to eradicate. Yet Denon, an arbiter of French national taste, saw much to praise in Watteau's idyllic fantasies of noble life. As he wrote of *L'Embarquement pour Cythère* (c. 1718-19)—the only Watteau at the time to hang in Musée Napoléon—its style demonstrated "*une plenitude d'idées qui lui donne de la profondeur et de la philosophie d'une composition Poussin*."[178] If critical assessment from the likes of Denon had warmed to Watteau, Boucher, and Fragonard, these artists remained commercially popular throughout the early nineteenth century. As Carole Blumenfeld has written in her study of the Regency style's nineteenth century "rediscovery," the Paris dealer Jean-Baptiste Pierre Le Brun (1748-1813) continued to sell these painters after the Revolution,[179] and prominent French collectors, such as the illustrious Baron de Vèze (1788-1855),[180] continued to buy their canvases.

---

[177] Seymour O. Simches, *Le Romantisme et le goût esthétique du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1964).
[178] Denon's commentaries on Watteau—the "Note de M. Denon"—is reprinted in Pierre Rosenberg's *Vies anciennes de Watteau* (Paris, 1984), pp. 125-27. Pierre Rosenberg's work on the French eighteenth century is formidable and has very much contributed to my understanding of the period.
[179] See Carole Blumenfeld, "Les pionniers de la redécouverture du XVIIIe siècle," *La Collection La Caze: Chefs d'oeuvre des peintures de XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, Guillaume Faroult and Sophie Eloy, ed. (Paris, 2007), pp. 84-95.
[180] Jean Charles Chrysostome Pacharman, the Baron de Vèze, was an avid collector and amateur artist who was also charged, by Alexandre de Laborde, with joining a historical effort to catalogue all the important pieces of French national heritage. This cataloguing effort was published as *Monuments de la France*

This gradually resurgent popularity—as well as the association of the *ancien régime* aesthetic with lost monarchic ideals—only grew in subsequent decades, and it was likely the Goncourts themselves who enshrined the style as a metaphor for the French nation at the height of its majesty. Eventually, Watteau, Boucher, Fragonard, Vigée-Le Brun, and other painters reached a more mainstream audience outside of their initial post-Revolutionary supporters, who were mostly confined to the *Académie* and the upper echelons of French society. However, by the mid-nineteenth century, there was, in the words of Monica Preti, a "critical turn" in the assessment of eighteenth-century art, in which the previously pejorative term "decadence" did not disappear but rather changed meaning, this time to a whimsical wisdom.[181] In the midst of this critical "turn," writers, poets, and historians all began to see value in the art of the *ancien régime*, especially in the much-maligned *Fête Galante*. There was a feeling, in this later moment, that the canvases of the *ancien régime* were deceptively frivolous and secretly deep. In the darkness of the clouds overhead and of the forests that surrounded their glades, these canvases evoked a deliberate refusal, on the behalf of their subjects, to wallow in the inevitable suffering to come.

In particular, the character of Antoine Watteau, once the most criticized painter in France, seems to have represented this resurgent, romantic ideal of knowing indifference. This, after all, is how he appears in Jules Michelet's volume on *La Régence*. In a strange passage in his narrative, Michelet devoted an entire chapter to the death of Watteau, who, in his eyes, embodied an important tendency of the era. The painter, wrote the historian, "*est toujours noble, quoi qu'il fasse, par la finesse singulière, la pointe aiguë de son génie*."[182]

Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), in *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), apostrophized the Watteau, praising the eternal carnival of his art, bathed in the glow of chandeliers yet still suffused with an element of the macabre:

> *Watteau, ce carnaval où bien des cœurs illustres,*
> *Comme des papillons, errent en flamboyant,*

---

classés chronologiquement et considérés sous le rapport des faits historiques et de l'étude des arts (1816-36).

[181] See Preti, p. 6.

[182] Michelet, "Mort de Watteau," *Oeuvres complètes de J. Michelet. Histoire de France*, t. XIV. *La Régence* (Paris, 1893-98), pp. 315.

Décors frais et légers éclairés par des lustres
Qui versent la folie à ce bal tournoyant.[183]

Likewise, Paul Verlaine (1844-1896) would do much the same in a collection entitled *Fêtes Galantes* (1869), in which he dedicated an entire poem to Watteau's *L'Embarquement pour Cythère,* which had been the favourite painting of Dominique Vivant Denon. What follows was Verlaine's poetic translation of that picture, in "À la Promenade." As in Baudelaire's homage to Watteau, Verlaine also relies on a certain intrinsic depth:

Le ciel si pâle et les arbres si grêles
Semblent sourire à nos costumes claires
Qui vont flottant légers, avec des airs
De nonchalance et des mouvements d'ailes.

Et le vent doux ride l'humble bassin,
Et la lueur du soleil qu'atténue
L'ombre des bas tilleuls de l'avenue
Nous parvient bleue et mourante à dessein.

Trompeurs exquis et coquettes charmantes,
Cœurs tendres, mais affranchis du serment,
Nous devisons délicieusement,
Et les amants lutinent les amantes,

De qui la main imperceptible sait
Parfois donner un soufflet, qu'on échange
Contre un baiser sur l'extrême phalange
Du petit doigt, et comme la chose est

Immensément excessive et farouche,
On est puni par un regard très sec,
Lequel contraste, au demeurant, avec
La moue assez clémente de la bouche.[184]

---

[183] Baudelaire, "Les Phares," *Les Fleurs du Mal*, trans. James McGowan (Oxford, 1993), p. 22.
[184] Paul Verlaine, "À la Promenade," *Les Fêtes Galantes*, *Oeuvres complètes de Paul Verlaine*, t. I (Paris, 1907), p. 87-8.

Aside from the admiration for Antoine Watteau, it was Edmond and Jules Goncourt who suffused this nostalgia for the "decadence" of the *ancien régime* with the sense of a lost French past. In other words, it was the Goncourts who transposed the resurgent popularity of this style into the language of an exclusive nationalism. In their time, they were best known for the series of monographs they wrote on eighteenth-century French painters and artists, *L'Art du XVIIIème siècle,* published between 1859 and 1875. These were nothing less than an effort at defining a canon, arbitrating, in a sense, the contours of a national heritage. This subtle project was perhaps most apparent in their study of Jean-François Boucher, the famous lines in which they coined the term "*décadence délicieuse*":

> *Lorsqu'au siècle de Louis XIV succède le siècle de Louis XV, quand la France galante sort de la France fastueuse et qu'autour de la royauté plus humaine les choses et les hommes deviennent plus petits, l'idéal de l'art demeure un idéal factice et de convention ; mais de la majesté, cet idéal descend à l'agrément. Partout se répand un raffinement d'élégance, une délicatesse de volupté, ce que le temps appelle 'la quintessence de l'aimable, le coloris des charmes et des grâces ; l'embellissement des fêtes, et des amours.' Le théâtre, le livre, le tableau, la statue, la maison, l'appartement, rien n'échappe à la parure, à la coquetterie, à la gentillesse d'une décadence délicieuse. Le joli, -- voilà, à ces heures d'histoire légère, le signe et la séduction de la France. Le joli est l'essence et la formule de son génie. Le joli est le ton de ses mœurs. Le joli est l'école de ses modes. Le joli, c'est l'âme du temps, --et c'est le génie de Boucher.*[185]

III. Jewish Aesthetic "*Fausseté*"

The Goncourts' vision of the French eighteenth century was an exclusive vision indeed. Whenever Jews attempted to collect artworks and *objets d'art* from that period, the storied province of Goncourt's imagination, their collections, in Edmond's view, were inherently and inescapably inauthentic. Consider, for instance, his comments on Louvicennes, the famous château occupied at one point by Madame du Barry. By the 1880s, Louvicennes was owned by the American-born heiress Alice Thal de Lancey, who often shared it with her lover, Nissim de Camondo, the father of the collector Moïse de Camondo. This, for Goncourt, represented not so much a Jewish invasion of French national patrimony as much as it did an inversion of a natural, aesthetic hierarchy.

[185] Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, "Boucher: étude contenant quatre dessins gravés à l'eau forte," *L'Art du XVIIIe siècle*, Vol. I: Watteau, Chardin, La Tour, Boucher (Paris, 1881), p. 90.

Importantly, it also reflected a change in the social order, in which true aristocrats were replaced at the top by the crudest of plutocrats. This, for Goncourt, was ultimately a spectacle of absurdity, of irony: "*L'ironique intérieur que celui de Louveciennes,*" he wrote, "*là où habita Mme du Barry et où habite aujourd'hui Mme de Lancey et où le banquier Camondo remplace Louis XV.*"[186] For Goncourt, this sense of spectacle was even more pronounced in his rather caustic opinions on Rothschild homes and collections.

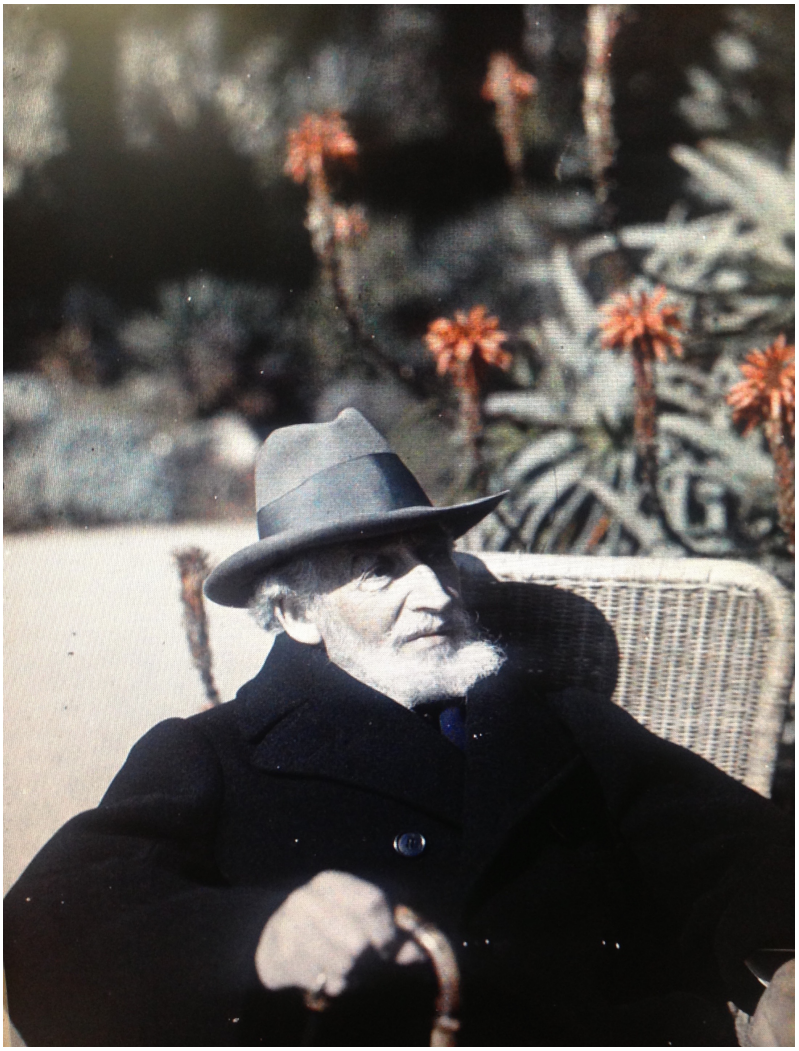

Figure 9. Edmond de Rothschild, undated. Musée Albert Kahn-Département des Hautes-de-Seine.

[186] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 943.

In fact, it is perhaps Goncourt's remarks on Edmond de Rothschild—the early Zionist and a passionate collector of drawings from the Italian Renaissance to the *fête galante*[187]—that betray the essence of his anti-Semitism as fundamentally material. Even with every imaginable resource available, Edmond, an ennobled Jew but a Jew nevertheless, could never hope to escape what Goncourt seems to have considered terminal artifice. Edmond appears in the *Journal* on three separate occasions, in 1874, in 1887, and in 1889: he was an acquaintance, nothing more. Yet Edmond Goncourt considered Edmond de Rothschild, despite the impressive extent of his collections, as the very embodiment of Jewish aesthetic inauthenticity. For Goncourt, Rothschild's home was a veritable theatre and its denizens the performers of a national identity that could never quite be theirs. This impossibility was entirely a function of the material things Edmond de Rothschild may have owned but could never understand. Consider, for instance, the following entry in the *Journal*, from June 1874:

> *Chez Edmond Rothschild. Vraiment, c'est dans ces antres de la richesse que l'on touche le néant auquel arrive le capital, même avec l'aide des conseilleurs que donne l'argent. C'est là qu'il vient à de pauvres diables comme moi l'orgueil de ce qu'ils ont fait avec du goût, du temps, des privations. Je faisais ces réflexions pendant que le jeune baron, avec un air conquérant, faisait défiler sous nos yeux une vingtaine de gouaches, dont pas une n'était franche, dont plusieurs—pardonnez-lui, spirituels maîtres de la gouache française ! – étaient des barbouillages enduits de la couche bête des papiers de paravent. Il y a, entre autres, un COUCHER DE LA MARIÉE*[188]*, qu'il défendait contre moi…non ! Au fond, ces gens ne peuvent conquérir le beau que dans les choses d'art industriel. Dans l'art pur, il faut qu'ils se contentant de gravures, dont la marge blanche leur crie bien haut qu'elles sont avant la lettre !*[189]

Goncourt presents himself as an arbiter of taste and, more specifically, of a decidedly French material realm. The language he uses, almost military in its emphasis, ultimately depicts "*le jeune baron*" as an invader of this realm: Edmond, we read, has "*un air*

---

[187] Typically, Edmond de Rothschild is known as either as an early Zionist or as a collector of Renaissance and eighteenth-century drawings. Rarely is he considered as both, or, rather, as a character whose interests might be related. However, Élizabeth Antébi, his biographer, has speculated that he was "avide de posséder et collectionnant les colonies comme il avait auparavant collectionné les dessins." See Antébi, *Edmond de Rothschild: L'homme qui racheta la Terre sainte* (Paris, 2003), p. 81, pp. 83-8. Rereading Simon Schama's study of the philanthropic Zionism of Edmond and his son, James de Rothschild, Antébi's hypothesis lives up to some scrutiny: Edmond often considered his colonists in terms of their ideal forms, at least as he imagined them. See Schama, *Two Rothschilds and the Land of Israel* (New York, 1978).

[188] In my estimation, Goncourt here most likely refers to "Le Coucher de la Mariée," a painting by Pierre Baudoin (1723-69) that was engraved by a young Gustave Moreau (1826-1898) in nineteenth century.

[189] Ibid., 6 June 1874, Vol. II, p. 580.

conquérant" and requires his guests to view his drawings in a forced march. The verb Goncourt uses, after all, is not "*exposer*" or even "*exhiber*": it is "*défiler*," a term that suggests a military parade or a march in rank and file. Of the gouaches themselves, he writes that "*une n'était franche*," but that many were merely done with haphazard daubs. For Goncourt, Edmond, who did not and could not know the difference, embarrassingly considered these artists "*spirituels maîtres de la gouache française*!" Thirteen years later, recounting a conversation with Edmond, who by then possessed one of the most extensive collections of French art, Goncourt would formulate the following maxim: "*Les gens riches peuvent devenir des amateurs, ce seront toujours de pauvres amateurs*."[190] No Jew, in his estimation, could ever rise any higher.

But it was Goncourt's final assessment of Edmond de Rothschild that was at once his most damning and most revealing. He described, in great detail, a dinner hosted by Edmond at his Paris mansion on the rue du Faubourg-St. Honoré. Present in this lavish house—"*l'hôtel le plus princier que j'aie encore vu à Paris*," Goncourt wrote, not without irony—were the fixtures of the Parisian society in the Third Republic: Princess Mathilde Bonaparte (1820-1904)[191]; Élisabeth de Gramont (1875-1954)[192]; and, among other, Louis Philippe Berthier, the Prince of Wagram (1836-1911).[193] At first, Goncourt, the self-proclaimed arbiter of French eighteenth-century style, seemed to praise the unbridled material opulence of Edmond's house:

> *Un escalier du Louvre, où sont étagées sur les paliers des légions de domestiques, à la livrée cardinalesque et qui prennent l'aspect de respectables et pittoresques larbins du passé. […] Une salle à manger ovale, aux boiseries blanches, avec une table où montent aux grands candélabres*

---

[190] Ibid., 28 December 1887, Vol. III, p. 83.

[191] Mathilde Bonaparte was a prominent *salonnière* in the Paris of the Second Empire and, later, of the Third Republic. She features in *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleur*s (1919), the second volume of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, where she is mentioned as "*l'amie de Flaubert, de Sainte-Beuve, de Dumas*." She also tells Swann that she can visit Invalides whenever she likes, as she has keys of her own. See Proust, *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* (Paris, 1946), p. 143.

[192] Élisabeth de Gramont was a relation of Edmond de Rothschild's and Béatrice Éphrussi de Rothschild: her father remarried Marguerite de Rothschild (1855-1905), of the Naples and London branches of the family, after her mother's death. She was a fixture of Parisian society in the fin-de-siècle: a confidante of Marcel Proust's, the longtime over of the American poet Natalie Clifford Barney, and, in her later years, a passionate socialist. De Gramont's memoirs remain one of the key windows into the social world of haut-bourgeois society in the France of the Third Republic. See Élisabeth de Gramont, *Mémoires* (Paris, 1928); S*ouvenirs du monde, de 1890 à 1940* (Paris, 1966).

[193] Louis Philippe Berthier was the second prince of Wagram, a title bestowed on his father by Napoleon I in 1809. He, too, was a relation of Edmond de Rothschild's, having married Bertha Clara von Rothschild (1862-1903) of the family's Frankfurt branch in 1882.

> *d'argent et s'enguirlandent autour des surtouts les plus belles orchidées du monde. Une innovation charmante pour donner la fraîcheur à une pièce, et qui nous vient, m'a-t-on dit, de Russie : deux obélisques de glace sur des consoles, jouant des morceaux de cristal de roche d'un format inconnu.*[194]

In the end, however, this diverse array of pieces, many with an unimpeachable French provenance, did not coalesce into a unified whole. For Goncourt, they presented nothing but a spectacle of "falsehood":

> *C'est curieux comme dans le logis de ces gens millionnairement riches, je suis persécuté par une pensée, qui ne vient pas du tout chez les collectionneurs pauvres : je suis hanté par l'idée de la fausseté des objets d'art qui m'entourent, par la fausseté des peintures, par la fausseté des sculptures et surtout par la fausseté des bronzes dorés, l'objet de fabrique artistique que les opulents prisent le mieux, payent le plus cher et qui me semblent, la plupart de temps, sortir de l'atelier d'une faussaire comme le docteur Camus.*[195]

This, in other words, was the essence of material anti-Semitism: wealthy Jews like Edmond de Rothschild could purchase whatever they liked, arrange the finest *objets d'art* in the most elaborate fashions, and yet never create anything but an "*atelier d'une faussaire*." They could hope only to perform French cultural patrimony; they could never hope to realize it.

IV. Édouard Drumont and Jewish Material "Invasion"

Édouard Drumont (1844-1917) requires no introduction. Quite simply, he was one of the most virulent—and certainly one of the most prolific—anti-Semites not only in France but also in the entirety of modern European history. His name was a fixture during the Dreyfus Affair—especially among the French-Jewish elite, against whom he railed frequently and mercilessly. The Reinachs, in his eyes, were responsible not only for the Panama Scandal itself but also for all the financial corruption that followed it.[196] Likewise, the Rothschilds, in his assessment, were the principal agents of France's inner erosion, and, during his tenure as a representative in the *Chambre des députés*, he famously—and very publicly—accused a colleague of having accepted a bribe from the banker Alphonse de Rothschild (1827-1905), to pass legislation that would have helped

[194] Goncourt, *Journal*, 4 June 1889, Vol. III, p. 277.
[195] Ibid.
[196] See Drumont, *La France juive*, t. II (Paris, 1886), pp. 1-67.

the Rothschild bank. After the Holocaust, however, Drumont's reputation was transformed from a local menace to an historical harbinger. Especially outside of France, he was often labeled as an intellectual precursor to Hitler and as a bigot whose anti-Semitism was even more extreme. This was an argument advanced by, among others, Robert F. Byrnes, who, in a 1948 article, was among the first to examine Drumont's work in a context that far transcended that of *fin-de-siècle* France.[197] A generation later, the American historian Thomas P. Anderson was even more blunt: "With the anti-Semitism of Hitler's Germany still so fresh in our minds," he wrote in 1967, "it is perhaps only natural that the study of the development of anti-Semitic doctrines has focused on Germany. However, the campaign against the Jews conducted in France during the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century rivaled anything in Austria or Germany during that period."[198] In no small fashion, Drumont became more than a French anti-Semite; he became a "pope" of all anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism.[199]

As captivating as these interpretations can be, they often obscure the actual nature of Drumont's anti-Semitism in the *fin-de-siècle*. His was a fundamentally material anti-Semitism, as he himself would admit. In fact, the particular details of his biography are often ignored in discussions of his work, as if his posthumous status as a Holocaust harbinger somehow removes him from the context in which he thought and wrote. But those details are of fundamental importance: they reveal the specific nature of his anti-Semitism, the same anti-Semitism with which French-Jewish elites were confronted throughout the Dreyfus Affair and well into the early decades of the twentieth century. To that end, it bears revisiting the actual text of *La France juive* (1886), Drumont's famous and oft-quoted anti-Semitic tract. As essentially a modern French adaptation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, its arguments are well known. But the terms in which Drumont made those arguments are rarely remembered. Those were material terms, and it was ultimately through his conception of French material culture and cultural heritage that he primarily articulated his conception of Jewish alterity and foreignness. In a sense,

---

[197] See Robert F. Byrnes, "Édouard Drumont and La France Juive," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (April, 1948), pp. 165-184.
[198] Thomas P. Anderson, "Édouard Drumont and the Origins of Modern Anti-Semitism," *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 53, No. 1, p. 28.
[199] See, for instance, Frederick Busi's *The Pope of Anti-Semitism*: *The Career and Legacy of Édouard-Adolphe Drumont* (London, 1986).

the material realm was the point from which the rest of his argument flowed, the crux of his anti-Semitism.

As Grégoire Kauffmann's recent biography of Drumont attests, the acclaimed author of *La France juive* was first and foremost an antiquarian.[200] This prolific writer's first book, after all, was *Mon Vieux Paris* (1874), a nostalgic reverie for a lost city. As he wrote in the early pages of the book: "*nos traditions, notre foi, notre héritage de croyances et d'idées : tout ce qui constitue l'âme même de la Patrie, j'ai défendu*."[201] And these values Drumont defended by studying the "sites" he identified with "*la Patrie*," an idea that, in fact, became real only in association with certain buildings and objects on his wistful tour of the ancient French capital. He longed for the city he had known as a boy, a city yet to be transformed by the *grand boulevards* of Baron Haussmann and, in his eyes, the scourge of the railway and the department store. Contemporary Paris, it followed, was in the throes of an immeasurable decay: "*Sans avoir atteint l'âge de Mathusalem,*" he wrote, "*nous avons vu nous-mêmes des rendez-vous de causerie, d'élégance et de plaisir perdre peu à peu la physionomie qu'ils avaient quand nous étions jeunes*."[202] As Kauffmann, has pointed out, Drumont's work on *Mon Vieux Paris* was ultimately what inspired him to write *La France juive*. There was an apparent affinity, in his mind, between the physical devastation of his beloved capital and the most notable minority group within it, several of whose members were at the heart of the transformations he hated the most. The financier James de Rothschild (1792-1868), for instance, the patriarch of the family's French branch, was a key financer of the expansion of French railways in mid-nineteenth century; the Alsatian Jews Théophile Bader (1864-1942) and Alphonse Kahn (1864-1927) had opened the *Galeries Lafayette* around the same time. Kauffmann cites an 1892 essay by Drumont in *La Libre Parole*, entitled "Notre oeuvre et la calomnie." In that article, Drumont wrote that, in the midst of researching *Mon Vieux Paris*, "*…la lumière se fit dans mon esprit. Je fus frappé par la terrible puissance qu'avait cette race qui, en quelques années, avait mis sous ses pieds la*

[200] See Grégoire Kauffmann, "Premiers pas dans le journalism (1864-1878)," *Édouard Drumont* (Paris, 2008), pp. 31-55.
[201] Édouard Drumont, *Mon Vieux Paris*, t. I (Paris, 1879), ii.
[202] Drumont, *Mon Vieux Paris*, t. II, vi. Philip Nord has also discussed Drumont's *Mon Vieux Paris* in cultural terms. See Nord, *The Politics of Resentment: Shopkeeper Protest in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton, 1986), pp. 376-378.

race des anciens Français."[203] There was a sense, in other words, in which the Jewish menace was a material menace.

The language of *La France juive* confirms the primacy of the material in Drumont's particular brand of anti-Semitism. In fact, his argument about the Jewish domination of contemporary France stems, in large part, from the "evidence" he cites of a Jewish invasion of France's cultural *patrimoine*. As he had suggested throughout *Mon Vieux Paris*, French material heritage evoked the French nation itself, and so Jewish ownership or "occupation" of historic objects and places was ultimately an act of fundamental aggression. This is clearest in the considerable number of pages he devotes to eviscerating the Rothschild château at Ferrières, leading his readers through the house room by room, object by object. His analysis reads, in a sense, like a declamatory catalogue, an itemized list of the family's material attacks on his imagine of a pure, native France. Furthermore, the intensity of his responses to the house—not to mention the detail of his interpretations—lend a sense of simulated, artificial credibility to the pages that then follow the passage on Ferrières, in which he decries the Rothschilds, predictably, for their financial manipulation of French and world politics. But what becomes clear in *La France juive* is that Drumont could not make those latter arguments without having first established the material element of the equation: Jewish material domination, in his view, enabled Jewish financial and political domination. As he wrote at the end of his discussion of Ferrières, Jewish collecting had profoundly sinister implications:

> *L'amour du bibelot ou plutôt le sentiment juif de l'acquisivité de la possessivité est poussé d'ailleurs jusqu'à la puérilité. Un petit pot de grès de Flandres, qui vaut six francs, sert de vis-à-vis à une assiette d'Orion ou à une figurine en pâte tendre. Les bons Sémites de l'hôtel des ventes n'ont pu résister à la tentation d'abuser ceux même qu'ils nomment avec tant de vénération : « Les barons. »*[204]

Collecting, in other words, was ultimately how Jews such as the Rothschilds inserted themselves into a national community that they then attacked from within. In Drumont's interpretation, objects and artefacts from the French past allowed them to construct a shield of false nobility. As it had been for the Goncourts, this sense of a Jewish aesthetic

[203] See Kauffmann, pp. 60-61.
[204] Drumont, *La France juive*, t. II (Paris, 1886), p. 116.

"*fausseté*" was a seminal element of Drumont's critique as well. In the end, Ferrières, as he would write, was exhausting to visit. The château was essentially a large consignment store, with innumerable objects displayed in a decidedly indecorous ostentation:

> *L'impression que laisse cette demeure est une impression de fatigue plus que d'admiration. C'est un fouillis, un capharnaüm, un prodigieux, un incroyable magasin de bric à brac. Tous ces objets, rapportés de tous les coins de la terre, jurent entre eux ; ces dépouilles opimes de l'univers ne s'harmonisent pas, ces manifestations de tant de civilisations différentes grincent de ce rapprochement.*[205]

To begin, Drumont depicts Ferrières as an essentially foreign construction, noting that the French Rothschilds had hired the British architect Joseph Paxton (1803-1865) to design a home that mirrored the family's mansion at Mentmore in Buckinghamshire. "*Paxton a élevé là un de ces châteaux bizarres*," he wrote, "*comme on en voit quelques-uns en Angleterre et qui, avec ses quatre façades de style dissemblable, semble tout dépaysé au milieu de nos pays du Nord*."[206] Because of its foreign inspiration, the style of Ferrières was discordant. Even more so, he wrote that the house was "*dépaysé*," a loaded term that evokes, in its most literal sense, a certain distance from the native land and, thus, the people who had emerged from its soil. The tour of the house's interior commences with an attack on the famous *style Rothschild*, a mixture of periods, styles, and schools that came together in a gilded, ornate whole. "*Après avoir traversé un large vestibule que décore un plafond de Tiepolo*," he wrote,"*on pénètre dans une petite salle à manger qui contient quelques joies peintures de Philippe Rousseau*."[207] Echoing the pronunciations of his friends, the Goncourts, Drumont appeals to the reader's common knowledge in pointing out the apparent absurdity of Tiepolo juxtaposed against Philippe Rousseau: it followed that Jews, no matter how wealthy, could not be expected to know the difference. In fact, the Rothschilds, in his assessment, could do nothing correctly. Even the library at Ferrières was an affront to decency, filled as it was with "*les éditions les plus affreuses*."[208]

The closest "reading" Drumont offers in his interpretation of the château is of the "salon Louis XVI." Clearly having adopted the standard Goncourt interpretation of Louis

---

[205] Ibid., p. 115.
[206] Ibid., p. 109.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Ibid.

XVI style as "*le signe et la séduction de la France*," the apogee of French cultural production, he depicts the room as a site of invasion:

> *A partir du salon Louis XVI, les surprises commencent. On voit successivement défiler sous ses yeux toutes les merveilles du génie des siècles qu'ont pu rassembler sur un seul point l'or, les relations universelles, la franc-maçonnerie des brocanteurs, aux aguets dans toute l'Europe, et réservant la fleur de leurs trouvailles pour les souverains d'Israël. Les chefs-d'œuvre de l'art du XVIIIe siècle, les tables de Gouthière, les meubles incrustés de Riesener et de Boule, les cuivres de Caffieri ornent cette pièce charmante dans sa tonalité printanière et claire que surmonte un plafond d'Henry Lévy. Au milieu apparaît, comme une trophée, l'incomparable clavecin de Marie-Antoinette, qu'on a le cœur serré de retrouver dans cette maison de Juifs*.[209]

There is a sense in which the room held in captivity the pieces and objects that, for Drumont, the Goncourts, and others, most evoked the French cultural genius. That genius, it followed, was enslaved to the whims of "*les souverains d'Israël*," who knew nothing of these objects save for the sheen of their gilded exteriors. Building on the Goncourts's views of the rights of French collectors to objects with French provenances, his most devastating lines are about discovering Marie Antoinette's harpsichord imprisoned in this material morass. For Drumont, this was an object that "*on a le cœur serré de retrouver dans cette maison de Juifs*." He speaks of the harpsichord as if it were a casualty, a symbol of defeat.

That sense of defeat would characterise the rest of his interpretation of Ferrières. This is largely because the chateau itself was the literal site of the negotiations between the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898) and the French foreign minister Jules Favre (1809-1880), the famous "*entrevue*" that enshrined France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. In Drumont's view, not only had Jews contributed to the making of an impotent, decadent society incapable of defending itself from foreign attack, they gone so far as to host—and even celebrate—the humiliation of France in their own home. Ferrières, then, was complicit in a certain betrayal of the French nation whose objects it had imprisoned and whose heritage it had stolen. "*Rentrons dans les appartements,*" he exhorted his readers. "*Nous allons rencontrer, pour la première fois, l'histoire en visiteuse dans ce château qui n'a point de l'histoire. En 1815, les Rothschild sont venu pauvres avec l'invasion ; l'invasion en 1870 les retrouve milliardaires et peut*

[209] Ibid., pp. 109-110.

leur faire ses compliments."[210] Again, Drumont's crucial theme is "invasion." The German-born Rothschilds, after all, had "invaded" France in 1815, (apparently) made millions on the invasion of 1870, and continued to invade France with every day they spent in Ferrières. In the end, he considered the château an offence to those who had sacrificed their lives for France, victims of German violence but also, importantly, of this "Jewish house":

> *Le cœur qui battait dans cette rude poitrine n'en ressentait pas moins peut-être quelque virile pitié en songeant à tant d'hommes, enfantés dans la douleur par les mères, qui allaient expirer sur les champs de bataille, afin que quelques millions de plus entrassent dans ce logis de Juifs*.[211]

This material anti-Semitism, then, as articulated by the Edmond and Jules Goncourt, Édouard Drumont, another others, was a significant element in the public discourse of the French *fin-de-siècle*. More importantly, it was largely the way in which the collectors featured in this thesis personally experienced anti-Semitism in the period. This, as subsequent chapters will show, was a primary motivation behind their specific and even idiosyncratic collecting habits: each in their own ways, they would seek to prove their "Frenchness" in the same material terms in which they had been attacked. This largely entailed an embrace of eighteenth-century French art, precisely the terrain that the material anti-Semites of the fin-de-siècle had declared Jews could neither understand nor appreciate. At least in part, the collectors sought to prove them wrong.

[210] Ibid., p. 111.
[211] Ibid., p. 112.

CHAPTER III.
MOÏSE DE CAMONDO, MATERIAL MONARCHY, AND THE PETIT TRIANON OF THE RUE DE MONCEAU



Figure 10. The Camondo Mansion, Parc Monceau, Paris, January 2015.

Late in life, with indomitable courage, we continue to say that we are going to do what we have not yet done: we are going to build a house.

—Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1958)

Since 1899, Moïse de Camondo had lived—at the suggestion of his mentor and confidant, the critic and collector Charles Éphrussi[212]—in a Neoclassical mansion at 19, rue Hamelin, a typical Haussmannian *passage* that runs from the Place d'Iéna to the Avenue Kléber in Paris's sixteenth arrondissement. Although he knew that he would one day inherit the family house, it was ultimately on the rue Hamelin that Moïse had established his own family, living there (briefly) with his wife, Irène Cahen d'Anvers, and their two children, Nissim and Béatrice, in proximity with the other families who

[212] Letter from Moïse de Camondo to Rouyrre, 6 June 1898: "*Mon ami Charles Éphrussi m'engage beaucoup à visiter l'hôtel que Madame Bernstein fait construire rue Hamelin*." AMNC.

comprised their social world. The Paris residence of Théodore Reinach, for instance, whose son, Léon, would later marry Béatrice, was at no. 9, rue Hamelin; Moïse's in-laws, the Cahen d'Anvers, lived on the rue Bassano just across the Place des États-Unis. Concurrently, it was on the rue Hamelin that Moïse began to mature as a collector, refining his tastes and acquiring several prominent pieces that would become the hallmarks of his collection, chief among them the series of seven pastoral panels by Jean-Baptiste Huet, which he had set into the paneling of the mansion's smaller drawing room.[213] In material terms, his vision was neither as precise nor as totalizing as it would later be on the rue de Monceau. In the pieces he acquired for the rue Hamelin, for instance, the Neoclassical, and, specifically, the Louis XVI aesthetic was hardly a requirement for purchase: in fact, during those years, Moïse bought a considerable number of objects in the rococo style, perhaps most prominently the ornate candelabrum adorned with Meissen figurines.[214] If a modicum of eclecticism still influenced his tastes on the rue Hamelin, Moïse, at least to a certain extent, appears to have considered the house house a canvas on which to render a family, social, and aesthetic life entirely of his own design. His excitement at the prospect of life in the house is nearly palpable in the early letters he sent to his architect, Rouyrre, whom he emphatically urged not to hurry in his work: "*Vous m'avez dit à plusieurs reprises que l'hôtel me serait livré le 1er mars*," he wrote, "*cela me paraît impossible mais, je le répète, comme je vous l'ai déjà dit, je ne suis pas pressé et vous accorde, si cela nécessaire un délai d'un mois*."[215] The point, in other words, was not so much expediency as it was perfection: for Moïse, it seems, the design of the space paralleled the creation of the life it would soon enclose.

But Moïse would ultimately enjoy creative authority only over the aesthetic sphere, as it was during his period on the rue Hamelin that his family life imploded in private and, worse, in public: his wife, Irène, had abandoned him for a man in his employ, and their divorce—a scandal among precisely the same neighbours in whose proximity he had consciously chosen to settle his family—was a subject of pubic debate and comment in the newspapers in 1902. When he inherited the family house at 63, rue

[213] On Moïse de Camondo on the rue Hamelin, see Bertrand Rondot, "Building a Collection," in *The Camondo Legacy*, p. 89.
[214] Ibid., 88.
[215] Moïse de Camondo to Rouyrre, 6 February 1899, AMNC.

de Monceau on his mother's death on 18 June 1910, he was thus presented with an opportunity to begin anew, to abandon the domestic site—and, in a sense, the built embodiment—of his humiliation. If, as the art historian François Loyer has argued, "art was a refuge, and often a consolation for personal tragedy," the Monceau house provided Moïse a space in which and with which to construct and design a sanctuary, a place that offered the potential for order, harmony, and, perhaps most importantly, tranquility.[216] Both the art historian Michel Steve, in his analysis of Moïse's transformation of the Monceau property, and the journalist Pierre Assouline, in his portrait of the Camondos, have described the new house as an aesthetic "*tabula rasa*,"[217] the proverbial blank slate on which Moïse, the aesthete and the collector, could refine his tastes and advance his collection in a space entirely of his own design. But a careful consideration of Moïse's many letters to his dealers and his architect, René Sergent (1865-1927), suggests that the project of transforming the family mansion was also, on some level, a fundamentally psychological enterprise, a means of creating, in the midst of personal and political chaos, a private sanctuary and an interior kingdom of which he was the indomitable—and sometimes even the tyrannical—absolute monarch.

In that sense, the late eighteenth-century style in which he chose to decorate a house expressly modeled after Versailles's Petit Trianon, itself something of a monument to the era, was especially meaningful. In the same will and testament in which he bequeathed his collection to the French state, Moïse would describe this style as an "*art décoratif qui a été une des gloires de la France*,"[218] and indeed, as a Sephardic émigré, he certainly sought to project a patriotic image that would efface the foreignness of the family's name and vitiate the anti-Semitism they continually faced. But this alone is too simple a reading of the material self-portrait Moïse left behind. In the Paris of the *fin de siècle*, Louis XV and Louis XVI represented more than affluence and, after the Goncourt brothers' endorsement, good taste. These styles, after all, carried with them a certain nostalgia for an imagined social world in which elites, as they had been before the

[216] François Loyer, "A Mansion in the 18th Century Style," *The Camondo Legacy*, p. 64.
[217] See Michel Steve, "Un monument pastiche, le Musée Nissim de Camondo à Paris," *Histoire de l'Art*, no. 28, October 1994, p. 63. "*Pour ériger ce monument en hommage à l'art et au goût français*," he writes, "*Moïse de Camondo entend faire table rase, au propre comme au figuré*." See also Pierre Assouline, *Le Dernier des Camondo* (Paris, 1999), p. 28. "*Il choisit d'en faire table rase*."
[218] Moïse de Camondo, Final Will and Testament, AMNC.

Revolution, were free to pursue lives of dalliance and refinement at the same time as they controlled the natural order that afforded them such pleasure.[219] The Neoclassicism of these respective styles celebrated restraint, harmony, and order, but they were also aesthetics of the *ancien régime*, gilded symbols of total control and, to some degree, of a stifling autocracy. In the narrow confines of the Monceau mansion, Moïse de Camondo was a material monarch. The style he chose, as well the sheer vigilance of his attention to detail in enacting his vision for the space, thus evinces a desire beyond the achievement of balance, symmetry, or even a particular national affiliation. Within the context of Moïse's own private sanctuary, the *ancien régime* aesthetic provided a poetics of power, a means of engendering, through space, a lived experience of control for a man who had ultimately lost control over several major aspects of his private and public life.[220]

I. Moïse de Camondo and a Family Inheritance of Public Life

The exact origins of the Camondo family remain elusive, obscured by myth and memory. As the use of Ladino among future generations of family members would suggest, their ancestors were presumably among the masses of Sephardim who had refused conversion and were thus expelled from Catholic Spain in 1492, only to settle in the Mediterranean ports of the Levant and the Italian peninsula, especially in Venice. Trade, as it was for so many other exiled Sephardim, was initially the family business, and the Camondos, not unlike the Ergas or Silvera families considered in Francesca Trivellato's recent study, were the archetypal "insider-outsiders in early modern

[219] See Philip Conisbee, *Painting in Eighteenth-Century France* (London, 1981), p. 9.

[220] I am indebted, here, to Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* (1958), a brilliant exploration of the concepts of house and home in which he conducts a phenomenological study of architecture and lived experience it engenders. His principal argument is that the house—imagined, inhabited, and constructed—is an individual's first and primary "cosmos," a space whose shape and form impact the human lives sheltered inside it as much as those lives conceive and create the house itself. In the case of Moïse de Camondo, of course, the house he constructed on the rue de Monceau was something he not only inhabited but dreamed, executing his vision with his vast resources. Particularly relevant in Bachelard's analysis to that end are his pages on the warmth and security a home provides its occupant in the proverbial and universal winter of the exterior. "The dreamer of houses knows and senses this," he writes, "and because of the diminished entity of the outside world, experiences the qualities of intimacy with increased intensity" (see Bachelard, "House and Universe," p. 41). Moïse de Camondo was precisely such a "dreamer," and enacting his dreams seems to have afforded a degree of control absent from a private life of humiliation and familial strife and a public life of dwindling financial stature and anti-Semitic caricature.

European commercial society," at home everywhere but nowhere.[221] For the critic and amateur historian Philippe Erlanger, a distant relation of the family whose mother, Irène Hillel-Manoach, was a niece of Moïse de Camondo's mother, Elise Fernandez, the family had derived its name from the mansion it had apparently occupied in eighteenth-century Venice, *Ca' Mondo*, "house of the world." This hypothesis, as Edouard Roditi, a friend of Moïse de Camondo and himself a distant relation of the family's on his father's side, has written, was probably untrue, a flight of imaginative fancy and either a selective interpretation or an outright fabrication of the facts. Venetian Jews in the eighteenth century, after all, were still confined to the city's storied ghetto,[222] and it was far more likely, for Roditi, that the family, not unlike Lorenzo da Ponte, the librettist of Mozart's major operas, had emerged from a small Jewish community on the periphery of the Veneto that had merely been called "Camondo."[223] In any case, the historian Nora Seni, whose examination of the family's history remains the most authoritative, has written that the only point that can be established with any certainty about the Camondos' early history is that, in 1782, having left Venice for the Ottoman capital approximately a century before, they hired a vessel, *La Madonna del Rosario*, to bring them to Habsburg Trieste from Constantinople, from which they had been temporarily expelled but would return a few years later, to become the so-called "Rothschilds of the East."[224]

In hindsight, of course, the *Ca' Mondo* myth fits the Camondos quite well. As a prominent Sephardic merchant family, even in the eighteenth-century, records survive that locate members of the family trading across the Mediterranean and European worlds, in Trieste, Venice, Vienna, and elsewhere.[225] In the mid-nineteenth century, when the family had established itself in Paris, they were certainly "of the world" in the literal and figurative sense of the term: the history and the evolution of the Camondo family was

---

[221] See Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, 2009), p. 2.
[222] For the best and most comprehensive history of the Venetian Ghetto, see Riccardo Calimani, *The Ghetto of Venice* (New York, 1987). See also *The Jews of Early Modern Venice*, ed. Benjamin Ravid and Robert C. Davis (Baltimore, 2001).
[223] See Edouard Roditi, "Camondo's Way," *Grand Street*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Winter, 1987), p. 152.
[224] See Nora Seni, "The Camondos and Their Imprint on 19th-Century Istanbul," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (Nov., 1994), p. 664. See also Seni and Sophie le Tarnec, *Les Camondo ou l'éclipse d'une fortune* (Paris, 1997).
[225] Aron Rodrigue, "Abraham de Camondo of Istanbul: the Transformation of Jewish Philanthropy," in *From East and West: Jews in a Changing Europe, 1750-1870*, ed. Frances Malino and David Sorkin (Oxford, 1990), p. 46.

truly cosmopolitan, their social world decidedly *mondain*. Their principal home remained Constantinople, where, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, they became the most prominent Jewish banking family in the Levant after the rapid rise of the family bank, I. Camondo & Cie, at the Ottoman court, where, after 1839,[226] it benefitted from modernizing reforms, the development of a modern financial system, and the close relations of the patriarch, Abraham de Camondo (1780-1873), with government elites.[227] Despite this affiliation, however, their citizenship was never Turkish. As was the case for many Jewish families who had ultimately settled in Ottoman trading centres, the Camondos' original citizenship was Austro-Hungarian and then, after 1865, from the Grand Duchy of Tuscany,[228] which reflected the desire of both entities to develop their Mediterranean port cities of Trieste and Livorno into major commercial hubs, by encouraging the settlement of foreign merchants such as the Camondo and other prominent Sephardim.[229] Their title, likewise, was Italian, granted to Abraham Behor (1829-1889) and Nissim Camondo (1830-1889) individually by the King of Italy in return for their financial support of the House of Savoy's war effort, which had led to the reunification of Italy.[230] Arriving in France in 1869, where they installed their bank's main branch in the rue Lafayette in Paris, not far from the bank—and, of course, the family mansion—that James de Rothschild had established a generation before, the Camondos adopted the appropriate *mondainité* to accompany the intrinsic cosmopolitanism that was the life-blood of their family's experience. The brothers Abraham Behor and Nissim—each of whom had only one son of his own, Isaac de

[226] 1839 saw the emergence of a reformist climate at the Sublime Porte, spurred by the passage of a slew of new measures voted in that were heavily influenced by the European enlightenment that reflected the reflected the desire to inculcate a European-style "modernity" in Constantinople, especially along financial lines. See Nora Seni and Sophie Le Tarnec, "From Istanbul to Paris," in *The Camondo Legacy: The Passions of a Paris Collector* (Paris, 2007), p. 23-24.

[227] The Camondo bank, for instance, negotiated loans for the Ottoman state with many prominent Western banks, and, quite significantly, it played the lead role in financing the Ottoman war effort in the Crimean War in 1854-56. As Rodrigue notes, Abraham de Camondo was an associate and close friend of Turkish political elites such as Resit, Ali and Fuat Pashas. See Rodrigue, p. 89.

[228] Seni, p. 665. See also Seni and Le Tarnec, note 1, p. 294.

[229] As Trivellato has written in the case of Livorno, the grand dukes of Tuscany issued a series of ad hoc policies designed to attract refugees from Spain, such as the charters of 1591 and 1593 (known as *livornine*), which essentially granted Jews rights and privileges unparalleled in neighboring Catholic societies. As a result, Livorno, if never quite an Amsterdam, became the second largest Sephardic settlement outside the Dutch capital and also the European city with the highest proportion of Jewish residents (approximately 10 percent). See Trivellato, p. 5.

[230] Roditi, p. 151.

Camondo (1851-1911) and Moïse de Camondo (1860-1935), respectively—became fixtures in the society attached to the Parisian *haute banque* of the Third Republic, flaunting, as Roditi recalled, "their flamboyant Italian title that sounded like that of a character in an Offenbach operetta."[231] Despite their public pretentions, however, the two Camondo brothers maintained and developed in France a specific family culture that was a composite of Levantine, Jewish and philanthropic identities, a hybrid sensibility that their sons, Isaac and Moïse, would later translate into the realm of public cultural life.

The initial template for this sensibility was undeniably their grandfather, Abraham de Camondo, the family's patriarch. As a devout Orthodox man, Abraham obeyed the traditional Jewish practice of *tzedekah*, the Hebrew Bible's injunction to help those in need through simple acts of (anonymous) charity. As such, his faith was the essence of his charity: he financed, for instance, the reprinting of the *Mea'an Lo'ez*, the Torah anthology composed for a secular reading public, and he established synagogues and shelters for the poorest among Constantinople's Jewish population.[232] By the mid-nineteenth century, however, that population was in a state of considerable economic malaise and social atrophy, not to mention intellectual decline. As Aron Rodrigue has pointed out, the Greek and Armenian populations had replaced the Jewish population as middleman in the Ottoman Empire's trade with Western Europe, which meant that the majority of the nearly 40,000 Jews residing in Istanbul in the 1850s lived in considerable and often even extreme poverty.[233] Furthermore, the aftershocks, even some two centuries later, of the Sabbetai Zevi scandal, in which a Sephardic rabbi had claimed to be the Messiah, had created an environment in which Constantinople's Jewish leadership frowned on any new intellectual pursuits that questioned or challenged Jewish tradition or religious doctrine in any way. If circumstance had mired the Ottoman capital's Jews in poverty and depression, suspicion ensured that they had no means of altering their personal or collective fates. *Tzedekah* might have temporarily alleviated their suffering, but it would never end it altogether. As the most publicly prominent and certainly the richest Jew in the entirety of the Ottoman Empire, Abraham de Camondo thus assumed, beginning in the 1850s, the role not merely of the Jewish community's chief benefactor

[231] Ibid., p. 158.
[232] Seni and Le Tarnec, p. 27-8.
[233] Rodrigue, p. 50.

but also of its guardian, a figure with a considerable paternalistic power to redesign the community he charged himself with saving.



Figure 11. Henri Cartier-Bresson, Camondo Steps, Istanbul, 1964.

The patriarch, in other words, had become the iconic nineteenth-century philanthropist, the personification of the general shift, in Jewish and non-Jewish public works after the mid-1850s, from simple charity to an ideological embrace of reform and regeneration. For Rodrigue, Camondo is a "perfect illustration of an important development in the wider Jewish world: the transition from the old philanthropy of *tzedekah* (charity) to the new philanthropy of reform."[234] But as Lee Shai Weissbach has

[234] Ibid., p. 55.

argued, this newfound practice in Jewish philanthropy was influenced by a larger ferment among European elites motivated by a reformist impulse—a local application of the *mission civilisatrice* of the age—that aimed at recasting the objects of their assistance into dutiful subjects who accepted certain cultural value systems and, of course, the position of the elites as their arbiters.[235] In any case, Abraham Camondo was both: his business dealings with many of the most prominent European Jewish banking families certainly attuned him to the ways in which his continental peers observed and interpreted ties to fellow Jews, and his association with the pro-Western, modernizing factions at the Ottoman court responsible for the rise of his bank also likely convinced him of the need for decidedly Western-style reforms among his own people. This accounts, for instance, for the clearly secular character of the school he created in Istanbul in 1854 with Albert Cohn, the emissary of the Paris Rothschilds and of the *Consistoire*, an educational facility that taught young Jewish boys traditional Jewish subjects but emphasized modern languages such as French and Turkish rather than Hebrew. Despite initial resistance among Jewish leaders[236], the school flourished, transforming generations of Turkish Jewish youths into the ideal citizens whom Camondo had imagined.

The Alliance Israélite Universelle was established in Paris in 1860, an organization the motto of which was the age-old maxim that "*kol yisrael arevim*," ("*Tous les israélites sont solidaires*"/ "All Israelites in solidarity") and which had as its project the observance of Jewish solidarity with communities across the globe. As Lisa Leff has argued, the particular type of "solidarity" at the heart of Alliance activities was separate and distinct from the corporate solidarity that French Jews themselves had so desperately sought to abolish in the early decades of the nineteenth century, in the pursuit of their assimilation and emancipation. With the Alliance in the 1860s, Leff has shown, French Jewish elites were actually affirming "their commitment to state secularism and of their belief that 'civilized' nations should advance the cause of religious equality in their

[235] Lee Shai Weissbach, "The Nature of Jewish Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century France and the Mentalité of the Jewish Elite," *Jewish History*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1994) pp. 191-204. See also Weissbach, "The Jewish Elite and the Children of the Poor: Jewish Apprenticeship Programs in Nineteenth-Century France," *AJS Review*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring, 1987), pp. 123-142.

[236] As Rodrigue notes, in 1858, a rabbi excommunicated the school and those who had enrolled their children in it, on the grounds that they were contributing to a "growing laxity among the Jews of Istanbul." Camondo, however, was able to mobilize his many connections to have the school re-opened, but only after agreeing to bring in more religion to the curriculum. See Rodrigue, p. 52.

political and economic negotiations with other countries."[237] For the Alliance, solidarity, in other words, was a particular application of a universal project, which is why its leaders linked the defence and protection of Jews worldwide to the French republican ideals of 1789 and 1848. The Alliance championed, after all, the universalist achievements of those revolutions: the separation of religion and the state, the right to work, and the expansion of suffrage, all factors that were pillars of a secular modernity.[238] The Jewish community was merely the particular portal through which that universality could be accessed; reforms intended to enable and "emancipate" Jewish people often meant distancing them from the traditional observance of the Jewish religion. After the establishment of the Alliance in 1860, Abraham de Camondo—as was the case with many other prominent nineteenth-century Jewish philanthropists, such as Moses Montefiore in Britain and Maurice de Hirsch with the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) in Palestine—continued his philanthropic activities through the infrastructure of a large organization,[239] relying on the Alliance as a means of projecting the values he shared throughout the Ottoman empire and beyond.

In a sense, the Alliance *was* the expression of Camondo's value system, its embrace of Jewishness at the expense of Judaism, its application of the *mission civilisatrice* to his fellow co-religionists as a means of exerting some form of social control, and its imposition of Western ideals onto "backward" Eastern subjects. As he wrote to the President of the Alliance in 1864, special attention needed to be paid to "the Jews of the East, who are so backward in civilization and for whom only *education* can open the path to progress."[240] After the school he had founded with Albert Cohn in 1854 had experienced significant opposition from the local rabbi who had excommunicated its members and their families, he wrote again to the Paris headquarters of the Alliance that, in the pursuit of modernization, it was necessary to be patient until "the spirits […] turn by themselves toward civilization and look to education as the only means of leaving the state of profound ignorance in which they at present find themselves."[241] But the Alliance

[237] Lisa Moses Leff, "The Making of Jewish Solidarity," in *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity: The Rise of Jewish Internationalism in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford, 2006), p. 157.
[238] Ibid., p. 179.
[239] Rodrigue, p. 55.
[240] Archives of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, III A 17, 3 March 1864, quoted in Ibid.
[241] Quoted in Ibid.

and its ideology were far from the personal perspective of Abraham de Camondo: it was a sensibility he transferred to his grandsons, the embodiment of the Camondo family's relationship to Jewish identity and, most importantly, to public life by the late nineteenth century. Part *noblesse oblige*, part Jewish solidarity, and part a nineteenth-century desire to "regenerate" brethren into the analogue of the emancipated French citizen, Abraham Camondo's version of Jewish public engagement, which became that of his family, was a project of cultural edification as much as it was a celebration—and even a glorification—of the French universalist ideal. This, for instance, was an interpretation that his grandson, Nissim de Camondo—the father of Moïse de Camondo—articulated in the speech in which he introduced the Alliance to the community of Turkish Jews it would be benefitting:

> *L'Alliance n'a au fond d'autre but que de protéger l'israélite qui souffre pour la seule raison qu'il est descendant d'Abraham, d'extirper les préjugés qui existent encore parmi nous […] d'amener nos frères, par l'instruction, le travail à devenir les égaux des autres peuples au milieu desquels ils furent lancés par une main terrible et mystérieuse. C'est à Paris, centre de la civilisation que se sont réunis plusieurs hommes généraux pour concevoir le dessin d'une Alliance israélite universelle.*[242]

Of course, in the very city that Nissim de Camondo termed the "*centre de civilisation*," the Camondos were not necessarily regarded with the same admiration with which they encountered their adopted new home. With a certain irony, the Camondos were often regarded as Eastern, as exotic, and, to some extent, as "backward" as the poorer Jews of the Ottoman Empire they themselves had stigmatized. Consider, for instance, the recollections of Ludwig August Frankl, who stayed with the Camondos for Passover in 1856 and who recorded the experience, among many others, in a book entitled *The Jews in the East*. Frankl described the Camondos through a clear Orientalist perspective which presented them, to some extent, as exotic specimens on the periphery of reality. Frankl described the Camondo mansion in terms of the unbridled opulence it contained:

[242] Quoted in Seni and Le Tarnec, p. 28.

> Four generations were seated at the table; the patriarch of the house, clothed in silks of different colours, occupied a throne furnished with cushions of purple and gold. […] In one corner of the large room…was seated the mother of these children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, apart from the rest, on a splendid divan. She wore wide trousers of red satin, and a short white silk petticoat over them; on her feet were yellow slippers; round her waist was a shaded silk girdle…. But her head-dress was the most valuable part of her costume; a white silk shawl was gracefully wound round a red fez, and adorned with pearls and precious stones of different colours.[243]

The Camondos, in Frankl's account, are many things, but most of all they are foreign, swathed in silks, seated on "cushions of purple and gold," and adorned with "precious stones" in a gaudy rainbow of colours. After Abraham Behor and Nissim de Camondo established themselves in Paris in 1869—bringing along their grandfather, the patriarch Abraham—they were perhaps attempting to shed this exotic association with their 1870 purchase of two adjacent plots of land they purchased in the Plaine Monceau, which had been developed and redesigned by fellow Sephardic banker Émile Pereire in 1861 and that had become a desirable address for financial and industrial elites. Abraham hired Denis-Louis Destors to design something of a family compound in the space, a safe—if public and prominent—enclosure in which the family culture of the Camondos could continue to exist unchallenged. Abraham, his mother, his wife, Regina, their daughter Clarisse, and her husband, Léon Alfassa, lived in the newly constructed townhouse mansion at No. 61, where his son, Isaac, occupied a wing they dubbed the 'Petit Hôtel.' At No. 63, Nissim likewise lived with his family, including his son Moïse, who would later transform this childhood home into a Parisian Petit Trianon, the site of his future collection. In keeping with their grandfather's philanthropic activities vis-à-vis Jewish schools in Turkey and abroad—activities which both Abraham Behor and Nissim maintained throughout their lives, albeit by proxy—they also, in their early years in France, began supporting public works expressly related to Jewish communal life in their new country. The most prominent among these endeavours was their support of the

[243] See Ludwig August Frankl, *The Jews in the East*, vol. 1, pp. 122-23. http://dbooks.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/books/PDFs/600052692.pdf

Sephardic synagogue on the rue Buffault, which remains the largest Sephardic rite in the French capital. For a time, they even collected rare pieces of Judaica, liturgical objects nearly all of Middle Eastern Sephardic origin which they donated to the Musée de Cluny.[244]

If the brothers Camondo attempted to abandon the aesthetic that had labelled them, in the eyes of their French contemporaries, exotic Orientals, they sought to cultivate a publicly French image, albeit of an incongruous variety. And it is significant that the means by which they sought to construct that image was primarily through the display of art, the arrangement of material culture, and the ordering of a built environments, a vocabulary that Moïse de Camondo—and, to some extent, his cousin Isaac de Camondo—would utilize advance even further in their own collecting activities. Consequently, the Camondos were frequent visitors to the gallery of the legendary dealer Paul Durand-Ruel, attended exclusive auctions at Hotel Druout, and were proponents of Japonisme, then *de rigueur*, as much as they were of the popular contemporary style of mixing periods in French style. Zola later satirized No. 63 in *La Curée* (1872): "*C'était un étalage,*" the novelist wrote, "*une profusion, un écrasement de richesses*."[245]

If, of course, the newcomers to Paris had successfully shed their forbears' exotic Eastern appearances and customs, they abandoned neither the opulence nor the excess that observers and critics had long associated with the name "Camondo." As Arthur Meyer, an acquaintance of the family and himself a testament to the fluidity of identity in the Third Republic, would later observe, rather pointedly, in his memoirs: "*Venus tout droit du pays des légendes, ils déposent comme entrée de jeu 40 millions à la Banque de France*."[246] They emblazoned the gates of their homes with the family crest—or, rather, the crest they had acquired from the Italian king some five years before installing themselves on the rue Monceau—and they entertained with a panache that shocked even the most seasoned social observers. They adopted, as Nora Seni and Sophie Le Tarnec

---

[244] See Roditi, p. 157.
[245] Émile Zola, *La Curée* (Paris, 1981), p. 52.
[246] Arthur Meyer, *Ce que mes yeux ont vu* (Paris, 1911), p. 305. Meyer was the grandson of rabbi from a middle-class Jewish family, who, over the course of his life, converted to Catholicism, edited *Le Gaulois* while embracing the right-wing political agenda, and espoused the anti-Dreyfusard agenda during the Affair. Despite his elected affiliations, however, Meyer never ceased to be publicly associated with Jewishness, as his famed duel with Édouard Drumont attested.

have written, "the manner and lifestyle of the aristocracy and the customs of the world of high finance," but they went even further in their observance of these rites than their actual custodians: "*Au bal de la comtesse Camondo, l'année dernière,*" one society periodical observed, "*il y avait eu également une distribution de bijoux*."[247] In France the Camondos took to taking the waters at Vichy, watching the races at Deauville, and spending the winters at Biarritz. Nissim de Camondo—as his son, Moïse, and grand-daughter, Béatrice de Camondo-Reinach, would also later do—became a passionate rider, and a fixture in the Bois de Boulogne social set. "*Voici les beaux jours du Bois heureusement de retour*," a magazine observed of the season's opening. "*Le rendez-vous des mails à la barrière de l'Étoile était des plus animés. Parmi les plus élégants, le comte de Camondo avec deux grandes carrossiers bais, un peu solennels, mais si beaux*!"[248]

As it was for the other families in this *milieu*, the public perception of their ostentation was not always as adulatory. In the increasingly pronounced anti-Semitic discourse of the Third Republic, the name "Camondo" itself became a synonym for the confused set of social ills that anti-Semites projected onto prominent Jews in French public life. Drumont's *La France juive* appeared initially in 1886, and the Camondos—as do the Rothschilds, the Reinachs, the Foulds, the Éphrussis and the Cahen d'Anvers—appear throughout, often as the "*turcaret levantin,*" exactly the label all of their efforts in France appear to have been so concerned to avoid. Furthermore, if Théodore Reinach and his brothers had to endure the aftermath of the Panama Scandal and its devastating impact on their family's public perception, the Camondos were confronted with the Alfassa Affair. The Alfassas were another prominent pillar of Paris's Sephardic elite, and Léon Alfassa had married Abraham Behor Camondo's daughter, Clarisse, in 1867. After his marriage into the family, his father-in-law and uncle-in-law appointed him as a senior executive at I. Camondo & Cie, in which he caused a bankruptcy scandal that amounted to several million francs (the exact figure remains unknown). In any case, the outrage from angry customers caused them to distrust the Camondos not necessarily as bankers but as Jews, who, in their eyes, had merely confirmed the age-old stereotype of

[247] From *L'Art et La Mode*, 1881, p. 26, quoted in Seni and Le Tarnec, 37.
[248] *L'Art et la Mode*, 1881, p. 344, quoted in Ibid.

avaricious moneylending. Both Abraham Behor and Nissim de Camondo died in 1889, the Alfassa Affair having darkened the reputation of their familial Parisian fantasy.

To some extent, Abraham Behor and Nissim de Camondo had distanced themselves from the explicitly Jewish philanthropic activities of the family's patriarch, although they always maintained support of the Alliance and its activities in their native Turkey. Perhaps because of the anti-Semitism his father and uncle experienced, Moïse de Camondo, in his maturity, would scale down Jewish philanthropy almost to the point of insignificance. He maintained, however, well into the twentieth century, the family's exact approach to public life, translated this time into the realm of the cultural and the material.

II. The Pursuit of Provenance

Initially, it was perhaps unexpected that Moïse—an aesthete, a socialite, and a denizen of the finest Parisian salons—would chose not only to occupy but to renovate and redesign so comprehensively the Monceau mansion he inherited from his mother. Although the address carried with it the undeniable association of affluence—the *salonnière* and painter Madeleine Lemaire lived at No. 31, Maurice de Rothschild at No. 47—its appeal belonged to that of an earlier generation, the real-life Proustian figures whose members often found themselves caricatured in the pages of *À la recherche*.[249] By 1910, the most desirable address for the Third Republic's industrial, financial, and cultural elites was no longer the Plaine Monceau but the more westerly locations of the Champs de Mars and, beyond, the fashionable Bois de Boulogne suburbs,[250] where, for instance, Edmond de Rothschild, Albert Kahn, and Salomon Reinach were neighbours. One might, of course, assume that Moïse had merely been moved or inspired by the idea of returning, after years of absence, to the family house and the Camondo compound in which it was situated. But his uncle Abraham Behor Camondo's mansion at No. 61 rue

[249] Lemaire (1845-1928), for instance, was known as one of the inspirations for Proust's Madame Verdurin. Camondo's mentor, Charles Éphrussi (1849-1905), is widely cited as the principal inspiration for the character of Charles Swann. See de Waal, *The Hare With Amber Eyes* (2011).

[250] For the history of this shift in desirability, see Yvan Christ, Jean-François Barrielle, Thérèse Castieau, Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, *Champs-Élysées, Faubourg Saint-Honoré, Plaine Monceau* (Paris, 1982). They argue that, throughout the nineteenth century, desirability moved first from the Left Bank to the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, then to Étoile or Monceau, and then, finally, to Trocadéro and the western suburbs of Boulogne.

de Monceau had been sold to Gaston Menier in 1893, and Moïse wasted no time in disposing of the vast majority of art objects he had inherited from his mother along with the deed to No. 63. A letter survives from 21 July 1910—a mere eleven days after Moïse assumed ownership—in which Tedeschi, his secretary and confidant, reports back on a successful disposal of the "Turqueries" left in the house: "*après deux rendez-vous, hier, rue de Monceau et deux autres ce matin,*" he wrote, "*j'en ai fini avec les 'Turqueries' ayant cédé tous les Tchibouks* [pipes] *[…] et tout ce qui était sur la table de la salle à manger*."[251] The particular history of the Camondos—especially their eastern, Turkish roots—was thus the opposite of the legacy that Moïse wished to maintain: that history had to be erased altogether so that he could ultimately project a new image in old surroundings.

Even still, that Moïse ultimately chose to enact his dream of a Versailles-inspired home in his family's house underscores, at least in part, the emotional intimacy—and intensity—of the project. Of course, the Camondo renovation of the Monceau mansion bears similarities to other home-restoration projects from the same period that also celebrated the neoclassicism of the *ancien régime*: one thinks, for instance, of the construction of the dandy and aesthete Boniface de Castellane's storied "Palais Rose" at no. 40, avenue Foch in Paris between 1896 and 1902 and also of Edmond de Fels's transformation of the Château de Voisins at Saint-Hilarion between 1903 and 1906, also with the architect René Sergent and the landscape artist Achille Duchêne, both of whom Moïse also employed. But these massive projects were executed on a far grander scale than No. 63, rue de Monceau: Castellane's Palais Rose was a reconstruction of the Grand Trianon complete with a scale model of Versailles' "*l'escalier des ambassadeurs*," and Fels's chateau was a recreation of the École Militaire.

Although he insisted on a complete transformation of his property, Moïse's vision was perhaps less ambitious than those of his peers drawn to the same style, his consumption less conspicuous: he did not seek to establish himself in a more fashionable neighborhood or boulevard, and, unlike Castellane, he did not, on the basis of his extensive correspondence, consider his home and its embrace of *ancien-régime* harmony as public argument against the perceived material excesses and decadence of the *fin de*

[251] Tedeschi to Moïse de Camondo, 21 July 1910, AMNC.

siècle. The canvas he chose was ultimately the intimate sphere of a single-family home, the very home in which he had been raised. The harmony of the style he chose was thus applied primarily to a decidedly personal enterprise, not a public one. "We know perfectly that we feel calmer and more confident when in the old home, in the house we were born in," observed Bachelard, "than we do in the houses on streets where we have lived only as transients."[252] This applies well to Moïse, who sought the sanctuary of home but also the ability to master a space. By controlling the destruction and immediate reconstruction of the built environment in which had been raised, the master of the house had therefore seized control not merely of his immediate material reality, but, in a sense, of his family's communal future. In that sense, Moïse's choice of the Louis XVI style—for the house, but also in terms of his collection—was in dialogue with a certain strand of cultural politics in the *fin de siècle*, but it was also a conscious choice that likely reflected significant dimensions of his inner life. In other words, if it was aspirational, it was also a testament to an ordered stability, or at least the desire to attain one.

This dual function becomes clearest in terms of Moïse's particular approach to collecting. Although, under the tutelage of Charles Éphrussi and the careful guidance of his dealers, Jacques Seligmann and Joseph Duveen, he had been collecting for nearly two decades, by 1910, Moïse had embraced with a consuming passion the art and style of the eighteenth century, particularly of its final decades, the transition period and, ultimately, the period of Louis XVI's reign (1774-93). Unfortunately, there is no surviving document in which the collector clearly explained the anatomy of his taste and his understanding of what exactly the lasting legacy of the eighteenth century had been. Those questions, however, are somewhat illuminated in the extensive correspondence Moïse left behind with his dealers and, later, his architect. During the years when he was furnishing the Monceau house into his image of perfection, his obsession with the provenance of certain *objets d'art* situates him somewhat in a larger milieu of wealthy and often reactionary bourgeois who had charged themselves with the preservation of the *patrimoine* in a time when, as they saw it, France's national heritage was in grave danger of despoilation or even destruction. As Tom Stammers has written in his study of the collectors Jérôme Pichon and Léopold Double, the tumult of 1870-71 had galvanized a generation of

[252] Bachelard, p. 43.

private collectors in Paris to preserve the city's material heritage. In the years that followed, Stammers demonstrates, these collectors eventually "participated in formulating a moralized, martyred language of remembrance," often assigning "quasi-magical meanings" to artifacts and propagating "a mystical strand of royalism, in which the Bourbons appeared as the flesh-and-blood manifestation of God's will for France."[253] This tendency certainly applied to Moïse's perception of many objects in his collection, with real or, in some cases, imagined connections to the court of Versailles. For him, royal provenance appears to have denoted the highest prestige imaginable.

In January 1913, for instance, Moïse bought, from the dealer S. Lion, a *table chiffonière* by Martin Carlin (1730-1785), the celebrated Parisian *ébéniste* whose trademark was the inclusion of Sèvres porcelain plaques on his chests and cabinets. Lion advertised it to Moïse as follows: "*La table que je vous ai vendue […] passe pour avoir été donnée par la marquise de Pompadour à l'ancêtre de Mme de Champeaux*."[254] In fact, Madame de Pompadour (1721-64), the mistress of Louis XV from 1745 until her death, could not have owned the *table chiffonière* in question, as she died before Carlin was ever admitted to the guild of cabinetmakers and indeed before the particular piece itself was completed. The significant fact, of course, is that this alleged association heightened the value of the piece in Moïse's assessment: he bought it anyway.

This is not at all to say that Moïse was easily fooled by dealers and decorators, and he often exhibited his extensive—and rather scholarly—understanding of the art of the period he had chosen to collect. As he responded in 1934 to a query from Maurice Darantière, the printer who had released James Joyce's *Ulysses* for Sylvia Beach, "*Monsieur, vous avez parfaitement identifié le dessin d'Oudry que vous possédez […] Vous savez probablement que le Château de Versailles possède les huit pièces reproduites en plaques de porcelaine de Sèvres, fabriquées sous le Roi Louis XVI, mais dont les têtes ont été changées par des portraits du Roi Louis XVI et de ses compagnons de chasse*."[255]

---

[253] Stammers, "Collectors, Catholics, and the Commune: Heritage and Counterrevolution, 1860-1890," *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Winter 2014), p. 68.
[254] S. Lion to Moïse de Camondo, 14 January 1913, AMNC.
[255] Moïse de Camondo to Maurice Daranitère, 19 July 1934, AMNC.

Likewise, he demanded the same level of historical engagement with provenance from his dealers. Regarding a series of paintings by the French painter Hubert Robert (1733-1808), known especially for his timeless depictions of ruins, a notary replied to Moïse in March 1927 with a detailed explanation of the paintings' authenticity and a history of their ownership. **"***Le testament de Mme Vve Hubert Robert née Loos, authentique, du 13 juillet 1821, est absolument muet en ce qui concerne les œuvres d'art qui vous intéressent*," he wrote. "*J'ai retrouvé dans la notoriété dressée après son décès le 6 septembre 1821 que l'inventaire a été fait après son décès par Me Delacour, notaire à Paris (dont le successeur est Me Salle…), le 18 août 1821. Vous pourrez vous adresser à Me Salle avec quelques chances de succès*."[256] Two days later, Moïse responded, ever the diligent investigator: "*Je vais donc m'adresser à votre confrère*."[257]

The real prize, however, was any object that had come into contact with Marie Antoinette, who appears to have occupied an especially coveted position in the eyes of collectors such as Moïse. Stammers cites Pichon, for instance, as having called her the "adorable princess" whose murder was "one of the most odious crimes to have soiled [the country's] history!"[258] It follows that Moïse's opinion was not very different, and he relished custodianship of this most coveted province of the *patrimoine*. Another Carlin table, completed in 1766 with his signature inlaid Sèvres, bore this provenance: "*il provenait de Ménage de Pressigny […],*" Jean Seligmann wrote to Moïse, *"auquel il aurait été donné par la reine Marie-Antoinette*." Perhaps even rarer, Seligmann located for Moïse two objects which immediately became among the most cherished in his entire collection, a pair of petrified wood vases that in all likelihood had come from Marie Antoinette's private apartments. In the description attached to the invoice, the dealer noted the following: "*ces vases dans la monture est attribuée à Gouthière […] passe pour avoir orné le boudoir de Marie-Antoinette à Trianon*."[259] This was only partially true: the bronzes were in fact the work of François Rémond, and they adorned not the

[256] Louis Bossy to Moïse de Camondo, 8 March 1927, AMNC.
[257] Moïse de Camondo to Louis Bossy, 10 March 1927, AMNC.
[258] Stammers, 69.
[259] Jean Seligmann to Moïse de Camondo, 30 March 1935, AMNC.

boudoir of Marie Antoinette but her bathroom.[260] In any case, it mattered little. Moïse de Camondo, with these purchases, had come to possess small but nevertheless significant material pieces of France's royal legacy, the life-blood, in a sense, of its nationhood. For Pierre Assouline, this was Moïse's attempt to brand himself an "*émigré du XVIIIème siècle,*" and, indeed, like other prominent members of the contemporary Parisian *haute bourgeoisie*, such as Théodore-Ernest Coqnacq and Maire-Louise Jay[261], Edward and Julia Tuck[262], and even his cousin, Isaac de Camondo, Moïse's choice of period reflected a degree of patriotism and class consciousness.[263]

III. Collecting: Public Service, Private Solace

As much as Moïse can be located among this milieu of haute-bourgeois collectors, the conspicuous consumers and the self-appointed saviors of France's national heritage, he was also fundamentally distinct. As we have seen, the scale of the Monceau transformation was smaller than many of the projects his contemporaries undertook, and, in a sense, his consumption was perhaps less conspicuous: whereas, for instance, the Cognacq-Jays and the Tucks donated their collections to public institutions before their deaths, Moïse did no such thing. His initial ambition with his collection, it seems, was private, not public, and only after the death of his son, Nissim, in the First World War—to whom Moïse had originally intended to leave the house—and the departure of his daughter, Béatrice, and her husband, Léon Reinach, in 1924 to a home of their own in Neuilly-sur-Seine, did he seriously consider the possibility of creating a museum on the rue de Monceau. The questions of self-presentation and the projection of a carefully

[260] See Christian Baulez, "Le grand cabinet intérieur de Marie-Antoinette. Décor, mobilier et collections" in *Les Laques du Japon. Collections de Marie-Antoinette*, exhibition catalogue (Paris, 2002), p. 39. See also Rondot, "Building a Collection," in *The Camondo Legacy*, footnote 110.

[261] The Cognacq-Jays, the founders of La Samaritaine department store, amassed a massive collection of eighteenth century French painting and decorative arts, some 1200 items in total, including paintings by François Boucher, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, and Jean-Antoine Watteau. It is housed today as the Musée Cognacq-Jay at 8, rue Elzévir in Paris.

[262] The Tucks, a wealthy Franco-American couple, collected almost exclusively Louis XV *objets d'art* and furniture, a collection they donated to the Musée du Petit Palais in 1921.

[263] Seymour Simches has written on the bourgeois taste for the ancien régime: "*Après 1840, le genre Watteau et Boucher eut encore plus de succès auprès des artistes et du public. La classe bourgeoise qui se développaient, avec son goût grandissant du luxe, son intense désir de raffinement aristocratique, raffolait des Fêtes Galantes qu'on trouvait partout*." Moïse de Camondo certainly fits in this demographic. See Simches, p. 2-3.

curated public identity, then, are undeniably relevant to the case of Moïse de Camondo, but they belong only to a later—indeed, the final—chapter of his life as a collector (these are addressed in turn in a subsequent chapter on the creation of his museum). If he was ultimately inscribed in the respective discourses of *patrimoine* and of haute-bourgeois class consciousness that Seymour Simches, Tom Stammers, and others have thoughtfully described and delineated—as his correspondence firmly attests that he was—for Moïse the prior purpose of collecting appears always to have been its *personal, private value*, and to a point that nearly eschewed any public component at all.



Figure 12. Mechanical Desk, with the stamp of Roger Vandercruse, c. 1760.

Consider, for instance, the numerous occasions when he rejected entreaties to include pieces from his collection in museum exhibitions or in articles for publication. These letters are perhaps the most recurring theme in his voluminous correspondence,

and his opinion on the subject remained almost entirely unchanged throughout the decades: the answer was always no. In February 1925, Moïse responded to a Madame Edgar Stern, then the President of the Conseil d'Administration de la Fédération Française des Artistes, who had requested his permission to include *Geneviève Le Couteulx* by Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun in an exhibition.[264] "*Ce tableau est le seul ornement de mon bureau, où j'habite constamment,*" he wrote, "*et je ne saurais m'en priver pour une aussi longue période et à cause de toutes les risques que comporte un voyage à l'étranger*."[265] His reply betrays not only a separation anxiety but also a certain intimacy with the painting itself, a personal relationship with a material object that shared with Moïse the privacy of a space he occupied alone and in which he attended to quotidian tasks. This relationship, it seems, superseded in his mind the Vigée-Lebrun's artistic or cultural value: what appears to have mattered was the stability the painting brought to life he lived in the room where it hung, as banal or as trivial that office life may have been. Similarly, he rejected an offer to send his Houdon bust to an exhibition at the centenary of the sculptor's death. "*C'est le seul ornement de la cheminée de mon salon*," he wrote, "*et, de plus, je ne saurais l'exposer aux risques que lui ferait courir des transports et son exposition en public*."[266] Were his sole motivation in collecting the *objets d'art* of the *ancien régime*'s final years the public image they afforded him as a defender of national heritage and grandeur, he would certainly have been less loathe to participate in such decidedly public opportunities for self-presentation. Sometimes, Moïse even lied to avoid the prospect of public participation, as is evident in his response in 1934 to the gallery owner André Weill, who had approached him about a forthcoming exhibition of Claude-Jean-Baptiste Hoin's landscape paintings. "*Cher Monsieur,*" the collector wrote, "*Je suis désolé de ne pouvoir vous être agréable en participant à l'Exposition consacrée à Claude Hoin, mais je ne possède aucune œuvre de ce charmant peintre….*"[267] In fact, Moïse had acquired two paintings by Hoin in 1932, as Weill probably knew.[268]

---

[264] By the time the collection became a museum, Vigée-Lebrun's painting hung in the large drawing room, where it remains today. See *The Camondo Legacy*, p. 126.
[265] Moïse de Camondo to Mme Edgar Stern, 25 February 1925, AMNC.
[266] Moïse de Camondo to M. Justin Godart, 28 March 1928, AMNC.
[267] Moïse de Camondo to André Weill, 12 October 1934, AMNC.
[268] The Camondo archives include a receipt from Cailleux on 26 June 1932, when Moïse bought the two paintings.



Figure 13. "Geneviève Le Couteulx," Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, Large Drawing Room, Musée Camondo

Moïse's disdain for the spotlight carried over even into the realm of print magazines, which would not have required any separation from his beloved objects. As he wrote to Sir Robert Abdy in 1933: "*Mon cher ami, Je me suis toujours refusé à une publication de tout ou partie des oeuvres d'art que je possède*."[269] The point of the pieces he owned, in other words, was not at all the publicity they might bring him. On this point, Moïse was even more explicit later in the same year in his response to Armand Dayot, Léon Gambetta's former Minister of Arts and the founder of the journal *L'Art et les artistes*: "*Cher Monsieur*," he wrote, "*Mlle votre fille m'a en effet parlé de votre intention de publier, dans votre revue, une série d'articles sur les grandes collections d'art. À cet effet, vous me demandez mon concours. Je regrette vivement de ne pouvoir déférer à votre désir car j'ai toujours refusé, à toutes les publications d'art françaises et anglaises de mentionner ma collection*."[270]

[269] Moïse de Camondo to Sir Robert Abdy, 21 April 1933, AMNC.
[270] Moïse de Camondo to M. Armand Dayot, 18 November 1933, AMNC.

This letter is particularly illustrative, in that Moïse not only disavows the public advertisement of certain pieces in his collection, but also his own personal inclusion among the other prominent collectors of his day. Despite the decidedly public—albeit posthumous—life his collection would have after 1935 in the form of a house museum, his response to Dayot ultimately underscores the discretion with which Moïse approached collecting, as well as the sense in which, for him, it was a something of a sanctuary, a private retreat predicated on the withdrawal from widespread attention and prominent association. Again, a mere six months before his death in November 1935, Moïse, in the only letter in which he acknowledged the worsening political situation in Europe, reiterated his refusal—this time, to none other than Herbert Eustace Winlock[271], director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York—to be separated from the objects that afforded him such pleasure, and one suspects solace. "*D'abord, vu mon grand âge, il me serait pénible de me séparer aussi longtemps d'un objet qui m'est cher*."[272] There is a striking prescience to this letter, one of the final pieces of correspondence in Moïse's extensive archive. It suggests, in a sense, that for the aging patriarch the objects in his collection bore a fixity[273] that had never applied to the intangible aspects of his life. By 1935, after all, he had lost his wife to another man, his son to the First World War, the prospect of a traditional Jewish family existence to the seductions of a secular modernity, and, finally, the cosmopolitan fluidity of the Camondo's continental Europe—"*si troublée*"—to a regime that had already embarked on its devastating project of an unprecedented ethnic nationalism. In a world that had been neither kind nor predictable, the material realm was thus a valued source of enduring stability.

---

[271] Herbert Winlock (1884-1950), an Egyptologist by training, was director of the Metropolitan Museum between 1932 and 1939.

[272] Moïse's comments on Europe were as follows: "*De plus, la situation politique, si troublée en Europe, ne me permet pas de prendre des engagements pour une date aussi lointaine.*" See Moïse de Camondo to Herbert Winlock, 4 May 1935, AMNC.

[273] This quality Moïse seems to have appreciated and, to some extent, celebrated through his painstaking care of the objects themselves. This becomes clear in the pieces of his correspondence concerned with repairs, which he frequently demanded. See for instance, his letter to M.P. Hamot, dated *28 December 1929: "J'ai bien reçu la chaise en tapisserie que vous m'avez renvoyée. Elle est parfaitement nettoyée et réparée et me donne toute satisfaction. Voulez-vous procéder au même travail pour les cinq autres chaises que je vous ai confiées*," AMNC. See also his letter of 2 April 1930 to the Director of the famed Gobelins tapestry manufacturer: "*Je vous remets […] la somme de 38,000 Fr montant de la réparation des chaises en tapisserie que je vous ai confiées. Cette réparation a été faite et c'est là une preuve de plus du travail impeccable de la manufacture*," AMNC.

Along these lines, a crucial dimension to Moïse's life as an aesthete is the sense of order that collecting afforded him—order not merely in terms of the particular period he chose to collect, which celebrated the revitalized Greek ideals of balance and harmony, but an order in the sense of strict temporal boundaries to observe in his pursuit of objects. In other words, for a man whose experiences by middle age had in fact been governed by few—if any—of the conventions that were to have arbitrated the lives of those within his rarefied *milieu*, collecting provided an obvious antidote to such lawlessness. There were observable rules and regulations. An object was either Louis XVI or it was not; it was either authentic or it was a copy.



Figure 14. The Foyer, Musée Nissim de Camondo, Paris. Les Arts Décoratifs.

Throughout his years of selecting and acquiring objects for the Monceau house, these concerns ultimately seemed to characterize the bulk of his exchanges with dealers and *antiquaires*. His collection, after all, had a clear and distinct identity, and, as the collector, Moïse's principal role was thus to respect that identity, a role he assumed with a remarkable discipline. "*Quant à moi, comme vous le savez,*" he wrote François Boucher of the Musée Carnavalet, "*je n'achète pas de dessins qui ne conviennent pas du tout à la décoration de ma maison; c'est dommage car ils sont charmants*."[274] To a Parisian dealer of figurines, his response was brief and simple: "*Je m'empresse de vous informer, en*

[274] Moïse de Camondo to François Boucher, 9 February 1931, AMNC.

réponse à votre lettre hier, que je ne suis pas acheteur de miniatures."[275] But it was temporality that Moïse most religiously respected. "*Je vous remercie de votre aimable proposition,"* he wrote to Leopold Davis of London in 1922*, "mais je n'achète que des meubles de l'époque Louis XVI*."[276] Similarly, to an offer from the dealer Henri Pettipas, he responded as follows: "*J'avais vu, sur le catalogue de la vente d'hier […] Il est très beau, mais je ne suis pas acheteur d'objets de l'époque Louis XV*."[277] The family and social world of the *fin de siècle* abided by no such discipline, but the material world that Moïse carefully constructed in the confines of his mansion—an alternative universe in its own right—indeed abided by an almost legislated sense of harmony. Of course, Moïse was the unquestioned arbiter of this universe, an absolute monarch who expressed his authority in the style of the absolute monarchs themselves.

IV. A Petit Trianon on the rue de Monceau



Figure 15. The frontal façade of the Camondo Mansion, February 2015.

[275] Moïse de Camondo to Mlle. Jumel, 30 March 1927, AMNC.
[276] Moïse de Camondo to Leopold Davis, 17 May 1922, AMNC.
[277] Moïse de Camondo to Henri Pettipas, 3 May 1929, AMNC.

Of course, the greatest expression of Moïse's aesthetic autocracy was his transformation of the Monceau house into the perfect reflection of the objects that he had so diligently pursued. In terms of styles then in vogue, the nineteenth century had presided over a series of historical revivals—perhaps most notably, the Gothic revival—that, by the *fin de siècle*, had culminated in the decorative excesses and affectations of the so-called "*Art Nouveau*," a global turn in aesthetics inspired both by the Symbolism and the Naturalism of the past that transformed and expanded on earlier decorative styles—the rococo of the early eighteenth-century, the *Japonisme* of the 1880s—with modern techniques and technologies. In a time of exponential growth in the respective financial sectors of European and American economies, the result was often a built environment in major capitals that employed *Art Nouveau* as a means of celebrating material wealth via decorative excess. Gustav Klimt, a member of the Vienna Secession, painted not just in hues of gold but with the metal itself, and the tonier arrondissements of Paris witnessed the erection of gates, facades, and Métropolitan entrances that were wrought iron fantasies, material translations of the decadence of the age. Architecture, to borrow from François Loyer, was often enacted "with a loquaciousness that turned it into an almost redundant costume," practicing "the flaunting of luxury remorselessly, even to the point of vulgarity."[278] In keeping with his reluctance to share his pieces with the public, it was this public excess that Moïse de Camondo wished to avoid in his reconstruction of his family home on the rue de Monceau. Most likely through his continuous association with the Duveens and the Seligmanns, he quickly hired René Sergent, who designed these dealers' respective mansions in the place Vendôme (1907) and in rue de Talleyrand (1910), as the architect to enact his vision of an eighteenth-century Petit Trianon of his own.

Despite his popularity among a wealthy clientele, in Paris and New York, Buenos Aires and London, René Sergent had not been trained in the grand tradition of French architectural style: he had not, for instance, attended the famed *École des Beaux Arts*, attending instead *École Spéciale d'Architecture*, an institution whose emphasis was practicality, not necessarily aesthetic grandeur. Consequently, although he was well versed in the masters of French design, he was not necessarily a visionary as much as a

[278] Loyer, p. 69.

translator of historical precedent into a contemporary context. René Bétourné, a former colleague, would describe him thus: "He [Sergent] studied the works of Mansard [sic], Delafosse, Daviler, Gabriel, Blondel, Brongniart, Ledoux and Chalgrin with intelligence and passion. He steeped himself in the beauty of the proportions of their buildings, in the coloring and scale of their profiles, in the elegance and charm of their decoration. Then, once he was sure he understood their grammar and orthography, he began creating."[279] This tendency, Loyer has argued, distinguished Sergent from many of his contemporaries, captivated with the prospect of Beaux-Arts pastiche: "His works are not stage sets but meditations on a world which he sought to bring back to life by remaining faithful to it. He wanted to bring about a veritable 'renaissance' of 18th-century art, not merely its evocation."[280] As his biographer, Michel Steve, has pointed out, Sergent's project naturally overlapped with that of Moïse de Camondo: "*La reconstitution d'un monde parfait*."[281] This took the form of a painstaking but intimate homage to Ange-Jacques Gabriel's Petit Trianon, a template that for the architect celebrated the perfection of a balanced form and for the proprietor the sanctuary of a controlled, ordered environment.

In technical terms, Sergent's recreation of his Versailles model was rather loyal to Gabriel's antecedent. Of Nissim de Camondo's original house at No. 63, rue de Monceau he kept only the wine cellar, reconstructing on the plot a house in an elongated "L" shape that would take advantage of the sunlight and the vista view of the Parc Monceau. Like the Petit Trianon, the new hôtel Camondo was constructed with an elevation of three main levels: a *rez-de-chaussée*, a cavernous first floor, and a second floor that housed the family's private apartments (an attic existed under the eaves of the roof). The decorative details on the new building's exterior—the frames of the windows, the Corinthian columns, and the balustrades—are all almost precisely identical to those of the Petit Trianon. Because of the spatial constraints of the particular plot of land the house occupies, there are, of course, certain differences: a quarter circle instead of a straight front entrance, for instance, to fit the curve of the inner courtyard, a central rotunda for

[279] René Bétourné, *René Sergent architecte. 1865-1927* (Paris, 1931), p.6, quoted in Loyer, p. 67-8.
[280] Loyer, p. 69.
[281] See Michel Steve, "Un monument pastiche, le Musée Nissim de Camondo à Paris," p. 64.

the Corinthian columns at the perpendicular intersection of the two wings of the house, again due to space constraints.

In any case, Sergent employed precisely the same signature technique as Gabriel in selecting a difference in ground level on opposite sides of the house, one that faced the courtyard and the other that faced the garden and the park beyond. The effect is for a visitor to the house to enter from the courtyard at a lower level, and, without noticing, discover that the first floor rooms up one flight of stairs are actually the "ground floor" on the opposite side of the house, opening directly into the garden designed by Achille Dûchene. The effect—in addition to the fact that the house's two facades are actually different, as they are in Gabriel's rendition—ultimately establishes a theme of dual worlds. The first of these worlds, naturally, is of a kind of public sphere—the house's exquisite rooms for dining and entertaining and, finally, living, all accessed in the normal spiral progression after entrance. But the courtyard-level *rez-de-chaussée* on the opposite side hides an entire sphere of life—the servants and the banalities of quotidian maintenance—from visitors and from the occupants of the house alike. This spatial design served well Moïse's desire for control: his house, in a sense, was a stage, complete with characters consigned to certain roles and the spaces to which they corresponded.

That desire for control manifested itself throughout Moïse's extensive exchanges with Sergent, whom he charged with ensuring that certain rooms to be constructed would indeed accommodate his often exceedingly specific ideas regarding his collection. As early as January 1910, for instance, three years before the Camondos would move into the house, Tedeschi wrote to Moïse to ensure the latter that his specific vision for the "Salle des Huets" would be respected in the construction of the new house. The house, in a sense, was an expression of the collection, not vice versa:

> *Monsieur le comte, J'ai pu, aujourd'hui, trouver un moment pour faire un saut jusque chez M. Sergent. Il est arrivé, semble-t-il, à faire de ses plans quelque chose de parfait et il attend votre retour pour vous les soumettre. Il a modifié les dimensions indiquées par vous ; arrangé les demi-lunes des deux côtés de la façade sur la cour et a trouvé une disposition plus heureuse du petit salon des Huet qui au lieu d'avoir des pans hexagonaux à la forme ovale, bien nette, ce qui donne à l'ensemble l'apparence d'une disposition plus architecturale et plus esthétique.*[282]

[282] Tedeschi to Moïse de Camondo, 16 September 1910, AMNC. This letter is also quoted in Nora Seni and Sophie Le Tarnec, *Les Camondo*, p. 221.

Objects ultimately governed Moïse's vision for the space he had commissioned. As he wrote to Sergent in July 1911:

> *Cher Monsieur Sergent, Faisant suite à notre conversation de ce matin, je vous prie de vouloir bien aller chez M. Fabre, antiquaire rue de Rennes, voir deux lanternes. Vous seriez bien aimable d'en faire prendre les mesures et de faire deux petites maquettes desdites lanternes pour les accrocher dans notre maquette de l'escalier.*[283]

Considering his correspondence to Tedeschi as a whole, what emerges most significantly is Moïse's attention to detail and, in a sense, his insatiable perfectionism. Both evince not merely a desire but—on some deep, inner level—a need to arbitrate every aspect of the house, a world entirely of Moïse's own. In January 1913, he wrote the following of a staircase: "*Les 2 galeries étant faites en bois, il serait absolument illogique de faire l'escalier particulier, qui réunit ces deux galeries, en matériaux différents*."[284] In October of the same year, his obsession with detail reached an even more extreme level: "*Cher Monsieur Sargent,*" Moïse wrote, "*Après le rendez-vous de tout à l'heure j'ai longuement causé avec Bourdier au sujet de la dorure de la rampe de l'escalier. Bourdier prétend que l'on n'arrivera jamais à un résultat convenable avec l'or qui a été employé ; il faudrait, d'après lui, de l'OR CITRON et un patinage par un homme absolument du métier*."[285] The majuscules were his own.



Figure 16. The *Salon des Huets*, Musée Nissim de Camondo, Paris

[283] Letter from Moïse de Camondo to René Sergent, 19 July 1911, AMNC.
[284] Letter from Moïse de Camondo to René Sergent, 25 January 1913, AMNC.
[285] Letter from Moïse de Camondo to René Sergent, 28 October 1913, AMNC.

CHAPTER IV.
THÉODORE REINACH, THE VILLA KÉRYLOS, AND THE QUEST FOR GREEK BEAUTY



Figure 17. Reinach Family Memorial, Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Dedicated 14 May 1949.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Reinach family—without which it would have been nearly impossible, a mere generation before, to conceive of French public life—vanished along with the majority of its written records. Nazi forces destroyed the immense family archive and library that Théodore Reinach had maintained in the Villa Kérylos, his Greek fantasy in Beaulieu-sur-Mer that he donated to the Institut de France, of which he had been a member, upon his death in 1928. Technically

speaking, only two members of the family died in the war. Jean-Pierre Reinach[286] (1915-1942), Joseph Reinach's grandson, was killed in combat as a second lieutenant in France Libre; Léon Reinach (1893-1944), Théodore's younger son—along with his estranged wife, Béatrice de Camondo, and their two children, Fanny and Bertrand—was murdered in Auschwitz. Julien Reinach (1892-1962), Théodore's older son, survived Drancy and Bergen-Belsen but was debilitated the rest of his life. In any case, physically injured or not, the members of the family who survived into the French postwar emerged into an altered social landscape in which the family unit in general became significantly less relevant in the life of the individual. Either as a result of ethnic cleansing or forced migration, the Second World War had uprooted millions of Europeans, disconnecting them from the homes and institutions that had defined their prewar lives. The continuity of generations and the fixity of place became less binding on people whose relations had been deported, killed, or murdered.[287] If the individual could survive, the family often could not. This was a trend that grew during the process of European reconstruction, and especially in France, where a stronger, centralized state began providing social services that had mostly been family matters before the war. The Reinachs were precisely such a family: some of its members continued living well into the 1960s, but, after the Second World War, its family culture became a relic, a thing of the past.

This was perhaps clearest when six Reinach men (and no Reinach women) were memorialized in May 1949 with a plaque that adorned the family house in Saint-Germain-en-Laye and that still stands today. It reads as follows:

ICI
vécurent au service de la France, de l'art et de la pensée:
Joseph REINACH
Historien et homme politique
1856-1921

Adolphe REINACH
Membre de l'Ecole Française d'Athènes

[286] In keeping with the dissertation's interest in the social ties that bound these individuals together in an *haute bourgeois* Jewish milieu, Jean-Pierre Reinach had married Naomi de Rothschild in 1941. His father, Adolphe Reinach, had been married to Marguerite Dreyfus, the niece of Alfred Drefyus, whom Joseph Reinach had emphatically defended throughout the Affair. See Michael Burns, *Dreyfus: A Family Affair, 1789-1945* (New York, 1991).
[287] This is a phenomenon Tony Judt has described in some detail in the opening pages of *Postwar*. See Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York, 2005), esp. "The Legacy of War," pp. 13-41.

1887-1914
Mort pour la France

Jean-Pierre Reinach
1915-1942
Mort pour la France

Salomon REINACH
Membre de l'Institut
1858-1932

Théodore REINACH
Membre de l'Institut
1860-1928

Léon REINACH
1893-1944
Mort pour la France en déportation

The plaque's text reveals the attempt to subsume the Reinachs into perhaps the expected postwar narrative of patriotic resistance. There is some truth in it: Jean-Pierre Reinach had indeed served in the French Resistance, and his grandfather and great-uncles had each served the French state in a variety of important capacities. But this comfortable image cracks in the case of Léon Reinach, the one Holocaust victim in the family. He did not die for France; he died because he was Jewish, as all the others probably would have had they lived long enough to experience the Occupation (and, indeed, as Julien Reinach, unlisted, nearly did). Either predictably or inevitably, the plaque—still the only public memorial to a family that certainly ranks among the most politically and intellectually significant in history of modern France—effaces their particular lived experiences as Jews and individuals with rich and complicated inner lives. In immortalizing their titles and achievements—"*Membre de l'Institut*," "*Membre de l'École Française d'Athènes*"—it merely commemorates what the Reinachs did. It says nothing of who they were, either as people or as a family.

Both questions today remain elusive. Joseph Reinach, Salomon Reinach, and Théodore Reinach each left behind a staggering bibliography in his own right, hundreds of citations that include books, articles, translations, newspaper editorials, and even musical compositions. These, however, evince only a diverse array of scholarly achievements and the contours of three distinct but equally formidable intelligences. If we know their opinions, we do not know their authors. The Reinachs have come to

represent an ideal of French academic excellence and the life of the mind at its most scrutinizing and judicious. As Charles de Chambrun (1875-1952), the diplomat and future member of the *Académie Française*,[288] would say at the dedication of the Reinach plaque in May 1949:

> *En journalistes, en polémistes, en hommes politiques, en hommes scientifiques, en hommes tout court, les frères Reinach ont su transmettre aux générations qui les suivaient, le message fervent du travail et de l'honneur. Alors que les extrêmes dangereux laissent les portes ouvertes aux excès, bien souvent funestes, ces trois hommes ont voulu, par un équilibre harmonieux, demeurer forts sur des positions et des solutions de sagesse, représentant par là la tendance française, faite à la fois de bon sens et du don de soi.*[289]

But the Reinachs were more than metaphors and more than living embodiments of "*la tendance française*" as Chambrun understood it. If the documents attesting to this crucial fact were all destroyed, the Villa Kérylos remains. Théodore's painstaking recreation of an ancient Greek villa on the *Pointe des Fourmis* in Beaulieu-sur-Mer, Kérylos was constructed between 1902 and 1908 by the Neoclassically trained Emmanuel Pontremoli (1865-1956), a fellow member of the Académie and the grandson of a rabbi from Nice. Above all, the house is a material self-portrait of the man who commissioned it, a translation into tile and stone of an intricate, nuanced individual sensibility that eludes facile categorization.

Théodore Reinach was the consummate Hellenist, a lifelong student of ancient Greece whose civilization he believed his own contemporary France to have inherited. In a sense, his entire intellectual project was a means of preserving and advancing the legacy of antiquity. Kérylos, in keeping with Théodore's scholarly passion, is an undeniable homage to the harmony and, most of all, the perfection of the Greek ideal of balance. With modern conveniences such as electricity, plumbing, and central heating, it is also a testament to the (adaptable) durability of those ancient ideals in a decidedly modern context. But there is another, more personal element at work in the design. Of the three Reinach brothers, Théodore was also the most invested in Jewish antiquity and Jewish history. If French civilization, like Kérylos, was the modern reconstruction of an ancient democratic ideal, the origins of that civilization's Republican universalism could

[288] De Chambrun, from an old French aristocratic and political family, was the French Ambassador to Rome between 1933 and 1935.
[289] Charles de Chambrun, quoted in *À la mémoire des Reinachs*, p. 11.

ultimately be derived from the ethics of the Hebrew prophets. Kérylos was built between 1902 and 1908, in the midst of the Dreyfus Affair's denouement, a scandal that often made the Reinach brothers, Drefyus's leading defenders, the targets of anti-Semitic invective. If the house is not at all a literal "Jewish" structure, it cannot be separated from the context in which it was constructed: Kérylos was conceived as a refuge, from both personal pain and the inhospitable public tenor of the *fin-de-siècle*, increasingly hostile to Jews, French and foreign alike. It was perhaps Théodore's greatest attempt to derive a sense of meaning in the midst of private and public chaos. The house is essentially an artistry of intellect, one collector's tireless quest for beauty in the traditional Greek sense of the term. Kérylos, through its symmetry and its geometry, was an effort to access nothing less than the Platonic Ideal, a higher, purer level of human existence. This Théodore would essentially admit in the inscription he chose to accompany the great Greek poets, historians and orators whose names adorned the walls of his library. "*C'est ici qu'en compagnie des orateurs, des savants et des poètes des grecs*," it reads, "*je me ménage une retraite paisible dans l'immortelle beauté*."

I. The Brothers "Je Sais Tout"

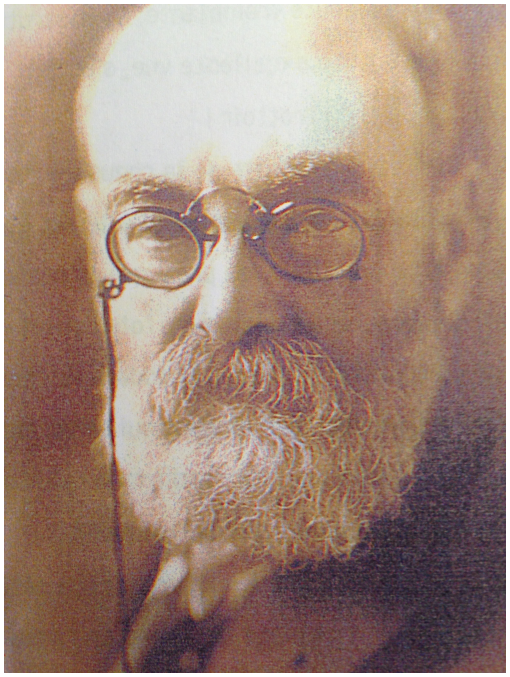

Figure 18. Théodore Reinach, Archives of the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme, Paris.

The Reinach brothers—Joseph, Salomon, and Théodore—were a fraternity at the very heart of social, political, and intellectual life in the Third Republic. The breadth of their interests and the depth of their collective knowledge was widely known, embodied in the nickname they earned in certain segments of the Parisian press: they were "*les frères Je Sais Tout*,"[290] a term not without its share of anti-Semitic implication but that nevertheless evoked the diversity of their endeavors. Joseph (1856-1921), the eldest, was a chief of staff and confidante to Léon Gambetta, a future deputy from the Basses-Alpes *département* and, perhaps most importantly, the lead defender of Alfred Dreyfus throughout the Affair.[291] Salomon (1858-1932), the middle brother, was a member of the École Français d'Athènes, an editor of the *Revue archéologique*, and the director of the Musée d'Archéologie Nationale in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, a position he held until his death.[292] Théodore (1860-1928), the youngest, may have been the most diversely academic of the three, not as politically oriented as Joseph—although he, too, would eventually become a deputy, from the Haute Savoie—and less animated by a singular terrain as Salomon, whose deep studies mostly focused on religious mysticism and its

[290] Initially, it was Julien Benda (1867-1956), the well-known author of *La Trahison des Clercs* (1927), who coined this term, which was then employed by others in a variety of less playful contexts. Benda, also born into an assimilated Parisian Jewish family, had known the Reinach brothers at school. This he recounts in his memoir, *La Jeunesse d'un Clerc* (1936). See Benda, *La Jeunesse d'un Clerc* (Paris: Gallimard, 1936, reissued 1968).

[291] It is nearly impossible to overstate the importance of Joseph Reinach in the Dreyfus Affair. In the initial trial, he had attempted to demand a public hearing; several years later, he joined forces with Auguste Scheurer-Kestner (1833-1899), the Alsatian politician who overcame his initial reluctance to support Dreyfus, and demanded that hearing's revision. Joseph then denounced the Hubert-Joseph Henry forgery—the so-called "*faux Henry*"—and, later, the character of Charles Esterhazy (1847-1923), who had actually perpetrated the espionage for which Dreyfus had been wrongly convicted. Joseph's exhaustive, eight-volume study of the Affair, *L'Affaire Dreyfus* (1898-99), remains one of the key texts on the subject.

[292] Among other things, Salomon Reinach, a contemporary of Émile Durkehim's, was interested, as many in the *fin-de-siècle* were, in the sociology of religion. Between 1905 and 1923, for instance, he published his multi-volume study *Cultes, mythes et religions*; in 1909, he published *Orpheus: Histoire générale des religions*. In each, he had much to say about Judaism and Jewishness. In direct response to his friend Ernest Renan (1823-1892), for instance, he decried what he called "*la prétendue race juive*," which he considered an imagined community full of heterogeneous elements that derived from different ethnicities that had converted to Judaism throughout the centuries. Essentially, Salomon espoused a version of the so-called "Khazar theory" of modern Jewish history, the divisive hypothesis that considers Ashkenazi Jews the descendants of the Khazars, a Turkic people from Southern Russia and who allegedly converted to Rabbinic Judaism in the eighth and ninth centuries. "*Vous* voyez," he wrote, "*combien est légitime la conclusion ainsi formulée par M. Topinard: 'Les Juifs ne sont qu'une fédération religieuse. Ils ne sont ni une nation ni une race.'"* See Salomon Reinach, *Cultes, Mythes et Religions*, v. III (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1908), pp. 457-71. For the best general survey of Salomon's intellectual career in the *fin-de-siècle*, especially vis-à-vis the topic of religious sociology, see Aron Rodrigue, "Totems, Taboos, and Jews: Salomon Reinach and the Politics of Scholarship in Fin-de-Siècle France," *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, and Society* (new series), 10 (Winter 2004), pp. 1-19

archeological traces. As a young man, Théodore more than outshined the already stellar records of his brothers at the Lycée Condorcet, garnering no fewer than nineteen separate recognitions in the national merit exam, the Concours Général. The youngest Reinach was a polygot, a true Renaissance man whose academic pursuits included mathematics, numismatics, musical composition, and translations of Shakespeare, to list but a few. Above all, Théodore was a Hellenist, a passionate student of ancient Greece whose civilization he believed his own contemporary France to have inherited. In a sense, his entire intellectual project, multifaceted as it may have been, was a means of preserving and advancing that legacy. When he died in 1928, the President of the Académie Française, of which he had been a member, eulogized him: "*Ce qui frappait d'abord en lui, c'était l'universalité de son érudition*."[293] Universal was his intellect indeed.

In the end, the Reinachs lived in the Parisian *fin-de-siècle*, a time and place in which their numerous successes were not enough to protect them from either ideological or anti-Semitic attacks. Despite the powerful images their public personas projected, the brothers felt uncertainty and even vulnerability in private. This was especially the case during the unfolding of the Dreyfus Affair, in which both Joseph and Salomon were heavily involved and that consequently brought the entire family an enormous amount of unwanted public attention. Their anxieties were not imaginary: in the eyes of certain anti-Semites, their name became a synonym for Jewish power and political conspiracy. This association metastasized into physical caricature, with the Reinach name standing in for perceived Jewish bodily deformities. "*Regardez ce petit Juif de Hambourg*," Édouard Drumont, France's so-called anti-Semitic pope, would write of Joseph in the early years of the Dreyfus Affair. "*Si son visage simiesque et son corps difforme porte tous les stigmates, toutes les tares de la race, son âme haineuse et gonflée de venin en résume mieux encore toute la malfaisance, tout le genie, funeste et pervers*."[294] The brothers' only sanctuary was their family circle, which, as Ruth Harris has written, "provided a zone in which they could tease each other and reveal their anger, pain and fear."[295] If Théodore,

---

[293] *Discours de M. Gustave Glotz Président de l'Académie à l'occasion de la mort de M. Théodore Reinach, Membre de l'Académie*. 2 November 1928, Archives of the *Institut de France*, Paris.
[294] Drumont published this article in *La Croix* in December 1899. Quoted in Pierre Birnbaum, *Les Fous de la République* (Paris, 1992), p. 22.
[295] Ruth Harris, *The Man on Devil's Island*, p. 193.

like his brothers, was a public man, he always remained within the comfortable confines of this decidedly private world and the sensibility it fostered.

Acute intellect was the life-blood of that sensibility. The sons of Hermann Reinach, a banker originally from Frankfurt-am-Main who would eventually leave his sons a fortune of approximately 14 million francs, the Reinach brothers were endowed with the security to pursue with neither distraction nor impediment the highest echelons of academic success. It was an animating passion they continued well beyond their schoolboy days, a metric they always seem to have used in assessing the value of their own careers, different though they may have been. As it happened, Théodore was not the first Reinach to have been elected to the *Institut de France*: in 1896, Salomon was named a member of the *Académie des Inscriptions et des Belles Lettres*. Although the Reinachs left behind innumerable books and publications, few traces of their private lives survive. But in the scattered correspondence that does remain, Salomon's election to this most prestigious of cultural institutions was clearly perceived as a victory for the entire Reinach clan, one in which even its youngest members were made to take pride. "*Gratulations*," wrote Joseph Reinach's eldest son Adolphe Reinach—known as "Ado" in the family. "*Nous te félicitons vivement de ton grand succès !!!*," wrote Lili, his sister.[296] *"Cher Oncle le Loup!"* wrote Hélène, Théodore's daughter, on behalf of herself and her sister, Gabrielle, too young to write. *"Je te félicite beaucoup d'être membre de l'Académie. Je te félicite aussi pour Gabie, car, à cause de ses yeux elle ne peut d'écrire*."[297] Even the children's English governess expressed her excitement: "Heartiest congratulations," she wrote, "G. Kinkelein."[298]

II. An Insular Family Culture: Masculine, Academic, and Jewish

But if there was a familial pride in the individual intellectual achievements of the brothers "Je Sais Tout," there was also a certain culture of competition. This often manifested itself as playful one-upmanship. We know, for instance, that Salomon Reinach was in the audience of the *Institut* the very day Théodore's nomination for

[296] Adolphe Reinach to Salomon Reinach and Juliane "Lili" Reinach to Salomon Reinach, dated December 1896, Fonds Salomon Reinach, Boîte 136, no. 197, Bibliothèque Méjanes, Aix-en-Provence.
[297] Hélène Reinach-Abrami to Salomon Reinach, dated December 1896. Fonds Salomon Reinach, Boîte 136, no. 198., Bibliothèque Méjanes, Aix-en-Provence.
[298] Gertrude Kinkelein to Salomon Reinach, Boîte 136, no. 197, Fonds Salomon Reinach, Méjanes.

membership was discussed, 5 February 1909. One could scarcely imagine higher praise than that lavished on the youngest Reinach. In the words of one member, a Monsieur Babelon: "*Je puis donc affirmer qu'il est peu de savants dont l'érudition soit aussi encyclopédique et qui puisse se présenter à vos suffrages précédé d'une réputation scientifique aussi solidement assise et aussi universellement reconnue*."[299] In the records of the séances that followed after Théodore's official initiation later that month, one can see Salomon indirectly defending his own universally recognized intellect from his brother's encroaching advances. On 12 March, for instance, Théodore gave a presentation to the *Académie* on a recently discovered inscription on the island of Amorgos, which, as he argued, was an important contribution to the contemporary understanding of Greek medicine. Salomon chose the same day to give a presentation of his own, except on the magisterial study that was perhaps his masterpiece: *Orpheus, Histoire générale des religions* (1909).[300] The same would happen the following week, when Théodore reported to the Académie on the International Archaeological Congress in Cairo and Salomon, upon his brother's conclusion, made quite a display of a donation he made to the institution's library—again, in the same week.[301]

This culture of competition was also marked by an undeniable maleness. In a time when anti-Semites were elaborating an association between Jews and physical weakness—and, during the Dreyfus Affair, the effeteness of the Reinachs themselves—intellectual vigor was an important means for the "*Je Sais Tout*" brothers to express their masculinity, at least among themselves. As evinced in the few pieces of surviving correspondence, they compared themselves with a humorous, often crude, but perhaps predictable norm of masculine sexual conquest. As Joseph wrote to Salomon, who would remain childless and who was considered by certain of his colleagues, and perhaps by his own brothers, as "*un peu feminin*"[302]:

---

[299] Séance du Vendredi 5 Février 1909, Procès Verbaux. Archives of the Institut de France, Paris.
[300] Séance du Vendredi 12 mars 1909, Ibid.
[301] Séance du Vendredi 19 mars 1909, Ibid. According to the meeting's minutes, the books Salomon donated were rare editions of Raymond Weill's *Des monuments et l'histoire des IIe et IIIe dynasties egyptiennes* and *La presqu'île du Sinaï* as well as M.J. Loth's *Les vases à quatre anses* and *Fouilles de Massés vengeuen en Baden*.
[302] It was the fellow art historian and archaeologist Edmond Pottier who had made this comment originally, but it was repeated elsewhere. See Charles Picard, "Salomon Reinach, Théodore Reinach, Adolphe J. Reinach," *À la mémoire des Reinach* (Paris, 1950), p. 39.

> It is quite obvious to me that you have gone mad, and that if you don't lose double quick the ridiculous virginity that is sending you round the bend, you will end up committing some pretty bad sexual offense, which will lead you straight to the magistrate's court… You are more dirty minded than the Catholic priests who screw chickens and goats… […] Let me tell you, in all friendliness: find yourself a hooker, or you will end up in court. […]. *Vale*. Lose your virginity. It's better than losing your honor.[303]

But within the closed confines of this family, there was a sense in which power and authority were functions of academic achievement. For the Reinachs, masculine prowess was often intellectual prowess. Consider, for instance, a letter sent to Salomon from Léon Abrami, the lawyer and amateur scholar whom Théodore's daughter, Hélène, had married some years before. "*Mon cher Oncle*," Abrami wrote:

> *Vous avez eu l'amabilité de m'encourager à écrire, tout seul, ces Index que l'éditeur Conard me demandait pour l'Herodias de G. Flaubert. J'ai suivi bravement votre conseil, et tout ignorant que je puisse être, j'ai puisé dans la lecture de Josèphe, dans celle de la Jewish Encylopédia, de l'Histoire de Graetz, etc…les renseignements qui m'ont permis de mener à bien ce petit travail.*[304]

Abrami's letter expresses gratitude—it was Salomon, apparently, who had encouraged him to write—but it also seeks recognition. Through a vast array of literary and historical allusions across time and place—Herodotus, Flaubert, Graetz—the younger man desires the older man's approval in order to take his rightful place in the family. An expression of sufficient intellectual vigor, it seems, was more than a feather in the cap: it was a rite of passage, and a decidedly male one at that.

This gendered exclusivity becomes more pronounced in the self-deprecating and self-effacing tendencies of the Reinach women, made to admire their fathers and uncles but never themselves to engage. As Hélène Reinach-Abrami would write in an undated letter to Salomon, around the time his *Cultes, Mythes, et Religions* was reissued for a subsequent printing: "*Merci mille fois, cher oncle Salomon : ton envoi nous fait à tous deux le plus grand plaisir. Dès hier soir Léon s'est plongé dans 'Cultes, mythes…' & il y a trouvé des…légèretés dont avons été stupéfiés!*"[305] The book was for Léon to read and

---

[303] Joseph Reinach to Salomon Reinach, undated, Boîte 134, no. 75, Fonds Salomon Reinach, Bibliothèque Méjanes. I have seen the original document, but Joseph's penmanship in this letter is entirely illegible. I have therefore relied on Ruth Harris's full translation in *The Man on Devil's Island*, p. 190.
[304] Léon Abrami to Salomon Reinach, 26 March 1910, Boîte 1, no. 1, Fonds Salomon Reinach, Bibliothèque Méjanes.
[305] Hélène Reinach-Abramai to Salomon Reinach, undated, Fonds Salomon Reinach, Boîte 1, no. 15, Bibliothèque Méjanes.

ponder; Hélène's role was to be stupefied by its insights. She wrote her uncle something similar in January 1929: "*je déplore souvent la disparité intellectuelle qui, bien plus que l'âge, nous sépare. Hélas ! le mérite & les talents ne sont ni héréditaires ni contagieux, & l'instruction très superficielle que j'ai reçue n'a pu remplacer les dons que m'a refusés la nature!*"[306] The sense of distance Hélène expresses between herself and her uncle—which, as she notes, was more than a simple function of age—was an intellectual disparity ultimately enacted on gendered lines. In the end, it is with a considerable degree of resignation that Hélène concludes the following observation that concludes that same message: "*ce n'est pas le devoir familial qui m'incite*."[307] Like her uncle, Hélène never reproduced; she and her husband lived essentially the same type of life Salomon lived with his wife, Rose Margouleff. And yet she appears to have felt herself judged for replicating precisely the same lived experience: "*Je sais que tu méprises la banalité bourgeoise de mon idéal*," she would later write her uncle, as a young bride.[308] For the male Reinachs, however, that bourgeois ideal was never banal; it was essential, almost endowed with a sacrificial nobility.

More precisely, it was a specifically Jewish haute-bourgeois ideal for which the Reinach men sacrificed. If in public life the Reinachs occupied a world devoted to the institutions of the secular state and its universal Republicanism, their private world was a deliberately segregated one, the epitome of the very communal particularity that French Republicanism had sought to eradicate altogether. As is revealed in the privately published memoirs of Hélène Reinach-Abrami, the family patriarch, Hermann Reinach (1814-1899), was the opposite of dogmatically religious, but he nevertheless insisted on the centrality of Jewishness within the family's identity.[309] At Hermann's behest, each of his sons received an elementary religious education, became influential members of the Grande Synagogue de la Victoire after its completion in 1875, and all three, without exception, practised not only endogamy but an endogamy within the exclusive sphere of

[306] Hélène Reinach-Abrami to Salomon Reinach, 13 January 1929, Fonds Salomon Reinach, Boîte 1, no. 5. Bibliothèque Méjanes.
[307] Ibid.
[308] Hélène Reinach-Abrami to Salomon Reinach, 2 May 1932, Fonds Salomon Reinach, Boîte 1, no. 12, Bibliothèque Méjanes.
[309] See Hélène Reinach-Abrami, *Le Bien-Aimée: Souvenirs de Famille et D'Enfance* (Paris: 1934-35), "Au Bois," p. 4-5. Held in the Archives of the Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme, Paris (MAHJ).

Paris's Ashkenazic—and, where possible, Alsatian-Ashkenazic—socio-economic elite. Hermann had even endowed a "*dot Reinach*," administered through the *Consistoire* and given to a young French-Jewish woman who married an especially promising *ouvrier français israélite*, all in the name of inspiring a Jewish "*régéneration*" at all levels of French society.[310]

His sons were subjected to the same social experimentation, and it was perhaps in marriage they most experienced the notion of sacrifice. In the early 1890s, Joseph, who had fallen in love with an Englishwoman whose exact identity remains unknown, wrote to Salomon of his frustrations with "*le gouvernement*," his ironic name for his parents, whose final edict prohibited him from marrying outside the community. "*Mon cher ami,*" he wrote his brother with his signature irony, "*Le gouvernement a du t'écrire que le rubicon no. 2 avait été franchi et que mon mariage avec Henriette est décidé*."[311] Not only was this Henriette part of the same Jewish community; in fact, she was already a part of the Reinach family, the daughter of Jacques de Reinach, Joseph's uncle, who had been implicated in the infamous Panama Scandal and had subsequently committed suicide in 1892. In this way, the Reinachs were similar to the Rothschilds: in the eyes of the older generation, marrying across family branches was a means of bolstering a social position that was still precarious even with great wealth. The brothers did not marry Reinach women, but they married other elite Ashkenazic Jews. Salomon married Rose Margouleff, a Russian Jew. Théodore first married Evelynn Kann, whose mother had been an Éphrussi, and then, after Evelynn's death, he married her cousin, Fanny Kann.

[310] See Corinne Casset, *Joseph Reinach avant l'affaire Dreyfus. Un exemple de l'assimilation politique des Juifs de France au début de la IIIe République*, thesis, École des Chartes, 1992, quoted in Birnbaum, p. 17.
[311] Joseph Reinach to Salomon Reinach, undated. Boîte 134, no. 102, Bibliothèque Méjanes, Aix-en-Provence.



Figure 19. The Reinach Children, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Archives of the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme, Paris. From L to R: Gaby, Adolphe, Hélène, and Gertrude Kinkelein

On an interior, emotional level, no documents survive that shed light on Théodore's experience of losing his wife. What is certain is that the Reinach family observed little difference between the respective households it contained, and the children of Joseph and Théodore—Adolphe, Julie, Hélene, Gabrielle, and, later, Julien and Léon—were raised together by the same governness in Saint-Germain-en-Laye. In a sense, it was an extended clan that lived and grew together and that did not necessarily distinguish its members and their roles in the same ways that became commonplace in the increasingly nuclear French bourgeois family in the *fin-de-siècle*.[312] Pain, it followed, was felt communally and in equal magnitudes even in the households not directly implicated

[312] See *Confronting Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle France: Bodies, Minds, and Gender*, ed. Christopher E. Forth and Elinor Accampo (London, 2010), esp. Steven C. Hause, "Social Control in Late Nineteenth-Century France: Protestant Campaigns for Strict Public Morality," pp. 135-150.

in the various tragedies that befell the family over the years. In the First World War, for instance—in which a good number of Reinach men, including Théodore, served, Adolphe "Ado" Reinach, Joseph's son, was killed, a traumatic event for the entire family. In the wake of Ado's death, Hélène wrote the following letter to her uncle, which expressed a considerable emotional intimacy and a mutual investment in endurance against circumstance. Perhaps its most relevant insight into the Reinach family culture is its moving declaration that the childless—and regrettably childless—Salomon Reinach in fact had many children, those of his brothers:

> *Ces quelques mois de vie commune m'ont laissé découvrir ton coeur trop caché, & ton optimisme éclairé a été la source où j'ai puisé le réconfort nécessaire à ma constante angoisse. Je ne te remercierai jamais assez de m'avoir préservée de l'abattement, du désespoir, au temps le plus cruel de ma vie. Le grand service que tu me rends aujourd'hui m'offre l'occasion de répéter, en m'inspirant du livre qui charma ta jeunesse : 'Salomon Reinach n'avait pas d'enfants, ce qui était un malheur pour eux ; Salomon Reinach avais des nièces, & c'était délicieux pour elles…' …je le pense bien souvent, & je serais heureuse que tu en fusses persuadé.*[313]

In any case, one can only infer that the same communal solidarity within the privacy and the intimacy of the family shielded Théodore after the death of his first wife. From Hélène's account in *La Bien-Aimée*, the memoirs she wrote for her grandchildren—but never published—in 1934 and 1935, Théodore appears to have outwardly confronted the situation with a stoicism that bordered on emotional absence: "*Dis bonjour Maman*," he told his daughters, when they began to notice him spending more time with their aunt. "*Cousine Fanny est ta Maman à present*."[314] That was the only explanation he ever offered his children, and his exact motives for marrying his wife's relation remained elusive. Was he seeking a natural mother figure for his two young daughters, with whom they were already familiar? Did he feel it imperative to remarry from within the same stratum of the Parisian Jewish financial elite? Was it both? As Hélène recalled, she and her sister did not take to the change as quickly as their father would. She initially viewed her new stepmother with considerable suspicion, calling her "Maman Fanny" until she gave birth to her brother some years later. Playing on the children's story of Snow White

[313] Hélène Reinach-Abrami to Salomon Reinach, 25 October 1915, Boîte 1, no. 2, Bibliothèque Méjanes, Aix-en-Provence.
[314] Hélène Reinach-Abrami, *La Bien-Aimée*, p. 21. MAHJ.

and the poisoned apple, she recalled wondering the following: "*Est-ce qu'elle voudra me faire manger une pomme empoisonnée*?"[315]

In advance of what he would call his "*retraite paisible dans l'immortelle beauté*" at Kérylos, Théodore, despite his outward strength, seems to have endured the darkness of personal tragedy through the control of material objects. After Evelynn's death, he completely transformed the family apartment, displacing his children for months as he obsessively and painstakingly rid their private living quarters of any surviving traces of his wife whatsoever. Material things, in other words, were the mode of expression through which he allowed himself to express an emotional reaction. Hélène would later recall returning after months of living with her uncle Joseph to a home that was entirely unrecognizable:

> *L'ancienne bibliothèque de poirier noirci était devenue blanche et bleue ; on y voyait un grand lit à baldaquin de soie ; la chambre de ma mère, dont je me rappelais si bien la tenture mauve et le mobilier de bois de rose, était maintenant la bibliothèque, et toute remplie de meubles rouges. En son milieu s'élevait une agglomération bizarre, composée de deux canapés d'andrinopole 'genre oriental', de deux tables-tréteaux en bois blanc drapées de velours rouge, et d'un haut guéridon central, sur le lequel se dressait, acéphale et désemparée, parmi d'étiques plantes vertes, la Victoire de Samothrace. […] Je détestai cet assemblage….* [316]

III. Théodore Reinach and Franco-Jewish Cosmopolitanism

Despite the famous words of Jean-Paul Sartre, one cannot consider the Reinachs as Jews created by anti-Semites.[317] Despite the anti-universalist—and, at least in that sense, anti-Republican—nature of the Jewish communal life they practised and espoused, these prominent Republicans saw in the particularity of Jewishness and its embrace the very essence of the universality that their "emancipation" had demanded they accept. This was especially true for Théodore, the Reinach brother who was undeniably the most

---

[315] Ibid., p. 20. MAHJ.
[316] Ibid., p. 23. MAHJ.
[317] In 1944, shortly after the liberation of Paris, Sartre, inspired by the question of Jews who returned to France after deportation, wrote an essay about the meaning of anti-Semitism. In it, he wrote the following oft-cited lines: "…*si le juif n'existait pas, l'antisémite l'inventerait… Ainsi n'est-il pas exagéré de dire que ce sont les chrétiens qui ont créé le juif en provoquant un arrêt brusque de son assimilation en lui pourvoyant une fonction* […] *C'est l'antisémite qui fait le juif* […] *C'est la société, non le décret de Dieu qui a fait de lui un Juif, c'est elle qui a fait naître le problème juif* […] *c'est nous qui le contraignons à se choisir juif malgré lui*." See Sartre, *Réflexions sur la question juive* (1944) (Paris, 1980), pp. 74-75.

invested in the theoretical dimension of Jewish life and its relations to French Republicanism and European modernity in general.

Universalism, at least in its French Revolutionary variety, had recognized all men as equal citizens. To accomplish that noble aim, however, it had negated the constitutive elements of their own individual identities that had grounded their self-understandings and distinguished them from others. There was thus a certain character to the universalist credo, which denied difference of any kind, even of the elective variety, and ultimately confiscated from individuals the liberty to articulate the contours of their own identities. In that sense, the Reinachs were something of a challenge to this conception of universality as mutually exclusive of particularity of any kind: they were unwilling to sacrifice those effaced differences—Jewishness most of all—at the same time as they were unwilling to forfeit the advantages of emancipation that French universalism had afforded them. This attempt to fuse local and global affiliations into a durable whole led them to articulate a Jewish cosmopolitanism in the sense that the Israeli historian Natan Sznaider has imagined it, an aspirationally universalist sensibility that "neither orders differences hierarchically nor dissolves them, but accepts them as such—indeed, invests them with positive value."[318] If universalism eradicated differences in the name of equality, this type of cosmopolitanism considered individuals as different *and* equal, albeit simultaneously. For the Reinachs, the particular narrative of the Jews in modern—and especially modern French—history was a parable that served to elucidate the value of that inherently fruitful tension.

As Pierre Birnbaum has pointed out, if Joseph Reinach embodied the promise of Franco-Judaism after 1789, it was his youngest brother, Théodore, who was the leading theorist of that sensibility, the acolyte of dual allegiance.[319] As the third and final Reinach brother who corresponded to the "Tout" in the nickname assigned to the family, what is most immediately apparent in a survey of Théodore's writings was that he seemed to

[318] Natan Sznaider, *Jewish Memory and the Cosmopolitan Order* (Cambridge, 2011), p.6. Snzaider's analysis centers on the case of Hannah Arendt, herself an uprooted "cosmopolitan" by his definition at the same time as she was a thinker eternally engaged with reconciling Jewish particularity and universality, a theme he sees in the roots of all her major works.

[319] See Pierre Birnbaum, "Introduction," *Histoire politique des Juifs de France. Entre universalisme et particularisme*, ed. Birnbaum (Paris: Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1990), p. 15.

believe that association. Indeed, a certain arrogance emerges in the pages of more than a few of the 328 articles and books he wrote over the course of his long intellectual career, including, notably, the preface of his *Mithridate Eupator, roi de Pont* (1890): "*dans le premier cas,*" he wrote, "*j'ai préféré laissé la parole aux documents ; dans le second, j'ai trouvé superflu de faire l'avantageux et de triomphe bruyamment des erreurs, grandes ou petites, commises par mes devanciers*."[320] Perhaps it was this self-assurance that enabled him—at the age of twenty-four—not merely to explore but to answer, with remarkable economy and next to no irony, the ways in which the particular can in fact reconcile with the universal. That, after all, is the thesis of Théodore Reinach's *Histoire des israélites depuis la ruine de leur indépendence nationale jusqu'au nos jours* (1884): allowing the Jewish people to maintain its "*caractère cosmopolite*" could serve as a lesson for France and, by extension, all humanity.

Théodore's book, of course, appeared at a moment of considerable anxiety among the more élite factions of Paris's Jewish aristocracy who lived what Michael Marrus, writing in the 1970s, famously called the "politics of assimilation."[321] For all of its bravado, *Histoire des israélites* is a poetic argument for the value of the Jewish presence in France and in Europe at large, largely in response to the mass influx of Eastern-European Jewish refugees into France in the early 1880s, fleeing Tsarist pogroms. There was also the Tisza-Eszlár Affair of 1882, in which the disappearance of a fourteen-year-old peasant girl Hungary elicited, yet again, accusations of Jewish ritual murder across Europe. The arrival of the observant and Yiddish-speaking Eastern-European refugees had coincided with, and to some extent exacerbated, a French anti-Semitism that emphasized the foreignness and racial difference of the Jew, and it had also inflamed the dormant insecurities of the assimilated *israélite* establishment, who often viewed their Eastern co-religionists as jeopardizing their carefully cultivated social position.

Théodore Reinach, as an indisputable product if not arbiter of that establishment, made clear his distaste for Eastern-European Jews in order to exalt what he called "*une certaine affinité secrète entre l'esprit juif et l'esprit français – affinité qui s'était*

[320] Quoted in Sznaider, p. 66.
[321] See Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation: A Study of the French Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (Oxford, 1971).

manifestée dès le Moyen-Âge—hâta l'assimilation morale des deux races."[322] In other words, there was a Jewish ethic and there was a French ethic, and, at least in Reinach's conception, each sought the same teleological end: the spread of what might be called a moral modernity throughout the Western world. It was in this way that he was able to interpret the Hebrew Prophets as the intellectual antecedents of *la France des Lumières* and its architects: the latter had inspired a people to lives of contemplation, thought, and reason, and the former had created a space in which those principles—at least in theory—were to reign supreme.[323] This was not so much a literal symbiosis he described as much as it was an essential allegiance or analogy between Jewishness and Frenchness after 1789. In a sense, Jewishness, for Theodore, was the Frenchness of antiquity, a *mission civilisatrice* that had emanated from the ruins of the Second Temple to the foreign lands of the Diaspora, carrying with it the precepts and the promise of spiritual and intellectual liberation.

In 1928, toward the end of his life, Théodore would frame that continuum in this way:

> *Aux heures les plus sombres de son histoire, Israël a gardé les yeux obstinément fixés sur un avenir de relèvement, de félicité et de lumière universelle. Concevoir un idéal est bien, l'espérer est mieux, le réaliser ou chercher à le réaliser, voilà qui est mieux encore. C'est à faire entrer dans la pratique cet idéal de paix de justice, proclamé pour la première fois par les Prophètes d'Israël, que nous devons convier toutes les forces religieuses, dans la seule et grande pensée de mener à bonne fin la fraternité entre tous les hommes.*[324]

Along those lines, "*le juif émancipé*" is the heralded figure in *Histoire des israélites*, the living personification of this French-Jewish analogy. The emancipated Jew, Théodore writes, "*réussit à concilier l'attachement à son antique tradition religieuse avec les devoirs que lui imposent le progrès de la civilisation et sa qualité de citoyen*

---

[322] Théodore Reinach, *Histoire des israélites* (1901 edition), p. 342.

[323] In a sense, Théodore was building on a trend in European political thought that had existed since at least the early-modern period, in which Christian scholars across the continent began to view the Hebrew Bible and newly translated rabbinic materials as God-given guides for the practical functioning of a pure republic. On this, see Eric Nelson's stimulating study, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Harvard, 2010).

[324] See de François de Callatay, "Théodore Reinach, Entre Histoire Ancienne et Engagements Contemporains," *Les Frères Reinach*, ed. Sophie Basch, Michel Espagne, and Jean Leclant (Paris, 2008), p. 69.

dans les divers pays qui l'ont affranchi."[325] Inherited tradition exerts its pull, but so do "*les devoirs*" of modern civilization, and Théodore's interpretation of Jewish history locates the widespread acceptance of those mores across Western Europe as a function of the Diasporic necessity to assimilate:

> *L'histoire des Juifs dispersés mérite encore et surtout d'être étudiée à cause de ses rapports intimes et trop peu connus avec l'histoire générale de la civilisation européenne. Je ne parle pas seulement du rôle économique considérable que les Juifs ont joué dans la société du moyen âge […] je fais aussi allusion à la part qu'ils ont pris au développement intellectuel et moral des peuples modernes.*[326]

The notion that the ways in which European Jews—"*trop peu connus*"—spurred the intellectual and moral development of the entire continent underscores Théodore's assumption that, in the abstract, the achievements of modernity were Jewish achievements. Although this clearly serves as a certain defence of Jewish tradition at a time when French public opinion had begun to view it in an increasingly unpopular light, it also relies on the striking assumption that "*la civilisation européenne*" begins within the confines of a singular national and ethnic enclosure. Théodore, somewhat predictably, is almost defensive on the question of the inherent exclusivity behind this apparent endorsement of a cosmopolitan, European ethic as a kind of historical end: "*les hommes qui travaillent à éclairer, à secourir, à relever une population si nombreuse, si malheureuse et si bien douée*," he writes, "*ne travaillent pas uniquement pour le bien d'Israël, mais pour le bien de la civilisation générale*."[327]

It is important to note that "*le bien d'Israël*" comes before "*le bien de la civilisation générale*" in that phrase, and not merely for rhetorical impact: the former—of no greater value—is the portal through which the latter can hope to be accessed. In other words, the gifts of the Jews to French culture, European civilization and humanity as a whole were possible only because of the Jewish people's prior maintenance and embrace of their own particularity as a people apart. Here we see Théodore—later to serve as a Deputy from the Savoie from 1906 to 1914 and therefore as a custodian of the French Republic—advocate a quiet but nevertheless clear departure from the very ideology to

[325] Théodore Reinach, *Histoire des israélites* (1901 edition), vii.
[326] Ibid.
[327] Ibid., p. 377.

which that state was devoted. What emerges in *Histoire des israélites*, after all, is less a picture of how Jews fit into the narrative of French universalism and more an elaboration of a Jewish cosmopolitanism, an ideology of its own that localized French universalism within the confines of a specific community rather than subsuming a community into the effacing abstraction of universality. In Théodore's Jewish cosmopolitanism, the particular was prior to the universal, but the universal was still the attainable end, the sphere that he hoped most to improve. There was, in short, a rootedness that defined this cosmopolitanism, which afforded the individual the ability to maintain communal ties at the same time as it encouraged him to think of it on a universal, even global, scale.

The Jewish community, Théodore insisted, furnished an "*identité de croyance*" for its members, a "*communauté vraie ou présumée d'origine, l'antiquité des traditions, [et] le souvenir de maux glorieusement soufferts en commun*."[328] It was precisely those communal ties that taught the individuals within that community what exactly it was that universal human ties could mean. Jewish solidarity, often criticized in France and indeed the crux of post-Revolutionary anti-Semitism, was therefore a variety of cosmopolitanism—an exclusive cosmopolitanism, perhaps, but cosmopolitanism nonetheless, ultimately geared toward the preservation of humanity as a whole. As Théodore concluded his *Histoire des israélites*: "*Israël ne cessera d'être une famille que lorsque l'humanité toute entière sera devenue une grande famille à son tour*."[329]

Yet despite the remarkable passion with which Théodore devoted much of his working life to the theory—if not the practice—of Judaism, he seems to have felt that the beauty and the richness he saw in the Hebrew tradition was lacking in one significant way. For Théodore Reinach, there was no such thing as "Jewish art." This he made perfectly clear in his writings on numismatics, one of the more obsessive terrains of nineteenth-century scholarship. It was a field in which he was active in a variety of ways, but perhaps his most enduring contribution to the study of coins was his treatise *Les Monnaies juives* (1888). In this brief work, he articulated his concerns about the absence of a Jewish materiality that would parallel the richness of the humanitarian cosmopolitan tradition he worked so tirelessly to advance:

[328] Ibid., p. 376.
[329] Ibid., p. 378.

Quant aux médailles romaines, il faut y voir, avant tout, une incomparable galerie de portraits historiques. On ne devra chercher dans la numismatique juive ni chefs-d'œuvre, ni portraits. Les graveurs en médailles juifs étaient des artistes fort ordinaires, et la ressource principale de leur art, la reproduction de figure humaine ou animale, leur était enlevée par la stricte observation du précepte du Décalogue : « Tu ne feras pas d'image taillée, ni aucune ressemblance des choses qui sont sur la terre, dans les cieux, ni sous les eaux. »[330] *En revanche, les médailles juives sont, par la sévérité même de leurs types, l'image fidèle du peuple profondément religieux et médiocrement esthétique qui les a créées.*[331]

Perhaps because of the injunctions of Heinrich Graetz[332] and others, who had insisted that pictorial representations diminished the wisdom of the Torah—a biblical injunction Théodore cited—Jews had become, in his estimation, a people "*profondément réligieux et médiocrement esthétique*." Kérylos was never designed to emulate the styles of Jewish antiquity, but it can be read as Reinach's response to this perceived deficiency in the realm of Jewish aesthetics. In using the house to chase an ideal of Greek perfection, Théodore was also demonstrating that Jews could create a coherent, inspiring artistic vision. And Kérylos was a totalizing vision indeed. As René Cagnat, the Secretary of the *Institut de France*, would note upon Théodore's death, the Villa did not so much recreate antiquity as much as relive it in every material way imaginable: "*tous les détails ont été empruntés à des documents archéologiques habilement choisis, mosaïques, bas-reliefs, peintures, vases, lampes*."[333] In much the same way as Théodore's intellectual project itself, Kérylos was a monument to Greek style but to a Hebrew ethic: it reflected the interests of the man as well as the tradition and the sensibility in which he remained forever inscribed.

---

[330] *Exodus*, XX, 4.
[331] Théodore Reinach, *Les Monaies juives* (Paris:, 1888), p. 8. Archives of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.
[332] Heinrich Graetz (1871-1891) wrote one of the first modern historical analyses of the history of the Jewish people. In his study, he was rather insistent that art was a little more than a sophisticated form of paganism, an irrational and superstitious form of expression that did not at all befit the people of the book.
[333] René Cagnat, "*Notice sur la Vie et les Travaux de M. Théodore Reinach*," Archives of the Institut de France, Paris.

IV. A Vision of "*l'Esprit grec*"

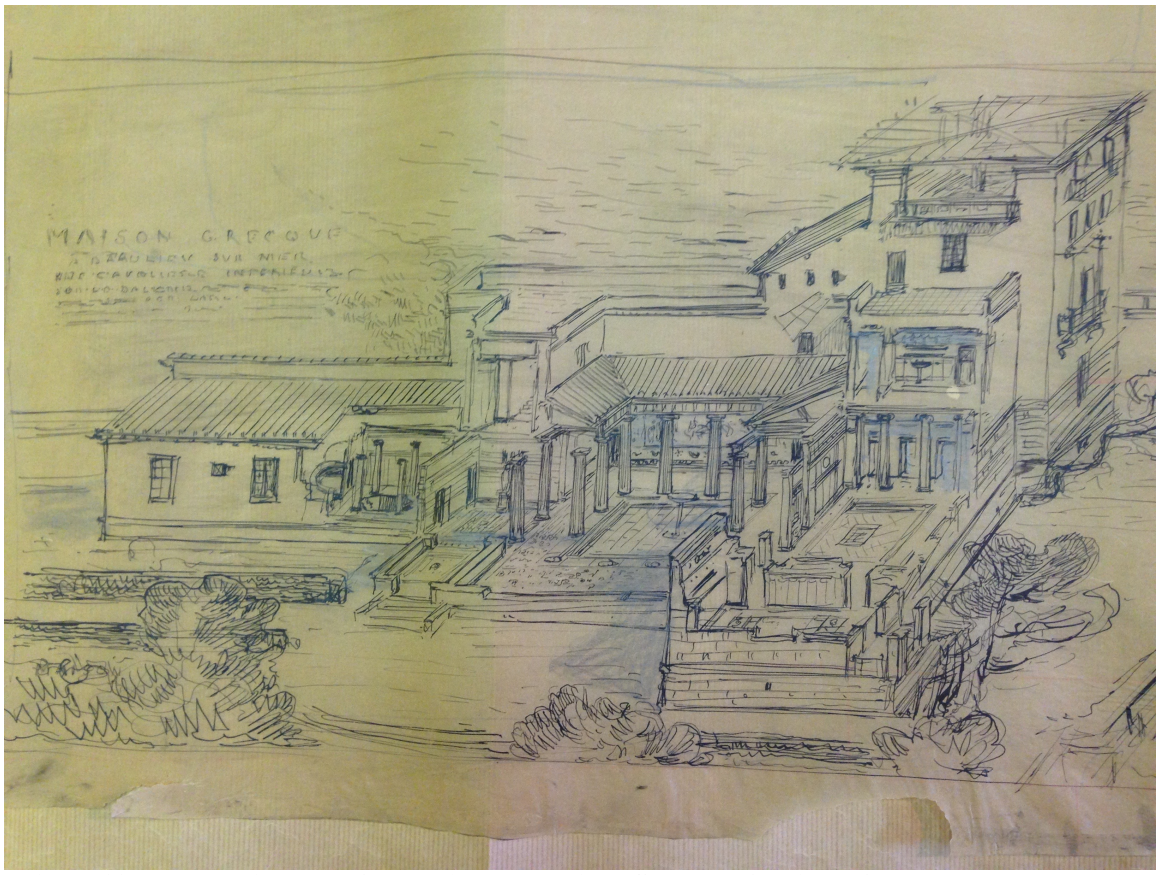

Figure 20. Pontremoli's sketch for Kérylos, the "Maison Grecque." Archives of *Institut de France*, Paris.

In comparison with others in his milieu, Théodore Reinach was not a great collector. He did not pursue objects with the passionate intensity of Moïse de Camondo, his future in-law, or the compulsive obsession of Béatrice Éphrussi, his distant cousin who built her own villa, the Île de France, directly across the bay from Kérylos.[334] Although he did indeed acquire a few very fine objects from classical antiquity—Tanagra statuettes, shards of painted Greek ceramics, small bronze strigils and fibulas—provenance and bric-à-bracomania were not the animating themes of the house Théodore commissioned. In a fitting parallel to his intellectual project, Kérylos was never intended as a museum, and Théodore never allowed reproductions of his pieces or his house to be published in his lifetime. On the contrary, the house was a metaphor, a means of

[334] Béatrice Éphrussi, née Rothschild, was a cousin by marriage of the collector and critic Charles Éphrussi (1849-1905), who was also a cousin-by-marriage of Théodore Reinach.

reconstructing a selective vision of classical antiquity compatible with the nature of modern life. As Théodore's grandson, Fabrice Reinach, would write decades later, the house responded to "*un double imperative: celui de reconstitution d'un maison grecque, d'une part, être une maison vivante et de notre temps, d'autre part*."[335]

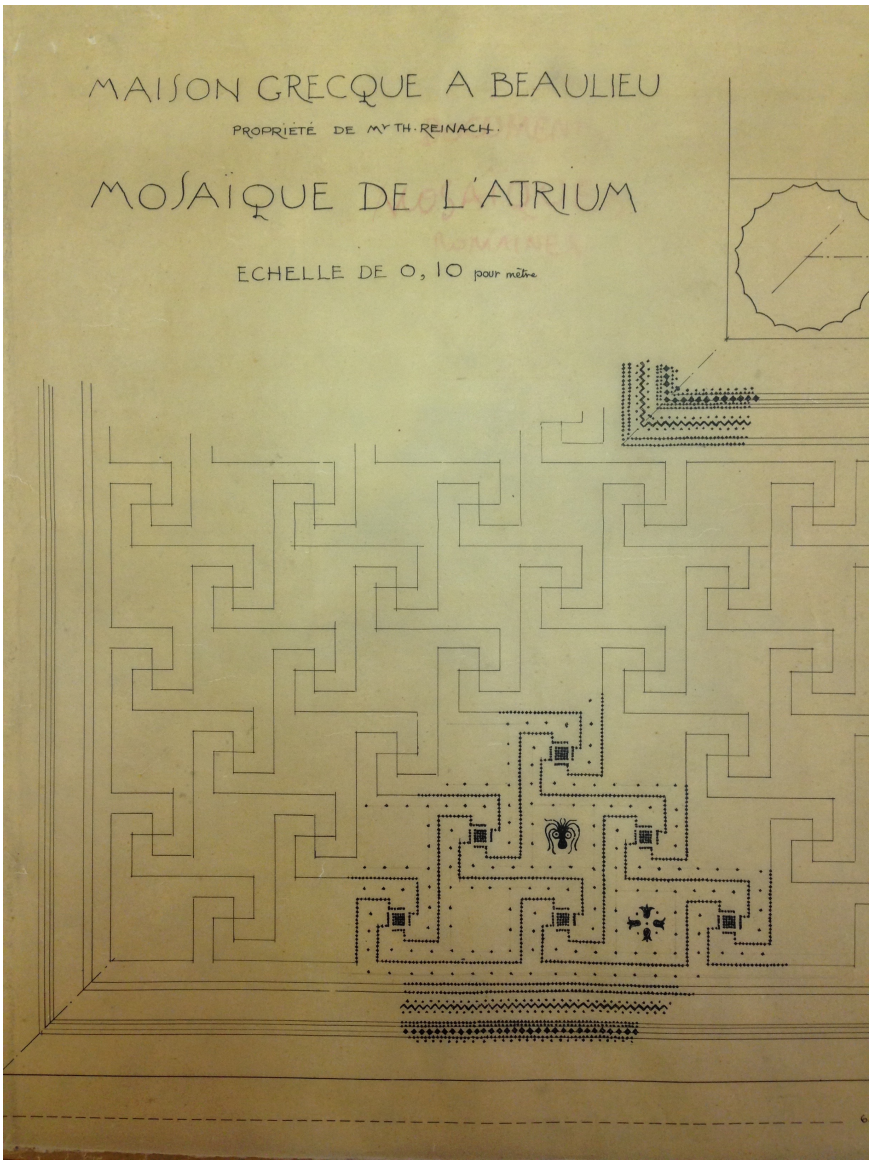

Figure 21. Pontremoli's plans for the Villa's mosaics. Archives of the *Institut de France*, Paris.

[335] Fabrice Reinach, "Le Rêve de Théodore Reianch. La vie à Kérylos de sa construction au Musée." In *Architecture du rêve. Actes du 3ème colloque de la Villa Kérylos à Beaulieu-sur-Mer les 29&30 octobre 1992* (Paris, 1994), p. 29.

Unfortunately, virtually none of Théodore's writings on Kérylos survived the Nazi raid on the house in 1943, but those of his architect, Emmanuel Pontremoli, remain. The two worked closely together, and Pontremoli's observations suggest at least a portion of Théodore's motivations in commissioning Kérylos at the time he did, years that constituted a harsh, discordant moment in both a personal and a political sense. Théodore's first wife had died, and his second, frequently ill, soon would follow suit. On a broader level, the Drefyus Affair, in all its dramatic intensity, had thrust the Reinachs themselves into the center of a hostile anti-Semitic discourse that seemed to respect no boundaries. Kérylos, in that sense, was more than a mere retreat: through its homage to ancient Greece, it was an attempt to transcend temporal troubles and to access a higher, purer plane of human existence. At its core, Kérylos was therefore an argument: it was Reinach's firm belief that the Greek notion of beauty—the elusive Platonic ideal—could indeed be revived in the France of the *fin-de-siècle*. Pontremoli articulated this argument most succinctly: "*Si la vie dans la Grèce Antique, ses moeurs, ses coutumes coïncidaient si peu avec les nôtres, l'Esprit grec n'est contradictoire, ni avec la vie, ni avec les habitudes de notre temps*."[336]

Théodore's devotion to "*l'Esprit grec*" in all its peace and tranquility is well represented in the name he chose for his villa: Kérylos. *Kyrillos*, after all, is the Greek name for the halcyon, the mythical bird—typically identified as the kingfisher—that nested on the sea, laying its eggs seven days before and seven days after the winter solstice.[337] This fortnight represented the "halcyon days" of calm and tranquil seas. In the *Metamorphosis*, Ovid identified the origins of the *kyrillos* as the reincarnation of two lovers, Alcyone, the daughter of Aeolus, and Ceyx, the King of Thessaly, who had drowned after a shipwreck.[338] In death, their enduring love for each other translated into

[336] Quoted in Ibid., p. 30.
[337] See "The Legend of Kérylos," in *The Villa Kérylos* (Paris, 2003), p. 15.
[338] See Ovid, *Metamorphosis*, Book XI: 710-748. These are the lines in which we find recounted the story of the halcyon, the inspiration for Théodore's villa. In brief, Ceyx and Alcyone were married and had angered Mt. Olympus by referring to themselves as Zeus and Hera, respectively. The wrath of the gods caused them to die at sea, but, later, their compassion transformed them into halcyon birds. Ovid tells the story as follows: "People doubted whether Ceyx felt this, or merely seemed to raise his face by a movement of the waves, but he did feel it: and at last through the gods' pity, both were changed to birds, the halcyons. Though they suffered the same fate, their love remained as well: and their bonds were not weakened, by their feathered form. They mate and rear their young, and Alcyone broods on her nest, for seven calm days in the wintertime, floating on the water's surface. Then the waves are stilled: Aeolus imprisons the winds

peaceful waters, waters that Théodore Reinach had all the reason to desire. For Pontremoli, Kérylos—"*un nom qui pouvait se lire aussi facilement en grec qu'en français*"—evinced his patron's devotion to a singular aesthetic ideal, to the idea of the house as a total work of art. "…'*Kérylos,*' he wrote of Reinach's choice, "*montrant qu'il avait voulu que cette demeure ne fût pas un vague pastiche, mais la réalisation, en notre temps, d'une pensée valable pour tous les temps*."[339] In a sense, every material object brought into the house joined in this mission. With the exception of the bronze copies of objects he had seen in the Museo Archaeologico in Naples, Théodore himself designed every item of furniture in the house to reflect the simplicity of the ancient Greek templates: tripod, chair, bed, and chest. His designs, the drawings for which survive in the Archives of the *Institut de France*, were then produced by the Parisian cabinetmaker Louis-François Bettenfeld, who rendered them in exotic woods such as wild olive, Ceylonese lemon tree, and Australian plum.[340] Kérylos was less an opulent mansion than a stage set for a bygone era.

Emmanuel Ponteremoli, a fellow member of the *Institut de France*, shared with Théodore Reinach more than institutional affiliations. Perhaps as a function of his own partially Jewish background, Pontremoli was also animated by an interest in the intersection between the Hebrew, ancient Greek, and French Republican traditions, an interest that becomes clear in a full consideration of the architectural commissions he accepted. Naturally, he designed a fair number of Parisian townhouses for substantial fees well-to-do clients were willing to pay, but he remained throughout his career a devoted archaeologist. Pontremoli had observed Théophile Homolle's famous excavation at Delphi, and in 1900 he conducted his own excavation of Pergamon, through which he met Théodore Reinach for the first time. But in addition to a series of somewhat predictable neoclassical French government buildings otherwise indistinguishable from mainstream Beaux Arts construction—such as the *Institut de Paléontologie Humaine* in

---

and forbids their roaming, and controls his grandsons' waves." See *Metamorphosis*, trans. David Raeburn (London, 2004), pp. 420-62.

[339] Emmanuel Pontremoli, "Avant Propos," *Kérylos* (Paris, 1934), p. 12. Archives of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

[340] *The Villa Kérylos*, p. 16. See also Françoise Reynier, "Archéologie, architecture et ébénisterie: les meubles de la Villa Kérylos à Beaulieu-sur-Mer," *In Situ: Revue des Patrimoines*, No. 6, 2005: http://insitu.revues.org/9376#quotation

Paris[341]—Pontremoli was an also an architect of synagogues, and, even more so, the private synagogues for members of the precisely the same social elite to which Reinach belonged. The most prominent of these was the synagogue near the Rothschild mansion in Boulogne-Billancourt outside of Paris, commissioned by the philanthropist and early Zionist Edmond de Rothschild in 1911. Considering Pontremoli's oeuvre in its entirety, then, three distinct strands become clear—the same three strands that, as it happened, united the intellectual endeavors of Théodore Reinach, his first patron. Kérylos was Pontremoli's first major commission, and if the house was a meditation on the exchange between antiquity and modernity, between past present, it was also, for both architect and patron, a meditation on how these traditions related to the question of an "inner life."

Inner life, after all, was central to Pontremoli's design for the villa. As he reflected in the 1930s, the experience of entering the house was meant to furnish an individual with a "withdrawal into the self," a means for modern man, so insulated by the trappings of industrial, technologically advanced societies, to encounter all that was fundamentally subjective in life. "*Ce repliement sur soi-même dès le seuil franchi, cette vie intérieure, assez primitive, malgré l'harmonie des proportions et des formes, se prolongea d'âge en âge*," he wrote, *"puis, conquête moderne, l'homme avec la sécurité découvrit la nature, le paysage, l'air et la lumière*."[342] Landscape, air, and, most of all, light, it follows, were the natural means of elevation through which an individual could rise above the trivialities—and, in a certain sense—the tyrannies of modern life. What might be called Pontremoli's thematic thesis was then translated into a literal design for the rest of the villa, and the spatial arrangement of the structure he created at Kérylos enshrined this broader attempt at accessing a pure Greek "beauty" amid the chaos of the twentieth century's first decade. The house, in other words, was not so much a simple reconstruction of an antique form; it was an employment of that form for an abstract—and almost spiritual—purpose. Form fostered function, but function dictated form. At Kérylos, *l'Ésprit grec* became an aesthetic whose aim was the discovery of what Walt

[341] Built between 1911 and 1914, Pontremoli's *Institut de Paléontologie* is located at 21, boulevard Saint-Marcel in Paris's thirteenth arrondissement. See Jean-Marie Pérouse de Montclos, *Le guide du Patrimoine: Paris* (Paris, 2004), p. 466.
[342] Ibid., p. 6. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Whitman, a poet of whom Théodore Reinach was fond, had already called the "multitudes" of the multifaceted, contradictory individual soul.[343]

Early in the construction, Pontremoli realized that the traditional model of the Greek house—symmetrically expanding from the central peristyle—would not be feasible in the tight enclosure of the *Pointe des Fourmis*. The center of Kérylos is still the peristyle, but only two sides—the east and the south—of this square-shaped central courtyard are flanked with buildings. To conserve space, the rest of the living space was built in a tower between these two sides, which afforded views of the sea as well as sufficient room for a garden outside. Typically, Greek houses did not have more than a single story, and Pontremoli's improvisation many said resembled the Viennese Secession or even the emerging Art Deco in its respect for the cubic form.[344] In any case, it was during the years in which Kérylos was constructed that archaeologists such as Joseph Chamonard—a careful student of Greek domestic architecture and a mentor of Pontremoli's—began to discover houses at Delos with an upper floor.[345] It turned out that these original two-story houses mirrored the design of Kérylos.

In keeping with Théodore's desire for a reclaimed antiquity, the peristyle is the literal and figurative center of Kérylos: off of this enclosure the rest of the house is built, but it is this space that creates the sense of harmony and the sense of order the house was meant to achieve. As Pontremoli wrote, this sense was achieved in direct contrast to the intensity of the natural environment: "*À l'ardeur du climat et à l'intensité de la lumière s'opposent, dès l'entrée, le calme et la fraîcheur du péristyle*."[346] Tiled in white marble, the space is partially reminiscent of Athens, as evidenced in the antefixes of lions' heads that adorn the gutter, direct copies of those found the Acropolis. Commissioned by Théodore, the walls of the peristyle present large fresco compositions by Gustave Jaulmes (1873-1959) and Adrien Karbowsky (1855-1945). The scenes—all carefully

[343] These famous lines come from Whitman's "Song of Myself": "Do I contradict myself?/ Very well then I contradict myself,/ (I am large, I contain multitudes.)" In the interwar period, Whitman was popular among certain circles of European academic elites, largely thanks to his humanism, his pacifism, and his cosmopolitanism. He was especially popular among Jewish intellectual elites, a phenomenon the writer George Prochnik discusses in some detail in his recent study of Stefan Zweig. See Prochnik, *The Impossible Exile: Stefan Zweig at the End of the World* (New York, 2014).
[344] *The Villa Kérylos*, p. 26.
[345] Ibid.
[346] Pontremoli, p. 8. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

chosen by Théodore himself—copy a series of Greek perfume vases from the fifth century BCE, and they represent stories from Greek mythology that animated some aspect of his imagination. The fresco that depicts the dispute between Apollo and Hermes over the lyre, for instance, later became the subject of *La Naissance de la Lyre*, a 1925 opera by Albert Roussel for which Théodore would write the libretto. Indeed, the peristyle—and, in a sense, all of Kérylos—was designed to embody a sense of frozen music, and the particular rhythm it exudes becomes clearest in the twelve identical Doric columns that surround the peristyle, each made of Carrara marble, juxtaposed with an inner set of Ionic columns. "*L'ordre règne par la juste proportion des colonnes, ioniques au second rang, doriques au premier*," wrote Pontremoli in 1934, "*leur rythme, leur dimension déterminent la métrique de la maison ; toutes les pièces sont commandées par ces mesures*."[347] Order, symmetry, and a perfect proportionality: these were the foundations of the house, its silent sounds. "*Ce rythme général*," Pontremoli added, "*crée une harmonie indépendante de la couleur et de la matière*." This central cadence, it follows, was intended as a rhythm that would transcend the more than the materiality of the space: in theory, it would transcend temporality itself.



Figure 22. The Peristyle, Kérylos, February 2015.

[347] Ibid., Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

For Pontremoli, there was a formidable poetry in what he called "*la simplicité des formes grecques*," a poetry made manifest in the design of the peristyle: "*Il fallait chercher non seulement le dessin et la couleur, mais la matière de ces fresques, trouver le mortier, le mélange de poudre de marbre, peindre la pâte fraîche, puis la lisser, l'encaustiquer, la rendre subtile et immatérielle*."[348] Despite the meticulous attention to detail throughout Kérylos—especially in the intricate yet immense mosaics painstakingly copied from models that had recently been discovered at Delos—the point of the house's staggering material reality was to escape the material world altogether. This, it seems, was the hope of both patron and architect for the design's embrace of Greek simplicity: through a calculated harmony, it would reach at least a version of classical beauty and the perfection it promised. Each room was subordinated to this larger mission, as Pontremoli would later note: "*L'harmonie du péristyle ainsi réalisée commandait toutes les autres pièces. […] Ainsi, la demeure se développe, pièce à pièce, chambre à chambre, sans rupture, avec la seule volonté de murs diversement colorés, de plafonds en bois peints et incrustés, de mosaïques imprévues, de claires ou puissantes tentures brodées*."[349]

In terms of the house's attempt to illustrate the compatibility of classical antiquity in the modern age, the *balaneion*, the room of traditional thermal baths essential in any respectable Greek mansion, provides the richest example. The bath itself, a whole meter deep, was cast in the octagonal shape found in many Greek houses, and it was laid in Carrara tiger marble, as was the majority of the peristyle. Decorated with fresoces that depict seaweed and water animals, it appears an exact replica of its ancient counterparts. However, the *balaneion* is a feat of contemporary plumbing, equipped with what at the time was the most advanced technology available. "*Problèmes mettant constamment aux prises la complexité de la vie actuelle avec la simplicité de la forme antique*," Pontremoli would note.[350] That tension is especially evident in this room, which hides the system for filling up the octagonal tub entirely. The taps are contained inside the round grates on either side of the steps into the tub, and the bath empties and fills by way of a bronze grid in the shape of the Star of David, a subtle motif quietly repeated throughout Kérylos. In

[348] Ibid., p. 9. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.
[349] Ibid. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.
[350] Ibid. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

addition to hot and cold water taps, the *balaneion* also featured a unique set of lateral jets made of patinated bronze that had just been introduced. If life in Kérylos was an homage to the glorious Greek past, it was never to be lived without the utmost modern comforts. This was the case in each of the private living spaces throughout the space: Théodore's bedroom, the *Erotès*; Fanny Reinach's bedroom, the *Ornitès*, and the family room, the *Triptolème*. Each was a careful replica of a Greek living space, but each was also always in keeping with bourgeois design conventions of the *fin-de-siècle*. Nowhere was this clearer than in the case of the decidedly non-Greek piano Fanny insisted on having in Kérylos. A special order from Pleyel in 1912, the lemonwood instrument folded into a chest when closed, its pedals shielded by a small footstool.[351]

V. Kérylos as Portraiture

In the end, Kérylos was closer to the allegory of the cave than the Platonic Ideal of perfect beauty. If Théodore's totalizing vision and Pontremoli's painstaking design could transcend certain aspects of the house's immediate surroundings, they could never escape context. Théodore died in 1928, and precisely the type of temporal troubles he had sought to escape arrived at his villa in a brutal, visceral way. As his grandson Fabrice Reinach later recalled, by the Second World War "*la tragédie mondiale atteignit dès lors directement la maison*."[352] After June 1940, when Italian forces occupied the area of southeastern France that included Beaulieu-sur-Mer, a local commander installed a series of cannons on the villa's terrace.[353] Kérylos, in a sense, had become conscripted in the conflict that destroyed the world of the man who had dreamed it. This was even more pronounced after September 1943, when the Italians withdrew from southern France in the wake of German pressure. Théodore's villa became a prison for his descendants. Having been made to forfeit his position on the Conseil d'État because of Vichy racial laws, Julien Reinach had withdrawn to his father's villa to complete a new translation of Gaius's *Institutes*. It was ultimately there that the Gestapo arrested him in the middle of the night, shortly after the German annexation of the Côte d'Azur.[354] Kérylos itself

[351] *The Villa Kérylos*, p. 48.
[352] Fabrice Reinach, "Architecture du Rêve," p. 34.
[353] Ibid.
[354] Ibid.

became occupied territory: German officials ransacked the house and destroyed the immense archive that Théodore had compiled inside. It was only thanks to the gardener, Joseph Garziglia, that the furnishings and library survived. After Julien's deportation, Garziglia alerted the *Institut*, and the entire contents of the house were safely transferred to the Musée de Nice, where they remained undamaged until 1945. "*L'essentiel était sauvait*," wrote Fabrice Reinach, but "*la maison fermée, le jardin miné, la famille dispersée*."[355] Soon the Reinachs would become little more than a memory, names inscribed on the spines of fading volumes and etched on a forgotten, peeling memorial. But Kérylos survived, preserving for posterity a romantic vision of French Republicanism and the dream of an achievable, habitable beauty.



Figure 23. The Villa Kérylos as seen from the Cap Ferrat, February 2015.

[355] Ibid.

CHAPTER V.
BÉATRICE ÉPHRUSSI, THE VILLA ÎLE DE FRANCE, AND MATERIALITY AS AGENCY



Figure 24. Béatrice Éphrussi, undated. Archives of the Musée Albert Kahn-Département des Hautes-de-Seine.

"Well behaved women," the historian Lauren Thatcher Ulrich famously wrote, "seldom make history."[356] Yet the age-old criteria for "bad" behavior in a woman—deliberate flaunting of social conventions, rejection of traditional gender roles, and, perhaps most of all, disrespect for the patriarchal family structure—have never quite carried with them an automatic entry into history, either. If well-behaved women seldom

[356] See Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Vertuous Women Found: New England Ministerial Literature, 1668-1735," *American Quarterly*. 1976; 28, pp. 20-40.

make history, not all badly behaved women do. Béatrice Éphrussi (née Rothschild) (1864-1934)—divorced, childless, independent, flamboyant, and eccentric—was precisely such a character. Her scandalous behavior—especially so in the eyes of her family—seems to have done little but efface the memory of one of the greatest collectors and *salonnières* from the majority of scholarship on the French *fin-de-siècle*. After all, there is an argument to be made that Béatrice personified the themes that have come to define the experiences of cultural elites at the end of the nineteenth century, especially in France: decadence and ennui, commodity fetishism and obsession, malaise and madness.[357]

After her failure to perpetuate, as her parents had done, the traditional Rothschild endogamy[358] and, ultimately, her failed marriage to Maurice Éphrussi, a scion of the prominent Russian-Jewish banking family, Béatrice became passionately consumed by material possessions, a zealous art collector and committed home designer who strove to create—and withdraw into—an aesthetic universe of her own design. If she was a female Jean des Esseintes, the antihero of Huysman's iconic novel *À rebours* (1884), a seminal literary artifact of the *fin-de-siècle*, few remember her name. Instead, the well-known signposts to the period have become the novels of Huysmans himself, the canvases of the painter Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, and the memoirs of the aesthete and *bon vivant* Boniface de Castellane. While each of these, along with the majority of Béatrice's other (and mostly male) contemporaries, has become the subject of scholarship in the century since, Béatrice appears as a footnote in virtually every history of the period and, perhaps most surprisingly, in nearly all recent studies of the Rothschild family itself.[359] Only one

[357] I refer, here, mostly to Eugen Weber's now-standard interpretation of the French *fin-de-siècle*. See Weber, *France, Fin de Siècle* (Harvard, 1988), "Decadence," pp. 9-27; "The Old Arts and the New," pp. 142-159. See also Carl Schorske, *Vienna Fin-de-Siècle: Politics and Culture* (New York, 1979), "Introduction," xvii-xxv.

[358] Béatrice's father was Alphonse de Rothschild (1827-1905), the son of James de Rothschild, founder of the family's French bank; her mother was Leonora de Rothschild (1837-1911), her father's cousin and a daughter of the English banker Lionel de Rothschild (1808-1879).

[359] This is the case, for instance, in Bertrand Gille's two-volume study of the Rothschild family (1965-67), which mentions Béatrice only in its genealogy. Guy de Rothschild's memoir, *Contre bonne fortune* (1983), mentions her only in a few parenthetical lines, and Niall Ferguson's monumental study of the Rothschild family, *The World's Banker* (1998), mentions only her marriage to Maurice Éphrussi and its potential financial appeal to her father, Alphonse. Even more interesting is that studies more closely related to Béatrice herself also avoid significant mention of her, such as Stanley Weintraub's *Charlotte and Lionel: A Rothschild Love Story* (2003) and Edmund de Waal's *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (2010), a portrait of the Éphrussi, into which Beatrice married. Given her life as a passionate collector and designer of homes,

monograph attempts to tell the story of her life, and it depends on informed speculation to address the dearth of evidence that continues to shroud its subject.[360] Badly behaved by the standards of her *milieu*, Béatrice Éphrussi did not, in the end, "make history." What did, however, were the houses and extensive collections she left behind, material remnants of the fantastical aesthetic universe she attempted to create with apparently unlimited financial resources.

Although throughout her life she would own, commission, and design several homes throughout France, it is the Villa Île de France in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat that best illustrates the degree to which Béatrice sought solace in materiality. Inspired by her cousin-by-marriage Théodore Reinach's Villa Kérylos[361] in Beaulieu-sur-Mer—and bolstered financially by the large inheritance she received on the death of her father in 1905—she purchased an expanse of land on the Cap Ferrat, within sight of Kérylos. At the turn of the century, the south of France was something of a *terra incognita* for members of the social class Béatrice (and, indeed, Théodore Reinach) occupied. Not yet fashionable, it allowed a certain distance from the nineteenth-century resorts of polite society—Deauville, Biarritz, Vichy—and also from the laws of decorum they enforced. As the historian Mary Blume has argued, in the *fin de siècle* the *Côte d'Azur* "was a place of escape […] the place to get away from it all and, eventually, to get away with everything."[362]

This was certainly the appeal for Béatrice, but the Villa Île de France was more than a mere escape from bourgeois convention. Built after her separation from her husband, who—much to the chagrin of her Rothschild relations—had squandered a not-insignificant portion of her inheritance and who had infected her with syphilis, the Villa was ultimately a world entirely subject to a woman's control. From the scattered records

---

another curious omission of Béatrice occurs in Pauline Prévost-Marcilhacy's *Les Rothschilds: bâtisseurs et mécènes* (1995), by far the definitive study of material culture in the Rothschild family. The Vila Île de France, her mansion in Cap Ferrat, is mentioned, but as a parenthetical to her family's other estates at Ferrières, Waddesdon, and Vienna.

[360] This is Michel Steve's *Béatrice Éphrussi de Rothschild* (Nice, 2008). There is also Jacqueline Manciet's *La Sphinge* (Paris, 2011), an exhaustive—yet somewhat imagined—biography of Béatrice.

[361] Béatrice Éphrussi's husband, Maurice Éphrussi, was the cousin of both Théodore Reinach's wives, Evelynn and Fanny Kann. Maurice, as it happened, was also the brother of Thérèse Fould, the wife of Léon Fould, whose son and daughter-in-law, Eugène and Marie-Cécile Fould-Springer, were the custodians of Royaumont in the 1920s.

[362] See Mary Blume, *Côte d'Azur: Inventing the French Riviera* (London, 1992), p. 10.

that survive, Béatrice—in much the same way as Moïse de Camondo, another relation through marriage[363]—was an active, almost tyrannical, dictator of every aspect of the house she built, the gardens she tended, and the collections she amassed. Always loyal to her vision, she hired and fired more than eight architects[364] during the course of the Villa's construction and insisted on implementing technical ideas of her own.[365] The Villa Île de France was a sanctuary in which she could reclaim what had been confiscated from her and live, at long last, on her own terms. Of course, for Thorstein Veblen, writing in the late 1890s, the tragedy of the leisure class was its association of material consumption with self-respect.[366] Yet for Béatrice Éphrussi, a woman certainly "exempted from useful employment" and who thus belonged to precisely this class, objects and things were the essence of her independence. If for social elites material consumption was self-respect, for the women among them it could also serve as a means of self-definition. As the Villa Île de France suggests, materiality could also be agency.

I. The Rothschilds, the Éphrussis, and Material Public Presentation

Despite the number of homes she built and the extent of the collections each contained, little is known about Béatrice Éphrussi de Rothschild. Her correspondence does not survive, and she died alone in a hotel in Davos in 1934, leaving no descendants. Of the person she was, there are only the memories of those who recalled "*Madame la Baronne*" as a woman of great beauty but affected luxury. "*Je revois le visage de*

---

[363] Moïse de Camondo's daughter, Béatrice de Camondo, married Théodore Reinach's son, Léon Reinach, in 1918. Théodore Reinach was a cousin of Béatrice Éphrussi's through marriage, via Charles Éphrussi.
[364] These were Paul-Henri Nénot (1853-1934), who designed the Hôtel Meurice; Charles Girault (1851-1933), who designed the Petit Palais and had been contracted by Édouard de Rothschild for the manor at Gouvieux; Walter-André Destailleur (1867-1940), the son of Hippolyte Destailleur; Aaron Messiah (1858-1940), the court architect of Leopold II of Belgium; Ernest Sanson (1836-1918), a master of the Beaux Arts; René Sergent (1865-1927), Moïse de Camondo's architect; and Marcel Auburtin (1872-1926).
[365] Most prominently among these ideas was the metal structure that supported the Villa's roof, attached to a wooden canopy covered in plaster and stitched together with iron threads, which Béatrice was determined to see realized. I am grateful to the Rothschild Archive, London (RAL) for providing me with this information. See esp. Ulrich Lebens, "Béatrice Éphrussi de Rothschild: Collector and Curator," The Rothschild Archive, 2008-9, pp. 26.
https://www.rothschildarchive.org/materials/review_2008_2009_beatrice_ephrussi_1.pdf
[366] See Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (1899; Oxford, 2009). Veblen discusses the notion of self-respect in great depth in his second chapter, "Pecuniary Emulation."

Madame Maurice Éphrussi," wrote the Belle Époque socialite André de Fouquières, "*un visage aux traits fins encadré de cheveux d'argent. Elle était toujours vêtue de blue Nattier, un ruban de même couleur retenant ses boucles, un petit fox-terrier 'Marche' couché à ses pieds*."[367] In his memoirs, the prominent art dealer René Gimpel (1881-1945), the brother-in-law of Joseph Duveen, recalled Béatrice along similar lines: "*elle est habillée de rose comme toujours,*" he wrote, "*avec un chapeau bleu tendre sur ses cheveux blancs; tels qu'elle les avait à trente ans. Elle a un visage comme un vin rosé. Jolie, très lapin blanc*."[368] In these observations, Béatrice herself appears as an art object, with a face that serves as a canvas and a body that functions as a mere mannequin for the fashions she displays, "*habillée de rose comme toujours*." Her Riviera soirées—elegant but excessive—also impressed Fouquières, and today Béatrice is mostly known as a hostess who spared no expense: "*je me souviens d'une nuit d'été,"* de Fouquières recalled*, "où nous eûmes le privilège de voir, dans les jardins de son hôtel à la française, et baignés de clair de lune, le Pavlova danser sur des nocturnes de Chopin*." Yet those who remembered Béatrice as an art object also invariably commented on her alleged parsimony, perhaps evincing the anti-Semitism that simultaneously condemned wealthy Jews of the Rothschild class for decadence as well as stinginess. "*On murmurait en effet qu'elle avait un grand souci d'économie*," recalled Fouquières.[369] "*Elle n'aime pas régler ses factures*," wrote Gimpel.[370] In any case, in these images, Béatrice is rooted in a very clear context: she is inseparably linked to the material world she created with no restriction. There is no meaningful distinction between the woman, the clothes she wore, and the money she spent. Without her things, it followed, *Madame la Baronne* did not exist.

These observations, of course, are merely the ways others perceived Béatrice in her own time. But there is nevertheless some truth in them, especially on the question of the primacy of material things in the life of this wealthy woman. The important

---

[367] André de Fouquières, *Traces écrites* (Paris, 1951), p. 43.
[368] René Gimpel, *Journal d'un collectionneur: marchand de tableaux* (Paris, 1963), p. 16. Along with the Wildensteins and the Duveen brothers, René Gimpel—a brother-in-law of Joseph Duveen's—was among the most important art dealers in France in the interwar period, and indeed his memoir is a comprehensive eyewitness account of a seminal chapter in the history of modern art. He was an important champion of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque when few of his contemporaries were.
[369] Fouquières, p. 43.
[370] Gimpel, p. 16.

distinction, however, is that this materiality was not the choice of Béatrice herself: it was the very essence of the *milieu* into which she was born and into which she later married. As her name attests, Béatrice Éphrussi de Rothschild existed at the intersection of two distinct family cultures—the Rothschilds and the Éphrussis—whose principal commonality was a reliance on (and, in some cases, an obsession with) material objects, both as a means of private solace and public self-presentation. With branches across continental Europe—the Rothschilds in London, Paris, Vienna, Frankfurt, and Naples and the Éphrussis in Odessa, Vienna, and Paris—these two families were cosmopolitan, multilingual, but always Jewish both in terms of religious practice and cultural affiliation. In fact, as historians such as Paula Hyman have written, it was the family as a unit of socialization that ensured the survival of Jewish identity among its members.[371] *L'dor v'dor*—the call for Jewish tradition to be passed from "generation to generation"—was a family matter most of all.[372]

By the late nineteenth century, especially in a France consumed by the Dreyfus Affair, Jewish families in the rarefied milieu of the Rothschilds, the Éphrussis, the Reinachs, the Foulds, and the Cahen d'Anvers often responded to this anxiety with a "fierce clannishness"[373] that often transcended the injunction to marry within the Jewish community: Rothschilds were to marry Rothschilds and Reinachs were to marry Reinachs. Despite this strict insularity, however, these were families with public—and, in the case of the Reinachs and the Foulds, even political—presences. This necessitated the need for carefully curated public images, often in the form of lavish family homes and extensive art collections, especially those that discernibly glorified the French past, as in the case of Moïse de Camondo's homage to the *ancien régime*. Objects and their spatial arrangement were thus essential to this project of constructed selves, and the material

[371] See Paula Hyman, "Introduction," in Steven Martin Cohen and Paula Hyman, *The Jewish Family: Myths and Reality*. (New York, 1986), p. 6.
[372] This is a point that becomes clear in Elisheva Baumgarten's brilliant study of Jewish family life—specifically, mothers and children—in Medieval Ashkenaz (mostly France and Germany). Throughout the centuries, she concludes, it was primarily the family unit that facilitated the transmission of Jewish identity against a political context of persecution and threat of conversion. See Baumgarten, *Mothers and Children: Jewish Family Life in Medieval Europe* (Princeton, 2004).
[373] This is Ruth Harris's term for the communal sensibilities of Jewish families during the Dreyfus Affair, which appears in her discussion of the Reinach family in particular. See Harris, *The Man on Devil's Island*, p. 188.

realm was endowed with an existential politics that afforded these families a means of defining what—if not who—they were.

If the family is the principal locus of socialization, this was the nature of the primary world in which Béatrice was inscribed. The Rothschild family culture in which she was raised embraced the material to a far greater extent than perhaps any of the other families in its rarefied milieu. As Pauline Prévost-Marcilhacy has argued in her exhaustive study, *Les Rothschild: Bâtisseurs et Mécènes* (1995): "*Les Rothschild préférant se faire constuire de vastes demeures qui seront autant de symbols de leur ascension sociale*."[374] Indeed, in each of its branches, the intimacy of family life by the mid-nineteenth century occurred in spaces—city mansions and country estates—that were designed to reflect the family's nascent status. In Britain, for instance, there was Mentmore and Waddesdon and in France, the rue Laffitte and Ferrières (among others). With the intricately designed rooms of these houses and, specifically, with the arrangement of the material objects they contained the family identity was communicated and solidified. To be a Rothschild was to inhabit such a space: the mastery and manipulation of material culture was something of a native language, a vocabulary of both self-expression and public presentation.

On this latter front, objects and things were particularly useful tools for the Rothschilds as the most visibly wealthy Jews in an increasingly anti-capitalistic society that often equated social ills with Jewish financial conspiracy. The long nineteenth century, after all, had seen the emergence of the "Rothschild Jew"[375] trope, a widespread belief in one family's ability to influence through wealth the politics of countries and the course of history itself. This association was strongest in France, where, after 1842, when the state authorized railway construction, James de Rothschild's Chemin de fer du Nord received the lion's share of government contracts. In July 1846, when a deadly crash occurred on one of his lines, a tidal wave of anti-Semitism targeted the family, as Jewish capitalists but also as murderers. These themes were explored in polemics such as G.M. Dairnvell's *Histoire édifiante et curieuse de Rothschild Ier, rois des juifs* (1846), Pierre

[374] Pauline Prévost-Marcilhacy, "La Quête de la Reconnaissance," *Les Rothschild: batisseurs et mécènes* (Paris, 1995), p. 53.
[375] The definitive interpretation of this trope is Michael Graetz's *The Jews in Nineteenth Century France: From the Revolution to the Alliance Israélite Universelle*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Stanford, 1996), in his chapter entitled "Rothschild, King of the Jews."

Leroux's *Malthus et les economistes ou Y aura-t-il toujours des pauvres?* (1849), and, most prominently, in Édouard Drumont's *La France juive* (1886). The Rothschild family never responded directly to these allegations in any language besides the material. Largely in response, James insisted—against the wishes of his company's board of directors—to erect an elaborate train station in Paris with soaring glass windows and scores of Greek statues, a cathedral for the mechanized age. As Karen Bowie has noted, in her study of the Parisian "*grandes gares*," the reconstruction of the Gare du Nord represented for James and his family "*l'occasion de démontrer aux yeux de tous qu'il peut faire édifier des monuments aussi importants que ceux que le regime impérial fait construire à Paris*."[376]

Of all the Rothschilds, none was more invested in material self-expression in private and public than Alphonse de Rothschild (1827-1905), the eldest son of James de Rothschild and the father of Béatrice Éphrussi de Rothschild. The head of the family's banking interests, Alphonse's true legacy was his obsession with art and the extensive donations he made later in life to a network of struggling provincial museums throughout France. Elected to the committee of the Exposition universelle in 1867, he was the first Rothschild to be named a member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts in 1885, a source of major pride in the family and seeming evidence of their social arrival. As his youngest brother Edmond de Rothschild, himself elected to the Académie in 1905, wrote in a letter to the family:

> *La grande nouvelle du jour, qui nous remplit de satisfaction, est l'élection de notre cher frère Alphonse à l'Académie des beaux-arts: cet honneur est rendu à la fois à sa capacité de discernement et à sa noble personnalité. Nous sommes très fières de compter dans notre famille un membre de l'Académie, ce qui est l'un des titres les plus éminents qui puisse se porter en France.*[377]

Alphonse, in much the same ways as other haut-bourgeois elites in the 1840s, primarily collected eighteenth-century French painting, although he gradually developed an interest in Flemish and Dutch painting, amassing one of the most extensive collections in France of Rubens, Rembrandt, Hals and de Hooch. But according to Prévost-Marcilhacy, he represented an important shift in the family's relation to the material

[376] Karen Bowie, *Les grandes gares parisiennes au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1997), p. 89.
[377] Edmond de Rothschild to cousins, 5 December 1885, Rothschild Archive, London, 13/202.

things and their use. It was Alphonse, she has insisted, who ushered in an era in which art itself became a synonym for Rothschild patriotism and philanthropic largesse: "*si, pour les Rothschild de la generation précédente, la collection relevait du domaine privé, Alphonse est animé par une ambition où se mêlent patriotisme, volonté educative, souci de rédistribution des richesses et vision libérale d'une société où l'initiative privée devance l'intervention de l'État*."[378] Largely thanks to the journal *L'Art* and especially to Léon Gauchez, the Belgian-born merchant-turned-critic who served as his intermediary, Alphonse took a keen interest in contemporary French painting and sculpture, especially that of Auguste Rodin, which he saw as carrying an instructive value for forgotten municipal museums across the nation. In an era when the great French collectors increasingly made their collections public—Louis la Caze donated 272 works to the Louvre in 1869; Davillier, the banker, donated 582 two years later[379]—Alphonse de Rothschild was perhaps the most invested of them all. Over the course of his career, he donated some 2,000 contemporary works to more than 150 local museums. He donated to the Cannes museum 176 paintings, 40 sculptures, 203 lithographs, 419 photographs, and 92 watercolors..[380] Between 1898 and 1939, it was even renamed the Musée Alphonse de Rothschild, a monument to the man.

The Éphrussis were perhaps even more invested than the Rothschilds in the realms of art and the public potential of material things. If this was the culture in which she was raised, the culture into which Béatrice married in 1883 was equally invested in materiality, and possibly more refined in its tastes. The Éphrussi, initially of Sephardic origin, were another prominent Jewish family whose wealth nearly matched that of the Rothschilds. The fortune was forged first in grain factories in the Ukraine, then in oil reserves, and then, finally, in banking, where they were among the principal competitors of the Rothschilds in Vienna and Paris from the mid-1850s. A central component in the social milieu of haute-bourgeois French Jews in the Third Republic, the Éphrussis—largely through Charles Éphrussi (1849-1905), the collector and critic—were linked to virtually every other Jewish family of consequence. Charles Éphrussi was a cousin of Maurice Éphrussi, who married Béatrice; the mentor and confidante of the young Moïse

[378] Prévost-Marcilhacy, "Commanditaires et Architectes," p. 150.
[379] Ibid.
[380] Ibid.

de Camondo; the lover of Louise Morpurgo, the wife of Louis Cahen d'Anvers; and a friend and cousin of Théodore Reinach, to whom he left most of his estate, a gift that essentially financed the construction of the Villa Kérylos. The family's interests in culture were also significantly influenced by Charles's legacy. Indeed, if the other families in their milieu were consumers of art and material objects, the Éphrussis were arbiters of taste.

A portrait of cultural life in *fin-de-siècle* Paris would be incomplete without mention of Charles Éphrussi—to whom Béatrice and her husband, Maurice, remained close throughout their short marriage.[381] Charles himself left few personal writings aside from the articles he published in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, the "*Courrier Européen de l'art et de la curiosité,*" a seminal art periodical that he bought in 1885 and edited from 1894.[382] The most thorough investigation of the man is likely Edmund de Waal's recent memoir, *The Hare With Amber Eyes*, in which the author, himself an Éphrussi, attempts to "understand how Charles looked at things."[383] From de Waal's reflections we learn mostly of his ancestor's worldliness: his friendship with Marcel Proust, for instance, who apparently used him as inspiration for the character of Charles Swann, and his shifting interests in *japonisme*, Renaissance art, and, most importantly, Impressionism. Of this last interest there is ample evidence: Charles was an early patron of Auguste Renoir, and his imprimatur led to the acceptance of Impressionist painters in his circle. He himself owned more than 40 canvases by Renoir, Manet, Degas, Monet, and Pissarro[384]; Renoir immortalized him in *Luncheon of the Boating Party* (1881), in the elusive man with his

---

[381] Michel Steve, *Béatrice Éphrussi*, p. 43

[382] The *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, founded in 1859, was an indispensible resource for art historians, critics, and collectors alike until its closure in 2002. It was the primary locus of conversation and debate on all topics related to art and material culture in the *fin-de-siècle*, and it published many of the period's greatest names: Marcel Proust and John Ruskin, Bernard Berenson and the Goncourts. In keeping with the theme of this dissertation, however, the Gazette was ample evidence of the primacy of material culture among French-Jewish elites in the early decades of the twentieth century. In fact, many of the collectors featured here played a significant role in the journal, as contributors, funders, or editors. Edmond de Rothschild, for instance, partially financed it; Moïse de Camondo served on its advisory committee; and, after the death of Charles Éphrussi, Théodore Reinach served as its editor-in-chief. It then fell under the control of the prominent dealer Georges Wildenstein, whose family continued to operate it until its closure. In any case, the Gazette was yet another tie that linked this network of Jewish elites together in their common pursuit of art, objects, and the material identities that, in their eyes, things alone could furnish.

[383] Edmund de Waal, *The Hare With Amber Eyes*, p. 36.

[384] "Charles Éphrussi," *Grove Art Dictionary*, http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T026431

back turned to the viewer. Charles Éphrussi inspired in his family a culture of aestheticism, a reverence for beauty as even more than a desire for material acquisition. As it was for her cousin Théodore Reinach, this communal, almost familial, notion of beauty—beauty as an ideal, but beauty as refuge—became an animating passion for Béatrice. As her biographer, Michel Steve, has observed, she inherited "*cette manière d'intégrer l'art et les luxueuses antiquités à l'ornement de leur quotidien, selon un procédé inédit et un peu théâtral*."[385] In other words, she inherited this material mother tongue even as she attempted to liberate herself from the family cultures that facilitated it. Objects and things were the mode through which both the Rotshchilds and the Ephrussis expressed their identities in public and in private. Materiality was thus the most available means for these decidedly insular families to respond to the external world. In the end, materiality was also the essence of Béatrice's revolt against the social mores of her time.

II. An Independent Woman of Means

To those who knew her—André de Fouquières, René Gimpel, Boniface de Castellane, Élisabeth de Gramont—Béatrice often appeared rash, impulsive, and even bizarre. "*Tous les témoignages concordent pour dépeindre Béatrice comme une personne agitée, impatiente et impulsive*," wrote Steve. "*C'est un des traits dominants et permanents de son caractère*."[386] Yet from what little evidence that survives, she appears to have been marked as well by a doleful melancholy that began during her childhood. According to Steve, her father, in keeping with bourgeois parenting practices, was absent; her mother, Leonora, of the English Rothschilds, suffered from hysteria, an affliction commonly ascribed to women in the nineteenth-century who expressed any disagreement with the status quo.[387] Consequently, Béatrice rarely saw either of her parents for sustained periods of time and was raised among a host of interchangeable governesses and nannies,who never remained in the family's employ for more than a year.. Furthermore, during the Franco-Prussian War, she and her siblings were taken to England to live with her grandparents, where she spent her formative years in a foreign context.

[385] Steve, p. 20.
[386] Ibid., p. 17.
[387] Ibid., p. 16.

She never learned to speak English well, and Steve has speculated that the alleged "*froideur*" of the English education she received also took its toll.[388] In any case, as a woman within an elite banking family dominated by male succession and male financial leadership, Béatrice was unable to direct her own life. This was especially true with regard to her marriage to the banker and gambler Maurice Éphrussi (1849-1916), which her father arranged largely for the financial possibilities the union provided.

When they were married at the Grande Synagogue de la Rue Victoire in 1883—the synagogue that the Rothschilds had financed—the bride was a nineteen-year-old woman marrying a groom nineteen years her senior. As was the case of many other marriages in the nineteenth-century, especially among elites, husband and wife existed at vastly different points in their life trajectories. One imagines, then, that a certain amount of distance characterized their marriage. If distance separated husband and wife, however, there was also a certain distance between Béatrice and the family that had arranged this marriage. As Steve has written, it likely represented a partial exit from the Rothschild clan, in which endogamy was an enshrined principle and communal recognition was still predicated on leadership within the bank. Béatrice, he has argued, "*devenait donc une demi Rothschild, ce qui dimunait son intérêt*."[389] Likewise, Maurice, albeit an Éphrussi, was not a director of his family's bank; he was a *bon vivant* and thoroughbred horse racer with a penchant for gambling. The marriage of Béatrice de Rothschild and Maurice Éphrussi was thus a mutual pursuit of pleasure, a testament to listless leisure. With his brother Michel, Maurice owned Haras du Garzon, a breeding farm in Normandy that produced some of the most successful horses of its day—"Perth" and "Roxelane," "Alicante" and "Bariolet." In the nineteenth century, horse racing, as Jonathan Pinfold has argued, represented a means for the wealthy to consolidate their social status.[390] Places like *le Jockey Club*—to which Maurice Éphrussi, along with Charles Éphrussi, Léon Fould, and many of the other men in their *milieu* belonged—were ultimately stages for public Proustian elites to compete in a context that simulated consequence and import. Maurice's desire for distinction among this elite had dangerous

[388] Ibid., p. 26-28.
[389] Ibid., p. 185.
[390] Jonathan Pinfold, "Horse Racing and the Upper Classes in the Nineteenth Century," *Sport in History*, Vol. 28, issue 3, 2008.

consequences with regard to his gambling. By 1904, his debts amounted to more than 12 million gold francs, some 30 million euros in the currency of today.[391] By this point, he had also infected his young wife with syphilis, which meant that she could not have children.[392]

No personal account of rupture survives. What does survive, however, is the divorce record, which details the fissure of the financial transaction the marriage had enshrined. On 29 June 1904, the couple was legally separated with the authorization of the Rothschild family, concerned with the status of its accounts. As per the terms of the agreement:

> *OPERER le dépôt avec mention de dotalité chez NM de Rothschild frères, à Paris, des valeurs, achetées en remploi, retirer tous reçus et récipissés, faire toutes déclarations d'immatricules ou de transferts, faire toutes constatations d'emplois ou de remplois.*
>
> *RETIRER tout ou partie de ces mêmes valeurs de la dite maison de banque, en donner bonnes et valables décharges, vendre, céder et transférer les dites valeurs au cours que le mandataire jugera convenable toucher le prix de ces ventes, cessions et transferts.* […]
>
> *Déposer ces valeurs avec mention de la dotalité chez NM de Rothschild frères, banquiers à Paris, retirer tous reçus et récipissés des valeurs et en donner décharges.*[393]

What emerges most in the agreement is the prominence of the bank. Only once does Béatrice's name appear in the document: it appears as if Maurice Éphrussi is divorcing N.M. de Rothschild Frères, which, in a certain sense, he was. His actual wife, however, was subject to a mandated silence. Isolated from her husband, Béatrice was increasingly isolated from her family as well: the divorce affected her inheritance. When her father died the following year, his will contained the following section, which had decreased her share to a quarter rather than a half: "*Le montant des droits héréditaires de chaque héritier sera établi par l'attribution au Baron Edouard de Rothschild de moitié*," the document read, *"à Madame Ephrussi d'un quart, et à chacun des petits enfants du défunt d'un vingt-quatrième de l'actif total net obtenu ainsi qu'il est dit ci-dessus*."[394] She was

---

[391] Steve, p. 44.
[392] Ibid.
[393] OE 465, Rothschild Archive, London.
[394] "*Memorandum des Regles Adoptés pour le Partage de la Succession de Feu le Baron Alphonse de Rothschild,"* OE 465, Rothschild Archive, London.

still a Rothschild, but, to be sure, a lesser Rothschild, having received half of the share her brother took of the 250,942,332 francs to divide. At the age of 39, Béatrice was thus an independent woman, marked by pain but with the means to create an alternate universe of distraction and refuge.

III. Eccentricity as Rebellion

In the years after Béatrice's divorce, what society seems to have observed in her character was a woman prone to flippancy, absurdity, and unbridled material excess. Consider, for instance, the recollections of René Gimpel, who regarded Béatrice as an ignorant but authoritarian consumer, going in stubborn search of painted monkeys with her cousin, Léon Fould, all for the purpose of decorating a set of newly acquired *boiseries*. "*Gardien, les singes*?" Gimpel recalls her asking the curator at the Archvies Nationales:

> -- *Vous vouz moquez, dit le gardien qui devient tout rouge et qui même commence à se fâcher.*
>
> -- *Monsieur le gardien, je suis Madame Éphrussi, née Rothschild, cherchez-moi un conservateur.*
>
> […]
>
> -- *Il se trouvent, madame, dit le conservateur, aux Archives.*
>
> -- *Allons à côté, chez Boulanger, le décorateur, dit-elle.*
>
> -- *Bonjour, Boulanger, avez-vous des singes*?
>
> -- *Madame, je n'ai qu'un perroquet.*
>
> -- *En peinture?*
>
> -- *Mais non, madame, en nature.*
>
> -- *Vous êtes stupide, Boulanger, je veux des singes en peinture.*[395]

A second anecdote, relayed to Gimpel by Adolphe Lion, another dealer to the Rothschilds, further underscored the public image of Béatrice as impetuous and entitled. In Lion's memory, she had apparently entered his shop on the rue Laffitte to purchase a porcelain vase she had seen in the window. "*Ceci, Lion*," the dealer recalled Béatrice saying, "*c'est l'affaire d'Edmond de Rothschild, c'est sa couleur, allez le lui porter demain matin. Voici ma carte*." Lion did as he was bidden and arrived at the Rothschild mansion, also on the Rue Laffitte, promptly at nine the next morning:

---

[395] René Gimpel, pp. 16-17.

J'attends. Vers 11 heures, j'entends dans la pièce à côté la voix de la baronne: 'Adolphe! Adolphe!' Tiens, elle connaît mon nom. J'entre. Le peignoir de la baronne est à moitié ouvert, elle a les cheveux dans le dos. Elle recule épouvantée et hurle:

-- Qui vous a permis d'entrer ici?

-- Madame la Baronne, vous avez appelé: Adolphe et Adolphe c'est mon nom.

-- Sortez, imbécile; Adolphe c'est le nom de mon chien.

-- Mais mon vase, madame?

-- Votre vase, une cochonnerie. Remportez-le![396]

Yet a closer reading of these seemingly scattered and impulsive declarations suggests a woman with a troubled and frustrated inner life struggling with her pain in the only way she knew how. Her grandfather had responded to anti-Semitism through his reconstruction of the Gare du Nord, and her father had displayed his Frenchness through extensive donations to provincial museums. On some level, Béatrice also managed her internal anguish through her control of the objects and things she obsessively purchased: the control of the spaces she inhabited was a means of simulating a control over the life she lived inside them. This is perhaps clearest in the very vignette most frequently cited as evidence of Béatrice's flippant frivolity and essential absurdity—the "dog wedding" she hosted in 1897 for Diane and Major, her favorite poodles. Animals were a fundamental part of the alternate world into which Béatrice withdrew. Albert Laprade, one of the eight architects who worked on the Villa Île de France, recalled—not without annoyance—the veritable Noah's ark always in her retinue: "*Un caniche et deux singes sont ses favoris et ont la faveur d'être promenés par un majordome choisi parmi les anciens généraux de la garde du tsar*," he wrote:

Une petite mangouste des Indes les accompagne. Des gazelles logent dans les jardins. Et dans la villa même, on trouve une perruche péruvienne et des poissons orientaux. […] Madame Éphrussi accorde une grande importance à ses animaux et entretient avec eux des conversations étranges, agaçantes et absurdes.[397]

Béatrice left behind no writings that contextualize or explain her attachment to animals, but perhaps she found in them interlocutors devoid of the judgment with which so many

[396] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[397] Albert Laprade's remarks have been published by the Villa Île de France itself: http://www.villa-ephrussi.com/fr/un-peu-dhistoire/saviez-vous

in her circle—de Fouquières, Gimpel, and even her cousin, Élisabeth de Gramont[398] (1875-1954)—considered her. In any case, Laprade does not mention the "wedding" in his recollections, but undoubtedly it furnished a spectacle far more absurd than her "*conversations étranges, agaçantes et absurdes*." News of the spectacle was reported in newspapers around the world, including *The Boston Daily Globe*:

> Hundreds of invitations were sent out, addressed to canine guests and their owners. All the men, of both the two- and four-legged variety, showed up during the day in formal evening dress: tails, wing collars and bow ties. [...] At the sound of the wedding march, three little poodles appeared in tails to begin proceedings. Canine "bridesmaids" and "best men" escorted the betrothed couple. At the other end of the room, a good and loyal bulldog waited for them wearing a top hat and a red, white and blue sash. [...] The bride had a gold ring set with diamonds slid onto her paw.[399]

At first glance, the "dog wedding" is the epitome of decadent irreverence, but despite its frivolity, the event also evinces a deliberate irony, and an undeniable pathos. Although the couple would not legally separate until 1904, by 1897 Béatrice was already estranged from Maurice and living apart from the only man she had ever known intimately, a man who had betrayed her trust, harmed her body, and drained a significant portions of her inheritance. By staging a wedding for dogs, she was perhaps indulging in a personal fantasy, but she was also ridiculing and even satirizing marriage, perhaps the most sacred of all bourgeois rites, an institution that had failed her in every respect. In a sense, it was a canine adaptation of the petty bourgeois aspiration that characterized the country nuptials of Flaubert's Charles and Emma Bovary: a fête, a feast, a statement. That this "wedding" was a public spectacle to which hundreds were invited only serves to underscore the motivations of its host: this was a work of theatre that required an audience. Béatrice, rather than discarding consumption altogether, ultimately refashioned excessive consumption for her own ends. The Villa Île de France—whose construction she turned to in haste after her separation from Maurice—was the epicenter of her revolt. Her refuge and her passion, the acres she bought on then-undeveloped Cap Ferrat furnished her with a stage for a more elaborate work of theatre: a space—and a life—of her own design.

---

[398] A fixture of Belle-Époque society, the writer Elisabeth de Gramont, best known for her memoirs of the period and her long-term romance with the American playwright Natalie Clifford Barney, was a cousin of Béatrice's by marriage. Her father had married Marguerite de Rothschild (1855-1905).
[399] See *The Boston Daily Globe*, 17 January 1897.

IV. The "Dream Space" of the Côte d'Azur



Figure 25. Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat with a view of Beaulieu-sur-Mer and the Villa Kérylos.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the 150-mile strip of Mediterranean coastline between Marseilles and Menton was not yet the "*Côte d'Azur*."[400] The winter of 1821-22 had devastated local agriculture and skyrocketed unemployment; the closure of Nice as a

[400]The origins of the "Côte d'Azur" as a concept and a myth are unclear. Between 1862 and 1869, five editions of Émile Negrin's *Les Promenades de Nice* were published: these certainly depicted the impoverished, forgotten territory as a romantic tableau. In 1887, there was Guy de Maupassant's *Sur l'eau*, an account of a boat trip taken in Antibes—some of which, it turned out, he had written before he arrived—and the arrival of Queen Victoria in Cannes. Most of all, however, there was Stephen Liégard's *La Côte d'Azur*, published in December 1887, which articulated the vision of the region we know today. Liégard, a wealthy Burgundy landowner, was an amateur poet and a minor literary figure in the Second Empire. He essentially gave the Côte d'Azur its name, a term he is believed to have coined by adapting the name associated with Biarritz at the time, "La Côte d'Argent." A handsome volume meant to be displayed in the home, Liégard's *La Côte d'Azur* was a tour of each major town and village along the coast, with an emphasis on the celebrities and luminaries who lived in each. This, Mary Blume has written, had a profound effect: "Liégard did more than describe the Côte d'Azur: he defined it. What he called a fringe of coastline, a ribbon, now had a memorable name: it was packaged." See Blume, *Côte d'Azur*, p. 44.

free port in 1854 had destroyed commercial trade.[401] The Mediterranean coast was a region of rampant poverty, where human excrement was used as fertilizer.[402] Circumstances did not change until 1860, when Victor Emmanuel II of Italy traded Napoléon III the city of Nice for French military and economic assistance. The shift in national affiliation itself made little difference: after its transfer, Nice and its environs still constituted the poorest of all French *départements*. Rather, what transformed an ailing backwater of 7,900 residents into a vibrant city with the highest growth rate in all of Europe was the local embrace of the tourist industry. Mary Blume has shown how it was the first metropolitan area whose existence was entirely a function of a tourist-based economy.[403] In that regard, it became a locus of the leisure class, dependent on the culture of the foreign *hivernants* and *rentiers*—predominately English, but also Russian and American—who sought healthful climates and affordable prices during the winter months. Construction began on a lower *corniche* road; the railway was extended from Marseilles in 1864, and by 1874, and a mere fifteen years after French annexation, the city had more than tripled in population to 25,000 inhabitants.[404] Nice, in the words of Paul Valéry, became the "combination of stimulants […] such as I have seen nowhere in the world."[405] It was a city whose entire built environment—facades, boulevards, plazas—constituted an architecture of pleasure, consumerism, and, most of all, fantasy.

Economic circumstances facilitated the ease with which this transformation occurred virtually overnight. Between 1873 and 1896, the French index of wholesale prices fell from 124 to 71 (with 1913 as 100). During the same years, however, securities with variable incomes doubled in value while those with fixed incomes tripled in value.[406] In other words, when disposable incomes were significantly higher, goods were significantly, even drastically, cheaper. The *rentiers*—men and women living on unearned incomes—were thus the designers and the arbiters of a new landscape of desire. The Côte d'Azur, inexpensive and undeveloped, was their canvas, and paint they did. Nice, Cannes, and small fishing towns along the coast—Saint-Tropez, Antibes, Cagnes-

[401] See Blume, p. 36.
[402] Ibid., p. 35.
[403] Ibid., p. 37.
[404] Ibid.
[405] Quoted in Ibid., p. 12.
[406] Ibid., p. 38.

sur-Mer—became stage sets for grand hotels, lavish casinos, and shopping arcades to present the latest Paris fashions for those who preferred to avoid them. This is the world that appears, for instance, in the pages of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* (1934), a novel that depicts the glittering social set of Gerald and Sara Murphy,[407] a cadre of expatriate elites immortalized in the photographs of Jacques-Henri Lartigue (1894-1986) and the guest registers of the Hôtel du Cap. As Nancy O'Neill has written, it was an environment characterized by a nascent social life, a newfound glamour, and also by a significant amount of artistic collaboration. On the Riviera, after all, Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse designed stage sets for Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes and the writer Jean Cocteau worked with Igor Stravinsky on an adaptation of "Oedipus Rex."[408] As Xavier Girard notes in his recent study, by the interwar period, the *Côte d'Azur* had become "an atmospheric ballet."[409]

The structures erected on the Riviera's newfound cities were often temples of pleasure. Typically painted in shades of pastel, these Beaux-Arts palaces—all public spaces—were designed to lure passersby off seaside promenades into commoditized spheres in much the same way that the Baroque had attempted to lure fallen Christians back into the church. In a sense, the development of the Riviera belongs in Walter Benjamin's *Passagenwerk*, the German critic's unfinished analysis of the Parisian arcades: its history, too, evinces consumers discovering themselves as fully formed "masses" before the public display of goods for purchase. These respective masses then began to define themselves against each other, through a language of material consumption. Consider, for instance, the Palais de Méditérannée, a grand casino, on the Baie des Anges in Nice. Of course, gambling was consumptive competition—for a sense of departure at least as much as for money. But the structure built to facilitate this activity

---

[407] Gerald and Sara Murphy, acquaintances of Béatrice Éphrussi's, were wealthy American heirs who owned a villa on the Cap d'Antibes that they called the Villa America. There, they entertained the majority of the (mostly American) artists and writers known as the "Lost Generation," the same milieu depicted in Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*. They were amateur painters themselves, but they were mostly known as important Riviera *salonniers*. See Calvin Tomkins's 1962 New Yorker profile of the couple, which he later expanded into a book-length portrait. Tomkins, "Living Well is the Best Revenge," *The New Yorker*, 28 July 1962: http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1962/07/28/living-well-is-the-best-revenge. See also Tomkins, *Living Well is the Best Revenge* (New York, 1998); see also Amanda Vaill, *Everybody Was So Young: Gerald and Sara Murphy, a Lost Generation Love Story* (New York, 1998).

[408] See Nancy O'Neill, *Art and Visual Culture on the French Riviera, 1956-1971: The École de Nice* (London, 2012), esp. "Postwar Nice: The Eden of the Hexagon," pp. 17-49.

[409] Xavier Girard, *The French Riviera in the 1920s* (Paris, 2015), p. 8.

itself expressed these values. In 1929, the *Cannes News*, an English-language daily, proclaimed the structure, a cathedral of white in Art Deco angularity, "the most luxurious building the world has ever known."[410] The essence of the Palais was its superlative imposture, its aspiration. Yet excess alone was never the sole point of this newly built environment, as evinced by another class that emerged on the Côte d'Azur distinct from the *rentiers* but equally invested in the project of fantastical local transformation.

These were the artists who eventually made the Côte d'Azur famous and who remain at the heart of its mythology. They were still tourists, but decidedly less elite than the *rentiers*, attracted not by the potential to spend disposable income but rather by the region's intense light and natural colors. Henri Matisse (1869-1954) moved to Nice in 1917, and many others followed during the First World War and the interwar years: Max Beckmann (1884-1950), Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947), Paul Signac (1863-1935), Francis Picabia (1879-1953), Marc Chagall (1887-1985), Serge Diaghilev (1872-1929), Pablo Picasso (1881-1973). According to the art historian Kenneth Silver, what these artists created in tandem was "a dream space for the twentieth century,"[411] a place where consumerist excesses were more than an inevitable byproduct of inherited wealth, cheap labor, and a low cost of living. Thanks to this class of émigré artists, which, as Silver has put it, "represented the comfortable no-man's land of tourism" by "looking at the scenic wonders but not belonging to them,"[412] regular hedonism became artistic expression. The interchange between these two classes on the *fin-de-siècle* Riviera allowed the *rentiers* to understand themselves as artists, invested not in a quotidian pursuit of pleasure but an aesthetic enterprise with a broader significance. Perhaps the Riviera was a "dream space" for them most of all, which becomes clear in the private villas the *rentiers* constructed along the coast— total works of art, painstaking recreations of Russian *isbahs*,[413] Indian temples or Venetian palazzos.

---

[410] Quoted in Blume, p. 56.
[411] See Kenneth Silver, *Making Paradise: Art, Modernity and the Myth of the French Riviera* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), p. 25.
[412] Ibid., p. 49.
[413] There was, for instance, a significant Russian expatriate community in Menton, near the Italian border, where members built a Russian Orthodox church, a Russian cemetery, and several houses in this style, which survive in Menton today.

V. The Villa Île de France: Departure and Fantasy



Figure 26. The Villa Île de France, February 2015.

In many ways, Béatrice Éphrussi de Rothschild, a millionaire through familial inheritance and also a millionaire through marriage—was the iconic *rentier*: a woman with no occupation besides the kaleidoscope of her own imagination, with nothing but the means to translate these fantastical visions into reality. The Villa Île de France was her contribution to the "dream space" of the *Côte d'Azur*: it represented the meticulous artistry of her fantasies. The name of the house betrays something of its occupant's intentions, as well as an homage to the ethos of its location. "Île de France," as Ulrich Lebens has pointed out, was the name of the ocean liner from the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique* on which Béatrice traveled frequently, especially after her separation

from Maurice.[414] At the turn of the century, Béatrice traveled extensively and alone—to Egypt and Perisa, to Greece and Turkey, but most of all, to Italy,[415] her principal source of inspiration for the Italianate villa she ultimately constructed. She belonged, in essence, to a nineteenth-century cadre of adventurous and solitary female travelers and explorers: Elizabeth of Austria (1837-1898), Jane Dieulafoy (1851-1916), Alexandra David-Néel (1868-1969), and, from Béatrice's own milieu, Mirra Alfassa (1878-1973). In exotic destinations far from bourgeois Europe, these women—David-Néel in Tibet;[416] Alfassa in Pondicherry[417]—could escape the strictures of gendered performance inflicted on them by social convention. If travel was escape, it was also transcendence.

Travel's liberating potential was embedded most significantly in the basic design of the Villa Île de France, mansion and gardens alike. Facing three sides of the Cap Ferrat peninsula, the triangular property was reconfigured to resemble a ship charging ahead into the open water. Expansive gardens stretched toward the endpoint of this triangular expanse: this was the hull of Béatrice's immobile vessel. A Palladian "Temple of Love" served as a watchtower, the last point on the eye's inevitable journey from house to sea. Upon the completion of the Villa Île de France in 1911, Béatrice spent the majority of her winters in the house until she died in 1934. To be sure, the Villa was fixed in place,

---

[414] Ulrich Lebens, "Béatrice Éphrussi de Rothschild: Creator and Collector," p. 24.
[415] Steve, p. 45.
[416] In her 101 years, Alexandra David-Néel broke many barriers. As a teenager and aspiring opera singer, she traveled alone to England, Italy, and Switzerland; in 1924, she traveled alone to Tibet when it was entirely closed to foreigners. In the process of those and many other voyages, she left behind her husband and the mores of French society to live a life of her own design. She converted to Buddhism and over the course of her life published more than thirty books—travelogues, works of religious history, and Eastern mysticism. See, among others, David-Néel, *Mystiques et Magiciens du Tibet* (1924; ed., Paris, 2003). See also Barbara and Michael Foster, *Forbidden Journey: The Life of Alexandra David-Néel* (New York, 1989).
[417] Born in 1878, Mirra Alfassa came from a prominent Sephardic family and married the painter Henri Morisset, a student of Gustave Moreau's, in 1897. In the Paris of the Dreyfus Affair, the two were fixtures in the city's cultural elite, entertaining Zola, Rodin, and Monet in their lavish apartment. But, like Alexandra David-Néel, Mirra, ultimately abandoned her husband and infant son and lived alone -- hosting séances, reading about the occult, and studying Eastern mysticism. Eventually, she remarried a senator from the French province of Pondicherry, where she moved just before World War I. While there, she met the yogi and guru Sri Aurobindo. She left her second husband and devoted the rest of her 95 years to realizing a mystical vision of spiritual evolution and human emancipation. But the ashram she created became far more than just a spiritual retreat. "Auroville" was a true attempt at realizing a utopia, and it remains one of the longest-surviving ones on earth—not to mention an architectural gem in an most unlikely setting. Founded in 1968, it was designed, at Mirra's insistence, by the French architect Roger Anger in a bizarre but beautiful futuristic style. That style reflected the mission of the community. As Mirra put it in her 6,000 page manifesto, Auroville was meant to be a place where people could "live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities."

literally rooted to the Cap Ferrat and figuratively rooted in the commoditized paradise of the *fin-de-siècle* Riviera. For a thrill-seeking custodian who relied, as did many of her contemporaries, on the casino and the auction house as a means of distraction, the Villa's primary visual effect was a simulation of constant voyage. A stationary ship, Île de France represented eternal departure.

The Villa Île de France was and was not a typical Rothschild house. Its departure from the norms of the family's aesthetic of theatrical ostentation reflected the ways in which Béatrice distanced herself from her family's culture and its stifling norms. The general nature of so-called "*style Rothschild*"is as well-known now as it was during the construction of the Villa Île de France, a term relatively common by the early decades of the twentieth century, even among members of the family.[418] Of course, the specific components of the *style Rothschild* connoted a series of different meanings: the art historian Philippe Jullian famously contended that there was a "*style Rothschild sombre*" and a "*style Rothschild clair*."[419] Over time, however, *style Rothschild* came to mean, as Prévost-Marcilhacy has argued, "*une certain opulence liée à un mode de vie*."[420] To some extent, the house that Béatrice dreamed and made real on the Cap Ferrat was designed in the same *style Rothschild* that had defined her family's other houses across Europe, regardless of national context. But in certain ways, the Villa Île de France was also a revolt against this aesthetic, and a woman's revolt at that.

By the mid-nineteenth century—at Mentmore in 1850, at Ferrières between 1853 and 1863, and at Waddesdon in 1874—the family had begun to embrace the form of the chateau, which carried with it an unmistakably political set of associations: aristocratic wealth and social ascension, a nobility that was now for sale. For the Rothschilds, however, these chateaux were not used in the ways they had been by previous generations of owners with actual noble pedigrees: family members lived in them year round and not for mere recreation. These historic spaces thus became homes of quotidian use, theatrical stage sets not for special occasions but for daily life. This was certainly the case for the Villa Île de France, in which Béatrice lived for a period of several full years

[418] Prévost-Marcilhacy, p. 16.
[419] This observation—"*…il existe un style Rothschild sombre et un style Rothschild clair*" is cited in Mario Pratz's study, *Histoire de la décoration d'intérieure*: (Paris, 1964; reissued by Thames & Hudson, 2008), p. 334.
[420] Prévost-Marcilhacy, p. 16.

after its construction and then for the winters before she died in 1934.[421] If Rothschild homes were invariably defined, as Prévost-Marcilhacy has argued, by a gilded ostentation, this ostentation was not entirely for the purpose of public display: it characterized most of all the design and the décor of the private spaces in which family members lived as private people. The Villa Île de France, adorned throughout with the finest French paintings and eighteenth-century *objets d'art* then available for purchase, was nothing if not an extension of the family's idiosyncratic relationship to material display. As the few surviving records of Béatrice's collections suggest, some of the house's most elaborate rooms, after all, were its private spaces. For example, her bedroom contained some of the most impressive and valuable artworks in her collection, such as a Tieopolo depiction of Venetians on a balcony and a set of *trumeau* mirrors painted after Boucher.[422] Visitors rarely, if ever, saw these masterpieces.

The décor inside the traditional Rothschild home, as Prévost-Marcilhacy has argued, reflected the family's cosmopolitanism, and their homes were distinguished "*par leur caractère international: avant d'être allemands, autrichiens, anglais, italiens ou français, ce sont des Européens*."[423] Consequently, typical Rothschild houses—in Vienna, Paris, and Britain—each combined what family leaders considered the finest pieces of cultural and artistic production from each of the respective national contexts they inhabited. They presented a decadent pastiche of European artworks that the Rothschilds, as Europeans at home in a multiplicity of national contexts, were well equipped to curate and arbitrate. In that sense, Béatrice's Villa Ile de France is a classic example of the family aesthetic. The Villa's external façade, drawing on her affinity for Italy, was done in a style that blends the Neoclassical and the Italian Renaissance. By contrast, its inner

[421] Lebens, p. 24.
[422] I am grateful to the Rothschild Archive, London, for providing me with a copy of the inventory taken at Béatrice's death in January 1934 of every item and object in her possession—in the Villa Île de France, the Villa Rose in Monaco, and her Paris townhouse at 19, avenue Foch. The inventory for the Villa Île de France, a staggering list of 36 pages in small print type, lists the following under the heading "Chambre de Madame": "*Tiépolo—Toile marouflés au plafond répresentant renomée et un groupe de personnages vénitiens près d'un balcon*"; "*2 glaces trumeau en bois laqué blanc avec peinture en gris dans le goût de sauvage, répresentant des amours aux bulles de savon et des amours dénicheurs d'oiseaux*." The value of the Tiepolo, appraised in 1934, is listed as 10,000; the value of the trumeau mirrors at 5,000 (2,500 each). In my analysis of the entire inventory, these specific pieces rank among the most valuable for specific objects. See "Succession de Madame Éphrussi: Etat Descriptif des Objets d'Art et d'Ameublement garnissant la Villa "ILE DE FRANCE" située à Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat (Alpes Mmes), Rothschild Archive London, OE 405, p. 14.
[423] Prévost-Marcilhacy, p. 15.

atrium—the first enclosure one enters—showcased a floor of Byzantine-style mosaics, in much the same fashion as those at nearby Kérylos, Medieval Gothic arches, and, most notably, a series of twelve columns in pink Veronese marble to match the rose color of the exterior. There were specific rooms for specific styles: a "Salon Chinois" for Béatrice's collection of chinoiserie, a "Salon Louis XV," a "Salon Louis XVI," and separate rooms for her innumerable porcelain pieces, based on whether they were manufactured at Sèvres or Meissen.



Figure 27. The Salon Louis XVI, Villa Île de France.

Like other members of her family—and, indeed, her milieu—Béatrice was a passionate pursuer of provenance, another crucial hallmark of the *style Rothschild*. This is perhaps clearest in the Salon Louis XVI, the largest and most significant room in the Villa Île de France. Divided in two parts, the larger of the room's two seconds displays a selection of eighteenth-century *boiseries* that, in her assessment, once hung in Paris's storied Hôtel de Crillon, completed by Ange-Jacques Gabriel on commission from Louis XV in 1758. Béatrice's collection of antique *boiseries* continued into her private bathroom, adjacent to her boudoir, in which she displayed another set of elaborately decorated wood panels with putative royal provenance: although these do not appear in René Destailleur's encyclopedic *Documents de décoration au XVIIIe siècle* (1906), Wildenstein, from whom Béatrice acquired them, attributed them to the decorator Leriche, one of several who had collaborated on the Pavillion du Belvédère in Versailles's Petit Trianon.[424] The Petit Trianon was the domain of Marie Antoinette, and, as evinced most emphatically in the case of Moïse de Camondo, this specific provenance was the most coveted of all. The association had any number of appeals for individual collectors, but it is easy to imagine the appeal for Rothschild collectors, engaged as they were in demonstrating what Prévost-Marcilhacy has called "*l'ascenscion sociale et la richesse de la famille*."[425] Along those lines, the rest of the Salon Louis XVI is a painstaking homage to the pre-Revolutionary way of life. The walls not covered with *boiseries* displayed tapestries from Savonnerie, the royal tapestry manufacturer, and the period furniture was arranged in such a way to simulate the form and function of a true *salon*. Small clusters of furniture—one of which was centered around an inlaid wood *table à jeux* by Hache[426]—allowed for tête-a-têtes, chaise lounges by the windows for

[424] On this specific question of provenance, I have relied on the thorough analysis of Régis Vian des Rives, the former curator of the Villa Île de France and the former director of the now-defunct Fondation Théodore Reinach. Unlike in the case of Moïse de Camondo, hardly any archival materials contextualize the personal attraction of Béatrice Éphrussi to specific objects and items in her collection: what survives is mostly the technical records of the house and its construction. Vian des Rives, however, has pieced together what is likely the most extensive study of the objects in Béatrice's collection, even without much material on the psychology of the collector herself. See Vian des Rives, "Les Boiseries," in *La Villa Éphrussi de Rothschild* (Paris, 2002), p. 91.

[425] Prévost-Marcilhacy, p. 15.

[426] Hache was a family of *ébénistes* from Grenoble who produced some of the finest tables and cabinets of the ancien régime, pieces of rare wood patterning that were extremely coveted in the nineteenth century. See Marianne Clerc's catalogue from an exhibition at Grenoble's Musée dauphinois. Clerc, *Hache, ébénistes à Grenoble* (Grenoble, 1997).

wistful rumination and repose. As at Royaumont, the estate of the Fould-Springer family outside Paris, bronze candelabra by Pierre-Philippe Thomire (1751-1843) adorned the commodes, illuminating the room in the same intensity of light (albeit electrically powered) that would have illuminated such a room centuries before.

And yet the Villa Île de France also represents a significant departure from the *style Rothschild*. Unlike the majority of the Rothschild family's other properties (with the notable exception of Waddesdon), Béatrice's mansion was not a reconstruction of an historic castle or chateau linked to a narrative of national patrimony. It was the opposite. In the *fin de siècle*, the Côte d'Azur had essentially been part of the French nation for a mere two generations; in the eyes of local inhabitants, the French who arrived there *en masse* after 1860 were no different than the Americans, the English, or the Russians. All were foreigners, and the cultural ethos of the Rivieria was one of temporal escape, never one of maintained tradition. The essence of what Béatrice built with the Villa Île de France, the stationary ship, was thus distance from—rather than proximity to—history: the house was built from scratch on a site that was cleared for its construction and that had never before been inhabited. She was the land's first occupant and, as it happened, its last. But if the Villa Île de France represented a certain aversion to history, it also sought to defy nature, as evinced in the lush gardens Béatrice installed with great difficulty and even greater expense against the dry aridity of the Mediterranean climate.

Although she worked with numerable architects and designers throughout the construction of the Villa Île de France, its gardens—arranged on a series of concentric terraces and tiers from the elevated apex of the property down toward the sea—were largely realized by Achille Duchêne (1866-1947). Duchêne was the landscape artist of choice for the elite social circle to which Béatrice belonged: he designed the gardens for Moïse de Camondo's Paris mansion at 63, rue de Monceau, Louis Cahen d'Anvers's Chateau de Champs in Champs-sur-Marne, and Léon Fould's Royaumont. Working in the style of André Le Nôtre (1615-1700), the gardener of Louis XIV who had transformed the Parc de Versailles into a royal fantasy, Duchêne emulated the strict neoclassical order and geometric control of *le jardin français* for clients who sought to project a certain image of the *ancien régime*. For Béatrice, however, he designed a sprawling garden that would emulate the fantastical pastiche of the Villa itself, mixing

plants, flowers, and trees from around the world, regardless of whether they would flourish in the rocky soil of the Cap Ferrat. Just as the house blended a variety of architectural styles and historical moments—the Italian Renaissance, the Medieval Gothic, Louis XV, and Louis XVI—the gardens presented a floral diversity that was immediately apparent. Mediterranean Cyprus trees were juxtaposed against rows of cotoneasters from the Himalayas, which were in turn juxtaposed against guaycan trees from Mexico. As Régis Vian des Rives has written: "*Le jardin, avec sa dominante architecturale, était donc conçu par Madame Éphrussi comme un prolongement de la villa*."[427]

Few documents that describe the specifics of Béatrice's affairs survive, but there is a certain amount of correspondence between René Julien, her property manager, and various horticulturists along the Riviera. The letters exchanged, from 1911, reveal the sheer determination with which the Villa's garden—a "dream space" in its own right—was built against all conceivable odds, both natural and logistical. One florist wrote of the difficulties involved with transporting a vast shipment to the estate: "*…le genre de transport est bien un peu plus couteux, mais plus advantageuse pour la plante*," he wrote, "*et même si on compte le transporte depuis la gare de Beaulieu à domicile le prix revient à peu près le même, et par chemin de fer on manipule les plantes 3 à 4 fois….*"[428] The following day, another landscapist wrote to Julien the following: "*Monsieur, les plantes dont je vous ai envoyé la liste…. On pourrais si vous le voulez ajouter dans ce même wagon avec les plantes 1000 ou 2000 fr de bruyères vertes dont le prix et 49 les milles kg*."[429] Also on April 18, the head of a rose company wrote to the estate with confirmation of Béatrice's order: "*Je m'impresse de répondre à votre demande de renseignements*," he wrote. "*1) poids approximatif: 2500 kilogr*."[430] Béatrice had ordered more than two tons of roses, a flower that cannot survive in Mediterranean climes without constant care. That fact, however, was irrelevant: the garden was to be realized whatever the challenges. The necessity of Béatrice's vision required it.

---

[427] Vian des Rives, p. 120.
[428] André Gordelon to René Julien, 17 April 1911, Moscow Papers, box 1390, Rothschild Archive, London.
[429] Denis Troncy to René Julien, 18 April 1911, RAL.
[430] P.C. Nabonnand & Cie., Les Roses du Golfe-Juan to René Julien, 18 April 1911, RAL.

Considering the number of plans and sketches that survive from the construction of the Villa Île de France, what is perhaps most striking is the active role Béatrice played in the structural aspects of its design. The house in fact was a laboratory for several of her own original designs, both architecturally and in terms of new furniture styles she imagined. As Lebens has written, she was insistent that her architects include a new kind of support system for the Villa's roof, plans for which she drew herself. It consisted of a metal structure that was attached to a wooden canopy, both of which were covered with layers and plaster and then woven together with iron threads.[431] Suspended between roof and attic floor, this intermediary level provided, at least in theory, extra support for the roof as well as a supple receptacle for the effects of rain and mold. The Rothschild Archive also contains Béatrice's personal drawings for a set of screen doors to adorn her new Villa: meticulously drawn, the screens that are fully collapsible along their hinges but t also double as trays on either side. The practical use of this particular contraption aside, it was an item whose conception, creation, and display were entirely a function of her imagination. All of her designs she patented—either in France or in Britain—as scores of holdings in the Rothschild Archive attest. As one receipt reads: "Originals sent to PATENT OFFICE, LONDON (per Thomas Cooper), in accordance with the instructions of Madame la Baronne Rothschild-Ephrussi, le 20 Février 1918."[432] And as Béatrice herself wrote, in English, to this same office later in the same year:

> I sent you on June 20th 1917 by parcels' post a small box containing a model of a chair showing the application of my Patent in facilitating the work of blind soldiers etc… You were to have it on hand to show to the Patent Office. What have you done with the chair and have you it now? On February 20th last I sent you several drawings of screens etc., for delivery at the Patent Office, London. On what date did you deliver them and have you kept a receipt for them. Please reply at once.[433]

As it had been for her father and others in her family and milieu, the material realm was for Béatrice a mode of self-expression and her patents a means of owning those expressions. At least in part, the Villa Île de France was thus a space that a woman not only owned and designed but that a woman made. In the end, however, the Villa was also a sanctuary in which Béatrice could—quietly, subtly, playfully—transgress the

[431] Lebens, p. 26.
[432] OE 466, RAL.
[433] OE 466, RAL.

mores of her family, its style and its culture. In much the same way as she had satirized, in 1897, the bourgeois rite of marriage by hosting a wedding for her favorite poodles, she also seems to have satirized Rothschild material excess—its opulence and its attempt to project power—in some of her collections. This was perhaps her rationale behind the "Salon des Singes," the most bizarre corner of the house. In keeping with the *style Rothschild*, Béatrice maintained rooms devoted to the finest porcelains, one for each of the main manufacturers she collected, Sèvres and Meissen. Especially in the case of Meissen, the long history of porcelain in Europe was a quest for perfect purity, and to possess "white gold" was, for many, more than a sign of status: it was an attempt to access an almost alchemical transfiguration.[434] Béatrice, however, amassed an extensive collection of porcelain monkeys, and placed them in a room in which the figure of the monkey appeared in every aspect of the decoration—the *boiseries*, the embroidery, and even the art. Of course, *singerie*, as it was known, was fairly popular in eighteenth-century décor because of its impertinence and its levity, but it was not as popular in the late-nineenth and early-twentieth century revivals of this style. Parody operates in the Salon des Singes on at least two levels. The first concerns the figurines themselves, an entire orchestra of small monkeys, swathed in painted fripperies, intended as a literal parody of the court of Saxony. The second concerns the room itself, juxtaposed as it is near the other porcelain rooms in the house: if "white gold" was a means of projecting prestige, it could also project an image of monkeys at the piano. Béatrice's intention for the room remains unknown, but this seems its principal effect.

VI. Material Obsession

In a family in which both public and private life were arbitrated by male leadership—even in the realm of family homes, all designed by male Rothschilds—the Cap Ferrat presented uncharted waters indeed. It was a presumably a refuge for Béatrice after her divorce, the death of her sister Bettina (1858-1892), and the death of her father in 1905; but, in the landscape of the Côte d'Azur, then relatively undeveloped, it was also a veritable *tabula rasa* on which she could enact her fantasies, as eccentric and bizarre as

[434] The historiography of porcelain is a thesis in its own right. For the most recent survey, see Edmund de Waal, *The White Road: A Pilgrimage of Sorts* (London, 2015). Although fictional, Bruce Chatwin's *Utz* (1988) is an iconic depiction of the elusive appeal of "white gold."

they were. As its name suggested, Île de France was a means of departure, a departure from the strictures of family and bourgeois life, but a departure into the realm of dreams. Eventually, and perhaps predictably, she tired of this Villa, and set her sights on other material transformations: these, it seems, were her animating passion. In 1916, she bought a pair of adjacent villas in Monte Carlo, not far from the casino, which she attempted to transform into a Moroccan casbah. These—to be called the Villa Soleil—remained unfinished when she died, alone in a hotel, in 1934. Her revisions and comments on the plans for these new projects were found among her possessions. Consumption and creation occupied Madame la Baronne until the very end.

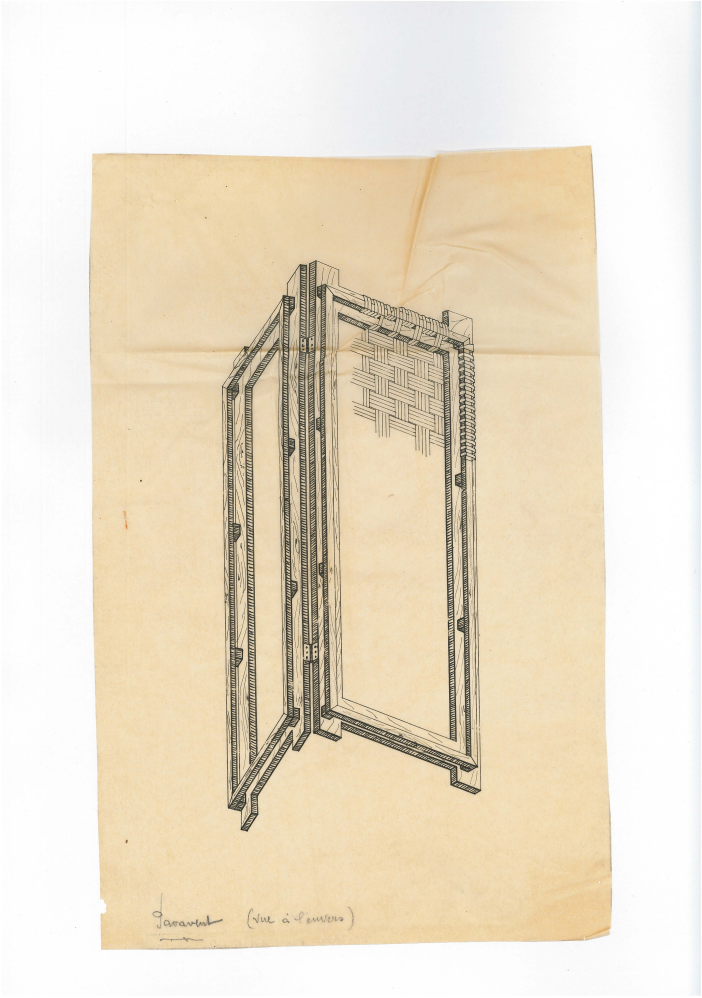

Figure 28. Béatrice's sketch of her screen design, Rothschild Archive, London.

CHAPTER VII.
THE FOULDS, THE CHÂTEAU ROYAUMONT, AND THE ANCIEN RÉGIME AESTHETIC



Figure 29. *Siegfried Propper and family, Thérèse and Liliane Fould-Springer, gathered for the wedding of Eduardo Propper de Callejón and Hélène Fould-Springer*, Paris, November 1929. Propper Family Archive, New York City.

Marriage, as both social contract and demarcation of status,[435] was perhaps the greatest totemic rite in nineteenth-century bourgeois life, in France and elsewhere. It was certainly, in the words of the French historian Frédéric Barbier, the "*grand affaire*" in the specific "*monde de la haute bourgeoisie financière*"[436] that the Fould-Springers inhabited: "*la stratégie familiale qui se concrétise notamment par les mariages, correspond exactement à la stratégie financière*."[437] For France's financial élite, and, as Barbier has noted, especially for France's Jewish financial elite,[438] marriages in the period were often mergers, the concretisation of mutual economic interests, as much as they were attempts

[435] See Nancy Cott, "The Public Stake," in *Just Marriage*, ed. Mary Lyndon Shanley (Oxford, 2004), p. 33.
[436] Frédéric Barbier, "Les origins de la maison Fould: Beer Léon Fould (vers 1740-1864), *Revue Historique*, Vol. 281, No. 1 (January-March 1989), p. 187.
[437] Ibid., 191.
[438] Ibid.

at solidifying—and perhaps even elevating—a coveted position in a rigid schema of social castes.

Marcel Proust, in *Du côté de chez Swann* (1913), famously called this late-nineteenth century schema "*un peu hindou*," a system in which *"rien, à moins des hasards d'une carrière exceptionnelle ou d'un mariage inespéré, ne pouvait vous tirer pour vous faire pénétrer dans une caste supérieure*."[439] Proust's words described marriage for many, but they speak especially well to the union that created "*la famille Fould-Springer*," custodians of the Chateau Royaumont, a Palladian *logis* an hour north of Paris that was a locus of social life in the *beau monde* of Paris's interwar Jewish haut-bourgeoisie. The 1905 wedding at the Vienna synagogue of Eugène Fould (1876-1929), scion of the prominent Fould family, and Marie-Cécile Springer (1886-1978), heir to the vast Springer steel and banking fortune, was no exception, and neither, for that matter, was the 1929 wedding of their daughter, Hélène Fould-Springer, to Eduardo Propper de Callejón; the 1934 wedding of their daughter Thérese to the British editor Alan Pryce-Jones; or the 1941 wedding—by proxy—of their daughter Liliane to the Baron Élie de Rothschild.[440] These were all undoubtedly personal and economic unions that nevertheless consolidated the family's position in a Proustian "*caste supérieure*," the holiest of bourgeois rites.

But in this particular case, these marriages were also the links that constructed a fundamentally transnational network connecting the respective establishments of Paris, Vienna, Madrid, and London, a network that constructed a bordered *milieu* of individuals at home partially in all of these environments but in none of them entirely, a group of Europeans with the means to travel between these poles and thus to sustain concomitant cosmopolitan identities, as fluid as they were multifaceted. Although concentrated in France through the summer of 1940, centred primarily at the Chateau Royaumont, the Fould-Springer family and its extended relations were, in these years, nevertheless the denizens not of a singular national polity but rather of a multinational, cosmopolitan world. Their ultimate exile from that world—and, indeed, from the identities that had

[439] Proust, *Du côté de chez Swann*, (Paris, 2007), p. 18.
[440] The marriage of Liliane Fould-Springer to Élie de Rothschild was performed by proxy in Cannes in October 1941; Élie de Rothschild at the time had been captured by the Germans and was being held as a prisoner-of-war at Colditz. See Hélène Propper de Callejón, *I Loved My Stay* (London, 1997), p. 114.

sustained it—appears primarily a result of the long struggle, begun in mid-nineteenth-century France, between two mythologised conceptions of Jewishness—and, specifically, of Jewish plutocracy—in an increasingly industrial society. Royaumont, the château that Eugène Fould and Marie-Cécile Springer purchased in 1923 and where their family lived until 1940, was their decidedly material attempt at forging a place for themselves within that society. A microcosm of the French past, the château was ultimately a canvas on which they attempted to project a cosmopolitan Jewish identity that was compatible with French universalism.

The first of these myths, forged in the wake of 1791, when the Jews had been emancipated in the Revolution, was that of the assimilated, republican *israélite*, privately Jewish but publicly, proudly French, a myth that took root mostly among France's native Bordelaise and Alsatian Jewish communities and especially among their élites. To be sure, the *israélite français* valorised the specifically *French* republic, but he also championed that republic's decidedly extra-national mission, what the historian Renée Poznanski has called its "*message universaliste*."[441] As Michael Graetz and Lisa Leff have recently argued, this embrace of universal republicanism was even translated into a culture of "Jewish internationalism" later in the nineteenth century, in which French Jews, in a seeming appeal to Immanuel Kant's *ius cosmopoliticum*, "publicised the plight of their Eastern brothers as a means of appealing to the enlightened spirit of the age."[442] Affirming particularity, in other words, became a means of affirming the universal, even cosmopolitan, project of the French Revolution that the *israélite*, as *citoyen*, had an obligation to uphold.

The second myth, crystallized in the aftermath of the Damascus Affair of 1840 and the deadly 1842 crash near Meudon on Rothschild-financed train lines, was that of the "Rothschild Jew," the capitalist agent and the Jewish plutocrat who would stop at nothing to exploit—and undermine—the French nation *and* its universalist ideals for profit and for the advancement of particular, Jewish interests. Beginning in the 1840s, the myth of the "Rothschild Jew"—circulated initially by the likes of Alphonse Toussenel in *Les Juifs, rois de l'époque*, G.M. Dairnvaell in *Histoire édifiante et curieuse de*

[441] Renée Poznanski, *Les Juifs en France pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris, Hachette, 1994), 22.
[442] See Lisa Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity,* p. 1.

Rothschild Ier, rois des juifs (1846), and Pierre Leroux in *Malthus et les economistes* (1849)—eventually became a powerful trope in the writings of Fourier, Proudhon, and Saint-Simon, a vocabulary in terms of which much of what was autocratic and anti-republican was articulated.[443]

Both of these myths—the Jew as universalist, cosmopolitical republican and as capitalist plutocrat—were constructions that had emerged in what was essentially the same historical moment and, indeed, within the same national context. Because they were thus dependent on the same cultural signifiers embedded within that context, there was an inherent friction between them, a tension predicated on their own mutual exclusivity. At least to some degree, the amplified interest in the so-called "Jewish Question" throughout the nineteenth-century—from Damascus to Dreyfus and beyond to Vichy—can thus be interpreted as a clash between these two mythic conceptions. As Barthes reminds us, "*il n'y a aucune fixité dans les concepts mythiques: ils peuvent se faire, s'altérer, se défaire, disparaître complètement*." The experience of the Fould family in the late nineteenth century and of the Fould-Springers between the wars is chiefly a micro-historical chronicle of a group of individuals—of *israélites*—gradually coming to terms with precisely that lack of fixity in their own self-understandings. By 1940, the mythic foundations of their particular formulation of Jewish identity had been destroyed. But the Château Royaumont survived, a material relic of that identity and the cosmopolitan world that had produced it. On at least some level, the château was the family's attempt to resolve—through objects and art—an increasingly hostile relationship between Frenchness and Jewishness.

I. Fould, the Archetypal "Israélite"

On a certain level, the contours of the Fould family's ascent are very familiar: the patriarch, Beer Léon Fould (1767-1855), emerged from the periphery of Boulay-Moselle, a small village in Alsace-Lorraine, born to a local wine dealer. Jews by the name of Fould

[443] I follow here, the line of argumentation recently introduced by the historian David Nirenberg, in which Judaism "is not only the religion of a specific people with specific beliefs, but also a category, a set of ideas and attributes with which non-Jews can makes sense of and criticize their world." See *Nirenberg, Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York, 2013), p. 3.

or its variants—Fuld, Fult, Foult or Fulda—had appeared in local records since the thirteenth century, but local archives dispute that until the eighteenth century these names indicated a clear family unit.[444] Illiterate and impoverished, the young Fould managed to charm the prominent Alphonse Cerfbeer de Médelsheim when he happened to shine the great man's shoes on the streets of Metz. "*Charmé de cette application et peiné de la paresse de ses fils, il […] leur cita l'exemple de ce pauvre petit, orphelin, abandoné, qui acquérait lui-même l'instruction*," observed one of Médelsheim's associates.[445] Clearly impressed, the wealthy Medelsheim then rewarded the enterprising young man with a job as *valet de chambre* in a hotel he owned in Nancy, and he was promoted to factotum and then to cashier. Twelve years later, when Fould moved to Paris, his benefactor lent him 30,000 francs to establish la Banque Oppenheim in 1784. The Foulds, as it were, had arrived.

As a young man fashioning a life in the capital after the Revolution, Beer Léon Fould had everything to gain in the emerging Republic with its struggling economy: he speculated on military equipment, the sale of army supplies, and domestic goods, and began to increase his profits—and presence—significantly. As Balzac observed of the Baron de Nucigen, his thinly veiled study of Fould, the initial, rudimentary iteration of la Banque Oppenheim offered an environment of his own, over which he had absolute control: "*chez lui, la banque est un très petit département: il y a les fournitures du gouvernement, les vins, les laines, les indigos, enfin tout ce qui donne matière à un gain quelconque...*"[446] It was also a base from which Fould could begin to expand, which he did quickly if not altogether scrupulously, by staging a false liquidation of la Banque Oppenheim in 1794, disappearing—even from his wife—for four years, while transferring the millions he had accrued in assets from the bank into the creation of an industrial conglomerate of mills and foundries that would establish his family as a permanent fixture in the world of *haut-finance*.[447] But Fould's fortune was not itself sufficient to propel his family into Paris's social élite.

---

[444] Frédéric Barbier, "Les origines de la maison Fould," p. 161.
[445] Quoted in Ibid., p. 163.
[446] Quoted in Ibid., p. 165.
[447] See "Fould," *Dictionnaire des dynasties bourgeoisies et du monde des affaires*, ed. Henry Coston (Paris, 1975), 385-389.

Fould's descendants heeded those words. Indeed, they became something of a family creed for future generations of the Foulds who would follow. If the Rothschilds were the wealthiest and most prominent Jewish family in France, the Foulds were ultimately the Jewish family that enjoyed the largest amount of political power in the nineteenth century. After all, Beer Léon's eldest son, Bénédict Fould (1792-1858)—who styled himself, in a representative *israélite* fashion, as Benoît—served in the Sénat and consolidated the family's banking interests by marrying the daughter of his father's partner, Helena Oppenheim. Fould's youngest son, Achille (1800-67), ultimately used his father's wealth to gain a position near the pinnacle of political power in the Second Empire, serving as Napoleon III's finance minister for four separate terms, a role in which he was influential in reducing France's significant war debts. It was in the second generation that the family began to undergo what Weber would have identified as an improvement in "style of life," an increase in social capital that was evinced in Achille Fould's admission to Paris's storied "Jockey Club" after his retirement—a rarity for Jews, even of the staunchly republican, *israélite* variety.[448] The rise and consolidation of this "*dynastie*" was even stronger by the third generation: the patriarch's grandson, Leon, had joined his inherited fortune with that of his bride, Thérèse Ephrussi of Odessa, and had become a tireless collector of porcelain and *objets d'art*. Thérèse's family was a Black Sea clan of grain and oil magnates who had a fortune even more extensive than the Foulds, and their marriage was a union that that propelled the foreign-accented bride into the Parisian *beau monde* and the groom into the particular stratum of financial security in which he could, in the style of Bruce Chatwin's *Utz*, lavish attention on his own material obsessions.

Leon Fould's own granddaughter, Hélène Fould-Springer, recalled her grandfather's passion for materiality in the second of her two memoirs, published privately—and in English—after her death in London in 1997. As she remembered, holding a piece of porcelain with great care and love and a sweet smile on his face, her grandfather would say: "'*Quel goût! Comme c'est joli*!' Even when he was going blind, he used to touch and feel the quality of a piece of china with the tips of his old fingers."[449]

---

[448] Barbier, p. 186.
[449] Hélène Propper de Callejón, *I Loved My Stay*, pp. 44-5, PA.

This is precisely the same materiality and commodity fetishism that Edmund de Waal has interpreted as a means of multi-generational dynastic consolidation in the confines of the nineteenth-century, affluent Jewish family.[450] Along those lines, the patriarch's great-grandson, Eugène—and Hélène's father—appears to have been more invested in Balzac's exhortation to "*devenir noble, fonder une dynastie*" even than his own father had been. A true dilettante, Eugène spoke five languages, could draw well, and corresponded throughout his life with Marcel Proust, whose portrait, incidentally, hung in his study at Royaumont, the neoclassical estate he and his wife had acquired north of Paris in 1923.[451]

From Hélène's recollections, her father loved the races, belonged, as his great-uncle had, to Paris's Jockey Club, and is often seen, in a slew of photographs that survive, charging ahead on one of the many horses he kept over the years at Royaumont. In his youth, he had been a carefree, uncommitted student whose primary mission seems to have been maintaining his social position among the likes of the Löwenthals, the David-Weills, the Weisweillers, and the Sterns—the pillars of the *fin-de-siècle* French-Jewish elite.[452] Eugène was known for his cutting—and often prurient—sense of humour, joking frequently, for instance, about the sexual incompatibilities of seemingly mis-matched couples he would observe on the street "*Sich vorstellen und wieder weg*," his descendants remember him commenting in those situations; having daughters, he would note later in life, was akin to dusting with sugar strawberries that someone else would one day eat.[453] Yet beneath the veneer of the playful, even cavalier *bon vivant*, Eugène was marked by a certain melancholy and a profound sense of darkness. "Deep down," Hélène wrote, "he had a wistful, morbid character, and he even told my mother on one occasion: 'I go through life like a bereaved clown.'"[454] In photographs, this "bereaved clown" often appears with his wife and children, a proud and even complacent patriarch. Yet, for

[450] See de Waal, *The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance*, pp. 30-32.
[451] Eugène's connection with Proust initially came through his mother, Thérèse Ephrussi, who held a salon at which he was a frequent guest. In fact, before its sale in 2011, the library at Royaumont contained a copy of Proust's first-ever published work, his 1904 translation of John Ruskin's The Bible of Amiens. It bore the following inscription: "*À Madame Léon Fould. Respecteux hommage d'un ami*."
[452] Eugène's youth is recounted in some detail by his grandson, the British writer David Pryce-Jones, in his recent memoir, *Fault Lines*. Pryce-Jones, born in 1936, never met Eugène, who died in 1929, but his book relies heavily on family lore and Eugène's private letters and diaries, which remain in his possession. See Pryce-Jones, *Fault Lines* (New York, 2015), p. 36.
[453] Ibid.
[454] Hélène Propper de Callejón, *I Loved My Stay*, p. 29, PA.

Hélène, there were "times we clearly sensed that our father did not really enjoy being the family man at the head of the 'Smalha,' as he often referred to the children and the nannies."[455]

Perhaps taking his father's example, Eugène married the wealthiest woman in Central Europe at the time of her birth, the sole heir to the vast Springer fortune and its extensive landholdings throughout the Habsburg Empire, scattered throughout Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia, Bukovina and Austria itself. This was Marie-Cécile Springer—known as "Mitzi"—the only daughter of the Baron Gustav Springer, whose father, Max Springer, had been an ennobled member of Vienna's Jewish banking aristocracy. Her grandfather, in much the same way as Beer Léon Fould, had emerged from the periphery of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the beginning of the nineteenth century and had come to its capital in search of a fortune, where his arrival had fortunately coincided with an increasingly tolerant atmosphere for Jews. Emperor Joseph II had already instituted the famous Edict of Tolerance in 1782, but Jews would enjoy a greater degree of inclusion after the Napoleonic Wars, when many of Vienna's Jewish banking houses—including that of Max Springer—financed public loans as a means of raising money for the nearly bankrupt monarchy. After the upheavals of 1848 especially, this capacity spurred the creation of a "second society" of bankers and traders who were often Jewish and who were rewarded for their services with titles, which was the case for the likes of the Arnstein, Rothschild, Königswater and Todesco families in the period.

As Vienna itself was recast into a built environment of bourgeois fantasy after the Emperor's 1857 decree for the demolition of the old city's walls, many of these ennobled Jewish dynasties took literal root along the newly constructed *Ringstrasse*, around which, to borrow from Carl Schorske's definitive study, "the great representational buildings of the bourgeoisie were placed sometimes in clusters, sometimes in isolation."[456] Receiving in 1860 the definitive right to own real estate and in 1867 full legal and confessional equality, Jews with means became fixtures in the burgeoning culture of the new city in a

[455] Ibid., p. 18, PA.
[456] Carl Schorske, "The Ringstrasse and the Birth of Urban Modernism," *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (London, 1980), p. 33.

time when the city's Jewish population[457]—assimilated and German-speaking—increased exponentially after the mass influx of newcomers from Habsburg territories such as Bukovina and Galicia.[458] The Springers were among these fixtures, hosting *salons* of Vienna's leading writers and artists and funding the construction of several of the new city's gleaming landmarks as well as public resources. Even in future generations, the Austrian capital, where the Fould-Springers would divide their time, served as something of an adopted ancestral home for the family, more so even than Paris. "*Vienne*!" Hélène later wrote in another privately published memoir, written in French and published in 1961. "*J'ai toujours un serrement de coeur en y songeant… Notre maison, le parc où chaque pierre, chaque feuille me rappellant ces années si longues qui s'éloignent sa vite*."[459]

Gustav Springer, Hélène's grandfather, was already, at the time of his father's death, among the wealthiest in the city and, for that matter, in central Europe, having inherited the Todesco fortune and joining his own with that of his wife, Elisabeth Königswater. But Gustav Springer was distinct in that he was among the few bankers who risked investing his money in his own industrial enterprises, which he did through a string of yeast factories he owned in Vienna and Paris. With the rise in popularity of mass-produced white bread—specifically, the Viennese trademark of *weisse Semmeln*—yeast product became a major Austrian export, and the Springers controlled the majority shares of the market. Max Springer's fortune of 1,456,736 florins—some £10-£15 million in today's currency—had more than quintupled half a generation later at Gustav's death in 1920, when his personal fortune was worth 346,395.764 crowns. All of this was inherited by Marie-Cécile.[460]

---

[457] Stefan Zweig's opening pages to *The World of Yesterday* emphasize—and, in truth, exaggerate—this same point on the influence of Vienna's Jewish bourgeoisie on the city's cultural output: "Whoever wished to put through something in Vienna," he wrote, "…was dependent on the Jewish bourgeoisie. […] Viennese Jews had become artistically productive although not in a specifically Jewish way; rather, through a miracle of understanding, they gave to what was Austrian, and Viennese, its most intensive expression." Zweig, *The World of Yesterday*, pp. 22-23.

[458] Klaus Lohrmann estimates the rise in Vienna's Jewish population in these years to have been from a mere 6,200 in 1860 to 40,200 in 1870 to 72,600 in 1880. See Lohrmann, *Zwischen Finanz und Toleranz: Das Has Habsburg und die Juden* (Vienna, 2000), pp. 195-201.

[459] Hélène Praday, *Absents de nous-mêmes* (Paris, 1961), p. 15, PA.

[460] See Hélène Propper de Callejón, *I Loved My Stay*, pp. 33-36, PA.

An independent woman who would maintain, alone, her father's business interests after his death, Marie-Cécile was remembered as an imperious character, a woman of power and a woman of conviction, whose every command was to be obeyed. "There had to be dead silence when we went out, especially if it was all black under her bedroom door," Hélène recalled, "or else there might have been, as indeed there often was, a real explosion of rage at our thoughtlessness."[461] Typically, Marie-Cécile began her days in the family's apartment in the rue d'Iéna with a retinue of guests—dressmakers, milliners, and servants—lined up outside her boudoir, awaiting an audience from the lady of the house herself. Material perfection was an absolute requirement: "The *lingère* who made all our underwear could not put imitation lace on my underclothes," Hélène recalled. "My mother was shocked when this was suggested as she wanted only the best."[462] Wrapped in a pink silk *liseuse*, trimmed in the finest Irish lace, Marie-Cécile, in her daughter's recollections, would receive her guests beneath a cashmere throw she called "Anatole."[463] There, she would issue commands to her secretary, Pauline Lévy, perched at a desk at the far end of the suite. On the days that the family was due to travel from Paris to her family estate she still kept at Meidling in Vienna, she had no compunction in asking Mlle. Lévy to do such things as telephone the Gare de l'Est, where the Orient Express departed for Istanbul. "Tell them that we might be a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes late," Hélène recalled her mother demanding.[464] When Marie-Cécile saw her children, she would not look at them so much as receive them, extending her hand for a kiss. "If I was sick," Hélène later wrote, "my mother would send her maid to enquire how I was feeling and I would then think how lovely it was that my mother had remembered me."[465]

When she married Eugène Fould in 1905, her fortune added significantly to the Fould's carefully cultivated social position. It also protected against Eugène's notorious spending habits. As Proust wrote to Eugène in March 1905, shortly after his wedding: "The task of your wife will be very delicated and very lofty and all your friends place the

[461] Hélène Propper de Callejón, *I Loved My Stay*, p. 16.
[462] Ibid.
[463] Ibid., p. 31. PA.
[464] Ibid., p. 18. PA.
[465] Ibid., p. 31. PA.

greatest hope in her that she will be able to fulfill it."[466] Initially, at least, Marie-Cécile appears to have fulfilled that "task" quite well. Not only did her fortune ensure Eugène's financial security; her considerable connections in Austria garnered him a coveted title, an acquired distinction that many of the other collectors in his *milieu* also enjoyed. Emperor Franz Josef, in a private audience, conferred on the newlywed couple and their future descendants the title of Baron and Baroness Fould-Springer, a moniker that then applied to each of their four children: Max (b. 1906), Hélène (b. 1907), Thérèse (b. 1908), and Liliane (b. 1916). As French and Austrian—or, rather, Parisian and Viennese—a fluid, European sensibility was inherent even in the family name, Fould-Springer. Within the confines of a single household, there were two distinct nationalities, five languages, and multiple landholdings, primarily in the eastern Habsburg territories, that straddled the borders of different regions and that therefore could not be identified in terms of a single national polity. What the family inhabited, then, was a literal and figurative cosmopolitan world. As Hélène recalled in her English memoir: "My mother considered the Orient Express and the Gare de l'Est like her own possessions."[467] In a sense, they were: the life of Marie-Cécile's family depended on constant motion and mobility.

In *Giboulées*, a collection of poems she published under the name of "Hélène Praday" in 1941—in the midst of exile in Morocco with her husband, Eduardo Propper de Callejón—Hélène's subjects were often the cities and the places she had known in her youth, the very fabric of the cosmopolitan Europe from which she had only recently been exiled. What strikes the reader is the immediate succession in which she has arranged the sequence of "place" poems: we move immediately from "Londres" to "Paris" to "Vienne" to, finally, provincial "Autriche." To be sure, the poems themselves are the work of an amateur, often the sensory impressions of an individual collected in a series of forced couplets. The "place" poems are unique in *Giboulées*, however, in that Praday's persona manifests herself in each, whereas that voice is absent all throughout the rest. In London, for instance: "*Tout* me paraît *actif, silencieux, concret*."[468] Of Paris: "Je pense *à*

[466] This letter appears—in translation—in Philip Kolb's edition of Proust's letters. See *Marcel Proust, Selected Letters*, ed. Philip Kolb., vol. II (New York, 1989), pp. 152-153.
[467] Hélène Propper de Callejón, *I Loved My Stay*, 18, PA.
[468] Hélène Praday, *Giboulées* (Tangier, 1941), 66, PA, emphasis mine.

toi *au printemps,/ Tes pieds à l'ombre des marronniers*."[469] Of Vienna: "Je te connais et je t'adore/ *Surtout en automne*."[470] Of Austria: "Je reste à l'arrêt/ *Dans le petit village/ Qui sent le cidre et le fumier*."[471] As the capitals and countryside of three distinct European centres of power, these locations are ostensibly unrelated, opposed, and foreign—at least to each other. Yet, because they constitute an environment—a world—that shelters, nurtures, and ultimately *produces* the voice of Hélène Praday, active in each, they are linked, sewn together in a cosmopolitan space by the red thread of a cosmopolitan individual.

These cities—and many others in early twentieth-century Europe—comprised a truly multi-national, multi-ethnic environment that lasted through the First World War and even up to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. This was the Europe that the Fould-Springers inhabited, a *mélange* of identities joined in a unique cultural adhesion fostered by cosmopolitan individuals such as Hélène Praday, who existed equally in a variety of national contexts. Of course, this cosmopolitan Europe was indeed a reality primarily for social and financial élites with, among other things, the means to travel. But it was also, for assimilated Jews such as the Fould-Springers—based in France if not exclusively *French*—a mythology in its own right, a sustaining illusion of individual identity in a national context increasingly wary of supra-national, pan-European affiliation, especially in the immediate aftermath of the Dreyfus Affair. When, for instance, Eugène Fould had refused to renounce his French citizenship as a newly named baron of the Austro-Hungarian empire, Franz Josef is said to have brushed aside his objection: "Baron Fould-Springer," he said, "We are pleased to meet you as a compatriot, as we both have our roots in the city of Nancy, Lorraine."[472] From the traces of the Fould-Springers' family life that survive, it seems clear that this notion of a European brotherhood—in which the custodian of what was once the Holy Roman Empire and the descendants of enterprising Alsatian Jews were equal "compatriots"—

---

[469] Ibid., 67, emphasis mine.
[470] Ibid., 68, emphasis mine.
[471] Ibid., 69, emphasis mine.
[472] See Günther Berger, *Dies Springer-Villa*. Erbauer and Bewohner (Vienna, 1992), p. 29. Hélène Fould-Springer also mentions this anecdote in her English memoir, albeit in slightly different terms: "'Auf Wiedersehen, Baron Fould-Springer,'" was apparently the family memory of this exchange. See *I Loved My Stay*, p. 28.

was the life-blood of the identities they created, which, at least in their eyes, transcended borders and boundaries.

Jewishness, for the Fould-Springers and many other cosmopolitan, assimilated European Jews in the period, was at once a reminder of an archaic identity that they, as modern Europeans, had transcended. But, in the same way that it was for Théodore Reinach, Jewishness was also a particular identity whose affirmation could emphasize the liberal ideals of cosmopolitan Europe and, to some degree, of the age in general. In a sense, this was something that that they had reclaimed. After all, as assimilating *israélites*, earlier generations of the Fould family had converted to Protestantism, which had enabled them to enter the upper echelons of the French government. Even still, the family never abandoned Jewish culture. Achille Fould, for instance, despite his insistence on assimilating into a world defined "*aux catégories supérieures d'une société en majorité catholique*,"[473] nevertheless used his considerable influence in the Second Republic to secure the official censorship of plays he deemed anti-Semitic, including Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*.[474] His brother Benoît Fould, whose adopted name, according to Frédéric Barbier, evinced a certain type of "cultural conversion,"[475] nevertheless followed the lead of Adolphe Crémieux in the aftermath of the Damascus Affair to show solidarity for persecuted Jews abroad, which he did in the Chamber of Deputies by publicly affirming his own Jewishness on multiple occasions.[476]

As separate and distinct from the age-old Talmudic injuction for Jewish solidarity—*kol yisrael arevim zeh bazeh*—this mid-nineteenth century iteration, especially in France, was a unique attempt to employ the embrace of particular, inherited identities as a means of championing the ideals of both the French—and the universal—republic. "Not only did French Jews seek to help Jews elsewhere whom they perceived to be in need," the historian Lisa Leff has argued, "they also used the language of solidarity—filled as it was with decidedly republican ideals—to solidify their own position within France."[477] In doing so, they could "appeal to the enlightened spirit of

[473] Frédéric Barbier, "Les origines de la maison Fould," p. 192.
[474] See Jan Goldstein, "The Wandering Jew and the Problem of Psychiatric Anti-Semitism in *Fin-de-Siècle* France," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 20, No. 4, (Oct., 1985), p. 522.
[475] See Barbier, p. 192.
[476] See Lisa Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity*, p. 126.
[477] Ibid., p. 6.

age" by arguing for the defence of fellow Jews in terms of western liberal principles, accessing universality *through* particularity. Given that both Benoît and Achille Fould were among the principal architects of many such policies in the 1840s through the 1860s, this ultimately appears to have been the family's understanding of Jewishness. It was an allegiance that, because of the Diaspora, was inherently transnational, a European and even global network in its own right that was thus an ideal space in which to enact the French Republican project. The Fould-Springers, as European "compatriots," seem to have inherited this particular understanding of Jewishness, a particularity through which they could therefore access a fundamentally cosmopolitan world. Unlike their antecedents, Eugène and Marie-Cécile never converted[478] and always remained proud of their Jewishness: in a sense, it was a natural extension of their cosmopolitanism.

"My parents," Hélene recalled in her memoir, "were not interested in religion."[479] But if the practise of religion itself was not a fixture in the lives of the Fould-Springers, a considerable degree of Jewish identity was indeed maintained. Eugène and Marie-Cécile, after all, had been married in a synagogue, their only son, Max, would have a bar mitzvah, and their daughters would be made to study with none other than Julien Weill (1873-1950), the *grand rabbin* of Paris at the time.[480] The Dreyfus Affair, for the Fould-Springers and other *haut-bourgeois* French-Jewish families, was, as Hélène notes, a "painful shock" not because of the widespread anti-Semitism it had elicited in newspaper

---

[478] In *Fault Lines*, David Pryce-Jones relates that for Eugène Fould, a Jew who converted to Catholicism was "a deserter in uniform." See *Fault Lines*, p. 36.

[479] Hélène Propper de Callejón, *I Loved My Stay*, p. 50.

[480] Along with his father-in-law, Zadoc Kahn (1839-1905), Julien Weill, the chief rabbi at the time of the German invasion in 1940, is perhaps the best-known—and controversial—rabbi in the history of modern France. This is largely because of an interview he gave to *Le Matin* in 1938, immediately after Kristallnacht, in which he said the following: "*Le problème juif vient, ces temps derniers, de prendre une ampleur telle qu'il ne saurait être résolu que dans le cadre des organisations internationales. Je crois, à ce propos, que la solution qu'il réclame dépend bien davantage de l'Amérique et de l'Angleterre que de la France, qui a déjà fait, à cet égard, plus qu'aucun pays au monde et ne peut plus, de toute évidence, accueillir de nouveaux immigrants. Je ne crois même pas qu'elle pourrait leur faire place dans les régions habitables de son empire colonial (...) Nul ne compatit plus que moi, vous l'imaginez, à la douleur et à la misère des israélites allemands. Mais rien non plus ne me paraît plus précieux que le maintien de la paix sur la terre*." In recent interpretations, contemporary historians such as Paula Hyman have been very critical of Weill, largely because, in their view, he denied any responsibility on behalf of France—or French Jews—for the protection of incoming Jewish refugees. The best situation, he argued, was best left for British, American, and international organisations to resolve. As Hyman has written: "Asserting his support for the French policy of appeasement, he subordinated all concern for the refugees to the achievement of an accord with the Nazi regime." See Hyman's discussion of Weill and the interview he gave, featured in Hyman, "Between Two World Wars," *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley, 1998), p. 156.

commentaries or even casual conversation. It was an affront because it challenged, at least for a moment, the myth that had grounded their Jewish, French, and ultimately cosmopolitan identities. "My parents had lots of friends who were members of the top social scene in Paris at the time, including members of the aristocracy," Hélène wrote.

> My father was undoubtedly very snobbish and valued these important friends and connections. Perhaps it was for this reason above all that the social behaviour […] brought about by '*l'Affaire Dreyfus*' was such a painful shock to my father—a wound which never healed. At that time, even some of his best friends cut him dead in the street, so no wonder."[481]

To be "cut dead in the street" in that way—ignored merely because of one's Jewish heritage—was, for the Fould-Springers, to be identified as something other than that which they had chosen for themselves, imprisoned in the confines of an unelected, unwanted role. In this case, Eugène Fould, as a result of an externally imposed perception, was momentarily exiled from his own understanding of his identity: he had become, for the first time, a foreigner. The Château Royaumont, which he bought in 1923, was thus Eugène's attempt at demonstrating a tangible, material Frenchness.

II. The "Rothschild Jew" Pathology

Aside from the *israélite*'s universalist, cosmopolitical republicanism, the alternative myth of the capitalist, anti-Republican Jewish plutocrat—the "Rothschild Jew," as it was often invoked—gained significant traction in the years after 1840. If, as we have seen, the Foulds—and, later, the Fould-Springers—were paragons of the *israélite* sensibility, they were more than mere targets of the emerging "Rothschild Jew" mythology. As a family of exceedingly wealthy—and publicly prominent—financiers of Jewish origin, they were among the signifiers from which this Barthesian mythology of the Jewish plutocrat was actively constructed, and the name "Fould" itself, repeated in mid-nineteenth century French socialist writings and in political tracts from the period, eventually became a veritable *sign* for that which was "other," anti-republican, and, most of all, foreign. By 1940, their name signified—and therefore imposed on them—a specific iteration of Jewish identity that was the opposite of the identity they, as a family, had formulated and had cultivated over the course of the nineteenth century. In that sense, the success of the Jewish plutocrat mythology in permeating popular discourse marked

[481] Ibid., 51.

the beginning of the Fould-Springers' exile from the distinctly cosmopolitan Euorpe in which they had imagined themselves to reside.

Although the so-called "Jewish Question" had played a distinct role in French discussions of universal citizenship since 1791, in the early decades of the nineteenth century the *question*, so to speak, was fundamentally a descendant of the Enlightenment concern, propagated by the likes of Voltaire, over the insular, particularist identity that separated Jews from the mutual social commitments they owed, in the eyes of republicans, to fellow individuals regardless of any system of categorisation. The post-Revolutionary utopian socialist Charles Fourier, for instance, maintained a clear animus toward Jews throughout the bulk of his writings. As he wrote in 1823, Jewish emancipation—in that it enshrined a people's particularity within the context of a universalist republic—was ultimately a "*rétrogradation libérale*," an "*acte impolitique*" that had only "*introduit des parasites, des improductifs, tous adonnés au trafic et nullement à l'agriculture, gens qu'une politique éclairée aurait exclus comme contagion sociale*."[482] Cast in terms of the "*sociale*," then, for Fourier the "*question juive*" was merely the justification behind the need to "*administrateur une éducation collective, et d'abord l'astreindre à l'exercice du travail productif, culture et fabriques*."[483]

It was not until the early 1840s—during a period of significant economic growth and industrial expansion, specifically in terms of railroads—that the *question juive* began to be approached primarily in economic terms and the myth of the "Rothschild Jew" began to be created.[484] This myth, as the Israeli historian Michael Graetz has shown, was sustained by both anti-Semites and Jews, either suspicious of or enamoured with "the presence in Paris of a dynasty of Jewish bankers who dominated the capital markets there and across Europe."[485] In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the amalgamated Rothschild firms alone could claim 100 million francs in assets, and could, in Bertrand Gille's assessment, have raised capital upwards of 300 million, taking into account their

[482] Fourier, *Théorie de l'unité universelle*, vol. i. in *Oeuvres complètes de Charles Fourier*, vol. ii (Paris: 1843), 169.
[483] Quoted from the *Publication des manuscrits* in Pierre Bourgin, 227-28.
[484] See Michael Graetz, "Rothschild, King of the Jews," *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France: From the French Revolution to the Alliance Israélite Universelle*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Stanford, 1996), 80.
[485] Ibid.

networks in Paris, London, and Frankfurt.[486] This sheer financial clout, Graetz has argued, "which allowed them to rub shoulders with rulers and the world's powerful, was assimilated—in the suppositions and rumours going around—to the power behind the throne. Peace and war were in their hands."[487]

Of course, the Rothschilds were merely the most prominent family in this "dynasty of Jewish bankers" in Paris, the most established, and, therefore, the most visible, which is why the myth of Jewish plutocracy initially began in terms of that specific family. But other families—including, most importantly, the Foulds, who had the largest amount of political power—came to be associated with this trope, especially after two specific events in the early 1840s. As the cultural historian Julie Kalman has pointed out, the first of these was the Damascus Blood Libel Affair in 1840, when eight prominent Jewish citizens of French-occupied Damascus were wrongly accused of murdering a Christian monk and subsequently tortured and imprisoned. When the Jews of metropolitan France—including James de Rothschild and Benoît Fould—expressed public sympathy with Jews of Damascus, a city on the periphery of the French imagination, they were catapulted into the public arena in a way that they had not been since emancipation in 1791. As Kalman notes: "In publicly identifying with people who were depicted as being so exotic—and so depraved—French Jews were confirming, for many, that those who during the Revolution had argued that Jews in France would remain an *imperium in imperio* had been correct in their association."[488] The second event was the calamitous May 1842 train disaster on Rothschild-owned lines near Meudon, when the *question juive* became a question of rescuing France from the deadly grasp of a ruthless, profit-hungry foreigner who could never be a true Frenchman, just as Balzac's Nucigen can never master his faint but ever-present German accent.[489]

Little wonder, then, that in the years that immediately followed, a plethora of popular treatises and what were allegedly more reasoned, "academic" formulations solidified, for the reading public, the myth of Jewishness as a means of achieving a form of plutocratic, financial control. In these considerations, it was no different than the

---

[486] Bertrand Gille, *Histoire de la maison Rothschild*, tome 1. (Genève, 1965), p. 162.
[487] Gratez, p. 80.
[488] Julie Kalman, *Rethinking Antisemitism in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 123.
[489] Ibid., p. 129.

absolute monarchy the Revolution had overthrown and that was therefore, at its core, anti-French. Perhaps most prominent in this genre is Alphonse Toussenel's *Les Juifs, rois de l'époque: histoire de la féodalité finacière* (1845), the first, as its title suggests, that makes the direct association between Jews and monarchs, albeit in financial terms. "*Où l'omnipotence des juifs apparaît dans toute sa splendeur, c'est dans la grande question intérieure, je veux dire la question financère*," Toussenel argued.[490] His treatise was followed, among others, by G.M. Dairnvell's *Histoire édifiante et curieuse de Rothschild Ier, rois des juifs* (1846), which also associated Jews with monarchs, and by Pierre Leroux's *Malthus et les economistes ou Y aura-t-il toujours des pauvres?* (1849).

The early contours of this myth then manifested themselves in the writings of the influential socialist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865). Indeed, as Pierre Haubtmann's 1960 edition of his notebooks revealed, the Jewish Question enjoyed a significant structural centrality to Proudhon's entire critique of political economy. Building on the writings of Toussenel, Leroux and others who had circulated the myth of the Jewish plutocrat with the antithesis of the republican enterprise, the Jewish Question became, for Proudhon, the negative space against which the good society could be conceived. As he wrote on 25 December 1847: "*La haine du Juif comme de l'Anglais, doit être un article de notre foi politique*."[491] But Proudhon carried the myth of the Jewish plutocrat even further. "*Je hais cette nation*," he wrote in an entry dated 26 June 1847. "*Il faut accomplir le voeu de Voltaire, la renvoyer à Jérusalem*."[492] He revised this initial endorsement of expulsion in the 25 December entry from the same year: "*Demander son expulsion de France, à l'exception des individus mariés françaises;—abolir les synagogues, ne les admettre à aucun employ, poursuivre, enfin, l'abolition de ce culte*."[493] This is the same passage in which Proudhon went so far as to advocate extermination: "*Il faut renvoyer cette race en Asie, ou l'exterminer. […] Par le fer, ou par la fusion, ou par l'expulsion, il faut que le juif disparaisse*."[494]

---

[490] Alphonse Toussenel, *Les juifs rois de l'époque: histoire de la féodalité financière*. (Paris: Libraire de l'École societaire, 1845), 16. *The Making of the Modern World*. Web, accessed through Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, 19 May 2014.
[491] Proudhon, *Carnets*, vol. ii, p. 338. "The hatred of the Jew, as of the Englishman, should be an article of our political faith."
[492] Ibid., p. 150.
[493] Ibid., p. 338.
[494] Ibid.

What Proudhon (and others) thus established, through the use of such terms as "*nation*" and "*race*"—juxtaposed against a notion of the "*français*"—was a veritable vocabulary of identity whose end result was the enshrinement of Jewish difference in public discourse and common language. In a sense, what he created was a new definition for what Jewish alterity would come to mean, a definition that would later be imbued in certain words themselves as the myth of the "Rothschild Jew" was mobilised. Those words were the names of prominent French-Jewish families: if "imaginary Jews," to use the historian David Nirenberg's phrase,[495] had a structural centrality in popular conceptions of French social discourse, the *real* Jews who were their inspiration now did as well. This is why most of the writings that sought to circulate this particular myth of Jewish domination contained lists of names of other prominent Jewish families or individuals besides the Rothschilds—names that, in theory, lent credibility to the broader "arguments" being made, names that reified the suspicions and rumours about the financial power of Jews among the lower echelons of French society, and names that, in the end, became signifiers of Jewish plutocracy and, through it, Jewish alterity. In a sense, the use of these names in the writings on Jewish financial exploitation in the period therefore redefined the meaning of those names. No longer did they merely connote the position of an individual within a specific family structure; as signifiers of a certain mythology, these names themselves *became* the very notion they were meant to signify. Those who bore them were thus no longer Rothschilds or Foulds; they were foreigners and exploitative plutocrats, subsumed into a singular identity category that merely served to distance them, linguistically *and* culturally, from the national project of French universal republicanism.

The name "Fould" was almost always included in those lists of names, a term that began, in the early 1840s, merely as a signifier for Jewish financial domination but that, by the later decades of the nineteenth century, had become a sign, a touchstone of a mythology it itself had helped to reify. In his bestselling 1846 treatise, *Histoire édifiante*, for instance, Dairnvaell expands—indeed, substantiates—his conception of the "Rothschild Jew" and its nobility by discussing at length one other prominent French-

[495] See Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*, pp. 1-13. See also Michael Walzer, "Imaginary Jews," The New York Review of Books, 20 March 2014. http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/mar/20/imaginary-jews/?insrc=toc

Jewish name: Fould, which he does more than simply list. Rather, Dairnvaell *defines* this term, not as a particular family with a particular history and provenance, but rather as "*une autre paire de cornes de Moïse*":

> *Il y a en Europe trois grandes dynasties juives, celle des* Cohen*, celle des* Fould *et celle de* Rothschild*. La dynastie Cohen s'est eclipse devant l'astre resplendissant des Rothschild. […] Le chef des Fould pretend même à la royauté.*[496]

Dairnvaell's redefition of the term "Fould," as the second most worthy signifier of the type of Jewish "*royauté*" he seeks to describe, goes even further in his discussion of Beer Léon Fould's three sons, Benoît, whom he calls "*le roi*," Louis, "*Monsieur frère du roi*," and Achille, "*trop éloigné du trône*." Dairnvaell attacks Achille's masculinity, which is itself a labour of distancing his subject—a man of high esteem in the government of Napoleon III—from traditional norms of accepted behaviour. "*M. Achille Fould représente*," he writes, "*sa dynastie dans la fashion parisienne […] on le connait dans les coulisses de nos principaux théâtres, et son nom est inscrit dans le livre d'or de nos lorettes*."[497] Of Benoît, whose name Dairnvaell attacks as a deliberate fiction of Christian appearance, the polemicist notes that "*M. Fould est, du reste, tout ce qu'il y a de plus* banquier du monde, *c'est lui qui dirige* la boutique israélite."[498] This, to some degree, is a masterful formulation, in that it essentially reverses the Foulds'—and, later, the Fould-Springers'—embrace of Jewish identity as a means of accessing a French, pan-European and even universal cosmopolitan identity. For Dairnvaell, "Fould" became a term that thus began with the universal—"*du monde*"—and ended with the particular—"*la boutique israélite*." "Fould," in that sense, implied something of the difference between cosmopolitan and foreigner.

In any interpretation, Dairnvaell's redefinition linguistically isolated the term "Fould" from the French commonplace: "Fould" means many things, but most of all, it connotes, in his interpretation, some degree of distance from the national mainstream, whether in terms of sexuality, nationality or identity. A year later, Proudhon appears to have internalised this conception, isolating not only the "imaginary Jews" evoked by "Fould" but the individuals who actually bore that name from the French national

---

[496] G.M. Dairnvaell, *Histoire édifiante et curieuse de Rothschild Ier, rois des juifs par Satan* (Paris, 1846), p. 5.
[497] Ibid., 7.
[498] Ibid.

community, at least as he understood it. In the same entry, entitled "JUIFS," in which he called for the disappearance of the Jewish "race," Proudhon made a list of names of individuals and families—French and foreign alike—who, in his mind, were chiefly responsible for France's national dissolution: "*H. Heine, A. Weil, et autres ne sont que des espions secrets; Rothschild, Crémieux, Marx, Fould, êtres méchants, bilieux, envieux, âcres, etc. etc. qui nous haïssent*."[499] The Foulds, as denizens of the term "Fould," were now "*espions secrets*," and their name had been recast in such a way as to remove from them—indeed, to *deny them*—the very identities they had sought to cultivate.

III. The Château Royaumont as Resolution

In a certain sense, the wealth of the Fould-Springer family lent its members the manifest belief that their fates were insulated from the vicissitudes and the vagaries of history. For them, the Great War of 1914 had seemed primarily an inconvenience, an external circumstance that had required them to concentrate their business operations primarily in Paris rather than Vienna but that was otherwise the opposite of an existential threat to themselves or to their own sphere of existence. As Hélène would recall in her French memoir, *Absents de nous-mêmes* (1961), she spent a great deal of the war with her elder brother, Max, at the Baur au Lac Hotel in Zurich, a neutral territory. As it happened, a hotel was an especially appropriate setting for the family's experience in the war, which was essentially a holiday from "*l'horreur environnante*," during which the children could run free outside and the adults could "*jouaient au bridge*:"

> *Les années s'écoulent ensuite sans que nous ayons pris conscience de toute l'horreur environante; la guerre pour nous, c'était les cartes postales de Papa, les inquiétudes de Maman, les permissions, la carte parsemée de petits drapeaux. Le grand événement des 'raids', tant appréciés par nous, tous les enfants se retrouvant alors sur des matelas dans un étroit corridor au rez-de-chausée; les parents et les grand-parents jouaient au bridge.*[500]

Of course, the family had been insulated from history only in its imagination, and as Jews living primarily in Paris and Vienna between the wars, there is no question that contemporary circumstances mandated a certain performance, even of the unconscious variety. As a fatigued society faced with a devastated economy after the stock market crash of 1929, a series of ineffective, disorganised governments on the Quai d'Orsay, and

[499] Proudhon, *Carnets*, vol. ii, 338.
[500] Hélène Praday, *Absents de nous-mêmes*, p. 19.

the prospect of communist upheaval in Spain to the south and a re-militarised Germany to the east, France in the 1930s was submerged in a climate of anxiety and internal division. This was especially true for French Jews, republican *israélites* such as the Fould-Springers, who now had to affirm their French nationality as millions of foreign *Ostjuden*, fleeing pogroms in either Russia and Ukraine or Nazi Germany, began to arrive in France *en masse*. Indeed, France's central location had made it the leading host of foreign immigrants and refugees in the world, even more so than the United States.[501] Jews, who now accounted for ten percent of the national population, were especially visible among the newcomers, the archetypal foreigners.[502] This perception was only exacerbated after the Stavisky Affair in 1933, the election of Léon Blum, France's first Jewish prime minister, in 1936, and the assassination of Ernst von Rath, a German diplomat, by Herschel Grynszpan, a Polish-Jewish refugee, in 1938.[503]

Proper *israélites*, ensconced in the social establishment, thus had to distance themselves from their eastern coreligionists. The effort to keep such a distance manifested itself in any number of ways: a culture of what might be labeled as "Jewish antisemitism" emerged in contemporary French literature, as is evident most famously in the novels of Irène Némirovsky, in which, as in *David Golder* (1931), she at times resorts even to base physical caricature. This, essentially, was a budding genre of the French interwar period: as the historian Nadia Malinovich has illustrated, other lesser-known novels such as Jacob Lévy's *Les Pollacks*, Bernard Larache's *Jacob* (1925), and Sarah Lévy's *O mon goye!* (1929) and *Ma chère France!* (1930) all suggest an urgent need among educated, assimilated French Jews to avoid a heightened anti-Semitism by distinguishing themselves from Eastern, un-acculturated immigrants. This insistence on self-differentiation, however, was by no means confined to the realm of literature, and it was not always even conveyed in terms of controversial, incendiary polemics.[504] In fact, as various art historians have argued,[505] it could assume a form as quiet and as unassuming as a private art collection or even the arrangement of a family home, an

[501] Eugen Weber, "Foreigners," *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s* (New York, 1994), p. 87.
[502] Ibid.
[503] See Renée Poznanski, *Les Juifs en France*, p. 39.
[504] Nadia Malinovich, "Jewish Literature in France, 1920-1932," in *French and Jewish*, (Portland, 2008), pp. 180-181.
[505] See, among others, Anne Higonnet, *A Museum of One's Own* (Pittsburgh, 2009).

attempt to demonstrate a certain fidelity to a particular interpretation (typically an eighteenth-century neoclassicism) of an *ancien régime* aesthetic, what the Goncourts and others in the period had identified as the peak of French cultural grandeur.

The example most often cited is that of the Camondo collection, now the Musée Nissim de Camondo. As the family patriarch, Moïse de Camondo, wrote in his will, his collection of French eighteenth-century *objets d'art* was a demonstration of his loyalty to the Republic at the peak of its glory. In that context, the Fould-Springer purchase and decoration of the Chateau Royaumont can therefore be interpreted as a similar attempt, conscious or unconscious, to project an image of French nationality in a climate increasingly hostile to Jews. On some level, the château itself, commissioned in 1784 by the abbot of Royaumont, Henri-Eléonore-François le Cornut de Ballivières—Louis XIV's former chaplain at Versailles—was the ideal canvas on which to project such an image. After all, Ballivières had commissioned none other than Louis Le Masson (1743-1829) to design his "Logis," the independent structure that the Fould-Springers ultimately acquired in 1923 and that subsequently became known as the Chateau Royaumont. With all the noticeable signs of Le Masson's style—clearly designed in the Palladian tradition but with something of the restraint of Inigo Jones—Royaumont strives for what might be characterized as an even more refined Neoclassical aesthetic, one that resists the temptations of scale and focuses instead on the geometry and precision emphasized in the contemporary drawings of Italian artists such as Giovanni Piranesi. Like the Petit Trianon at Versailles, Royaumont is a small but nearly perfect cube, a mimetic homage to the form.



Figure 30. Château Royaumont, September 2011.

On some level, the château's design seems an embodiment of the "*edle Einfalt und stille Größe*"—the "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur"—that Johann Winckelmann (1717-1768) famously ascribed to the Neoclassical project.[506] But it also evokes a specific moment in French history, a moment of glorious abundance in the years before the Revolution, a period that was defined, according to the Goncourts, by a "*décadence délicieuse*." Its construction was directly linked to the highest echelons of the *ancien régime*'s social hierarchy, and, in a sense, the château was a material remnant of the world in which it had been constructed. Unlike, for instance, Moïse de Camondo's mansion in the rue de Monceau—or, for that matter, the majority of the other homes considered in this thesis—Royaumont was not a new construction designed to realise the particular fantasies of an individual collector. As the Château Champs-sur-Marne had been for the Cahen d'Anvers, Royaumont presented the Fould-Springers with an

[506] On Winckelmann and his influence on the Neoclassicism, see, for instance, David Irwin's *Neoclassicism* (London, 1997) and Francis Haskell, *Taste and the Antique: the Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500-1900* (Yale, 1981).

authentic piece of the past as opposed to a plot of land for a reconstructed fabrication. By acquiring the Château, then, they were acquiring more than a house: they were acquiring history, a narrative in which they belonged as much as any other. After all, in the years between the chateau's completion in 1789 and its sale to the family in 1923, it had become a veritable microcosm of France itself, in constant flux between revolution and reaction. Sold as national property in 1791, Royaumont became a weaving mill until 1864, when it again became an abbey that, in 1904, was ultimately targeted in the post-Dreyfus anticlericalism of Émile Combes (1835-1921).[507] The property thus exuded a sense not only of history but of *French* history, from the *ancien régime* to the present. As we have seen, Drumont would likely have classified the Fould-Springers' purchase of the château as a Jewish "invasion" of France's cultural *patrimoine*. But when they bought Royaumont in 1923, the Fould-Springers were writing their family into the history of the house, but, in a certain sense, they were also writing Jews into the history of France.

This subtle project was even clearer in the execution of the house's decadent interior, which Eugène Fould and Marie-Cécile Springer decorated in a painstaking fidelity to the architectural style of Royaumont itself. In much the same way as the Camondo collection attempted to honour the "*gloires de la France*" in its emphasis on eighteenth-century pieces, the Fould-Springer was also a private, personal monument to the aesthetic splendours of the *ancien régime*. Compared with the others in their *milieu*, many of whom were frequent guests at Royaumont, Eugène Fould and Marie-Cécile Springer were particularly interested in Louis XVI *ébénisterie*—cabinets. These were a particularly well represented in their collection. There was, for instance, a mounted tulipwood Louis XVI table, lined in ormolu and with an intricate marquetry top signed by Martin Carlin (1730-1785), the period's most celebrated *ébéniste* who was ultimately made a royal master of cabinetry in 1766. As Chapter I of this thesis has shown, Moïse de Camondo was also a collector of Carlin: Carlin's name bore the coveted royal imprimatur that many of the period's great Jewish—and non-Jewish—collectors desired. Additionally, sometime before 1913, Eugène also acquired a Louis XVI *guéridon* attributed to Adam Weisweiler (c. 1750-c. 1810), another of the period's coveted

[507] For a comprehensive history of the Chateau Royaumont before the Fould-Springers purchased it, see Jean-François Belhoste. *Royaumont au XIXe siècle: les métamorphoses d'une abbaye* (Paris, 2008).

ébénistes,[508] the table's tripod legs supported by elaborate bronze cherubs.[509] The crown jewel of the Fould-Springer collection, however, was their Louis XVI *meuble d'appui* (c. 1770), a chest made of ebony, lined with ormolu, and topped with a layer of pink marble. The piece joins certain elements attributed to the school of Pierre Gole, a Dutch-born cabinetmaker at the court of Louis XIV, with others by that of his son-in-law, André-Charles Boulle, the undisputed master of marquetry.[510] Indeed, the marquetry on this particular piece was incredibly elaborate, depicting in inlaid bronze the floral fantasia of the coming of spring. Like the château itself, this *meuble d'appui* was a piece of history: as Alexandre Pradère has argued, the different styles it united reflected the shift in the school of Boulle between Louis XIV and Louis XVI.[511]

In terms of spatial arrangement, however, the centrepiece of the Fould-Springer collection—displayed prominently in Royaumont's austere, stark atrium foyer—was an eighteenth-century *consulat* table laced with ormolu and bronze patina, by Pierre-Philippe Thomire (1751-1843). At first glance, this piece would seem a natural addition to a collection otherwise dominated by *objets d'art* from the *ancien régime*—and especially the Louis XVI period. Thomire, after all, in the pre-Revolutionary portion of his career, had done the bronze wall fixtures for Marie Antoinette's *Salon des Jeux* at Compiègne: his signature, as well, evoked the coveted royal provenance. Yet Eugène and Marie-Cécile displayed this Thomire table, by far the most visible piece in their home, alongside an elegant late eighteenth-century bronze stag and four ormolu, green marble from the first decade of the nineteenth century. Royaumont, therefore, was technically not a "total reconstruction" of a specific period in the way that Moïse de Camondo's Paris mansion or Théodore Reinach's Villa Kérylos later would be. To some extent, the collection and its display mirrored the evolving, multifaceted history of the house, which,

[508] On Weisweiler, see James Parker and Clare Le Corbeiller, *A Guide to the Wrightsman Galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1979), pp. 127-128.
[509] We know that this particular piece was acquired before 1913 because it appears in the 1913 piece on Eugène's collection. See Georges Samary, *Collection de Monsieur le Baron Eugène Fould*, July 1913; parts of this inventory are reproduced in the Christie's catalogue of the September 2011 auction of the Fould-Springer collection at Royaumont. See *Palais Abbatial de Royaumont: 19, 20 & 21 septembre 2011* (Paris, 2011), p. 38.
[510] On Boulle, see, among others, Theodore Dell, *The Frick Collection, V: Furniture in the Frick Collection* (New York, 1992), p. 187.
[511] See A. Pradère, "Boulle. Du Louis XIV sous Louis XVI," *L'Objet d'Art*, February 1988, p. 39. See also Royaumont (Christie's, 2011), p. 40.

indeed, originated in the *ancien régime* but continued well into the twentieth century. And the Fould-Springer collection included pieces and rooms devoted to the styles of various periods within that span of time. Their library, for instance, was designed in an Empire aesthetic: its focal point was a *guéridon* from the early nineteenth century whose legs, instead of cherubs, were the taut torsos of Roman figures. Other rooms featured more contemporary, twentieth-century pieces. This was especially true of the *grand salon*, illuminated by a massive thirty-six light chandelier, strung with thousands of amethyst beads.[512] What the Fould-Springers collected—and what they displayed at Royaumont—was ultimately an image of French cultural production through the ages, a narrative that would match the history of their home. Of Royaumont, it followed, they were not so much owners as they were custodians, keepers and celebrants of a national legacy.



Figure 31. Thomire consulat, Château Royaumont, 2011.

[512] See S. Melikian et. al., *La Décoration*, Vol. I (Paris, 1963), p. 264. See also Royaumont (Christie's, 2011), p. 27.

IV. Royaumont as Refuge

Although no documentation exists that reveals the precise motivations behind the Fould-Springer collection or their design of Royaumont, both nevertheless existed in the larger context of anxiety among assimilated French Jews over the durability of the universalist Republican enterprise in a time when that no longer seemed certain. After Dreyfus, the Fould-Springers were yet another elite Jewish family who emphasized the art of the *ancien régime*, precisely the period that the material anti-Semites of the *fin-de-siècle* had insisted they could neither understand nor appreciate. As there was in many of the homes designed by these elites, Royaumont, too, evoked a certain aspiration. Eventually, the château's attempt at nationalistic self-definition had failed, and so had the mythology of identity—Jewish, French, and cosmopolitan—that had sustained it. In the words of the historian Renée Poznaski: "*Le Juif devenait donc le quintessence de l'étranger, en même temps que le Juif étranger révélait le vrai visage de l'israélite qui se prétendait française*."[513] So it was for the Fould-Springers, forced to confront their own alterity even in the confines of a home that had been constructed as a testament to their own Frenchness.

Eugène Fould died of pneumonia in the Astor House Hotel in Shanghai in 1929, in the midst of a six-month world tour with Marie-Cécile and their eldest daughter, Hélène. The trip had been arranged as a rapprochement between mother and daughter: Hélène had abruptly broken off her engagement to one of her mother's financial advisors, a few months before. The following year, when the widowed Marie-Cécile brought her grieving children to Langau, the Austrian country estate of Alphonse (1878-1942) and Clarice Rothschild (1894-1967), Hélène met and fell for Eduardo Propper de Callejón (1895-1972), a First Secretary in the Spanish Embassy. Propper, the son of Max Propper, a Galician Jewish banker, and Juana de Callejón, the daughter of a Spanish aristocrat. Although Propper was half-Jewish in terms of origin, he was a devout and practicing Catholic. This was not at all what Marie-Cécile had imagined for her daughter, a prospect that even elicited the scorn of their *milieu*. Alice Cahen d'Anvers, for instance, one of the sitters in Renoir's *Rose et bleu* (1881) and a close friend of Marie-Cécile's, allegedly

[513] Poznanski, p. 39.

disapproved of Propper to such an extent that she urged her friend to "throw that creature out."[514] Marie-Cécile herself had apparently referred to the Proppers as "Jews from Galicia with lice in their side-locks."[515] Because of Propper's diplomatic credentials, however, and their potential utility for her various international business holdings, Marie-Cécile permitted the marriage. Hélène Fould-Springer married Eduardo Propper de Callejón at Royaumont in 1929. Marie-Cécile's calculation turned out to be wise: it was Propper who would save them all.

By the summer of 1940, it had become clear that the Second World War constituted a threat to the members of this family and their cosmopolitan world. As a result, Propper—working at the time at the Spanish Embassy in Paris—made a conscious choice to protect the Chateau Royaumont. On 12 January 1940—five months before he would the issue the "*visado especial*" to the Jewish refugees in Bordeaux that would cost him his career[516]—Cristobal del Castillo, an official in the Spanish Embassy in Paris, sent the following message to the Ministère des Affaires-Étrangères on the Quai d'Orsay:

> *Par une note no. 26 du 10 Janvier, l'Ambassade d'Espagne a bien voulu signaler au Ministère des Affaires Étrangères que le Chateau Royaumont, sis en Seine et Oise, commune d'Asnières s/Oise, résidence habituelle de M. PROPPER de CALLEJON, premier Sécretaire de l'Ambassade, était a sa disposition et occupé par ses services depuis le début des hostilités.*[517]

This simple action, this simple—if not exactly legal—bureaucratic transfer, which never appears in elaborated detail either in Propper's memoir or in any of his other writings, suggests an attempt to establish an enclosure that would protect what remained of the cosmopolitan world the family had inhabited, which had been reduced from a

---

[514] See David Pryce-Jones, *Fault Lines*, p. 48.
[515] Ibid., p. 126.
[516] In the summer of 1940, Eduardo Propper de Callejón, along with the rest of the Spanish diplomatic corps, had followed what remained of the French government from Paris to Bordeaux and, finally, to Vichy. While in Bordeaux, the Spanish Ambassador, José-Félix de Léquerica (1891-1963) was dispatched to negotiate the Armistice between the Germans and the French at Compiègne. Propper was left alone to handle the refugee situation. Improvising, he indiscriminately issued a "visado especial" to hundreds of Jewish refugees, who were granted a three-day transit period through Spain to Portugal. Because Franco's Spain at the time was a fair-weather ally of Nazi Germany's this led Serrano Súñer, Spain's Foreign Minister, to demote Propper, dispatching him to Larache, Spain, and then, eventually to Oslo, Norway. Documents survive in the Propper Family Archive in which Súñer, a Falangist and renowned anti-Semite, accuse Propper of having served "*los intereses de la judería francesa*." See Serrano Súñer to José-Félix de Léquerica, 14 March 1941, Madrid, PA. For his actions, Propper was recognised by Jerusalem's Yad Vashem in 2008: http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/stories/propper-de-callejon.asp.
[517] Letter from Cristobal del Castillo to Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, January 12, 1940, PA.

network of localities across the European continent to the premises of the Chateau Royaumont itself. By June 1940, it was to Royaumont that Thérese Fould-Springer and her husband, Alan Pryce-Jones, had returned from Vienna en route to London; to Royaumont that Élisabeth Fould, the vicomtesse de Nantois and sister of Eugène Fould, had come seeking protection from the yellow star she had been made to wear; and to Royaumont that Hélène Fould-Springer and Eduardo Propper de Callejón had retreated for the safety of their children. When Propper flew the Spanish flag over its gates, the Chateau had become, at least for a moment, a sanctuary from an external environment in which conceptions of bordered communities, ethnic identities, and national polities had now rigidified. However, if Royaumont afforded such a sanctuary, it did so only temporarily: its denizens were soon to be uprooted, dispatched on various trajectories to lives of exile from the France and the Europe they had known. The objects in the Fould-Springer collection, however, would remain fixed in place, performing an identity that had already become obsolete.



Figure 32. Remants of Spanish flag flown over Royaumont,

Propper Family Archive, New York City, September 2013.

CHAPTER VIII.
FROM PRIVATE COLLECTIONS TO PUBLIC MUSEUMS: MATERIAL ARGUMENTS FOR FRENCH-JEWISH COMPATIBILITY



Figure 33. Hubert Robert, *Projet d'aménagement de la Grande Galerie du Louvre*, 1796.

Among the innumerable radical legacies of the French Revolution was the emergence of the public museum, with its particular combination of formal hierarchies and public access. Although art collections had been essential elements of aristocratic life in Europe since at least the mid-seventeenth century[518], the establishment of the Musée du

[518] As Anne Higonnet has amply demonstrated in her study of private collection museums, the *Wunderkammer* or *Kunstkammer*—the "curiosity cabinet"—was common among Renaissance-era elites, as in the case of Francesco Calzolari's famous curiosity cabinet in Verona or that of Ferdinand I, the Archduke of Tyrol, who began designing Europe's largest *Wunderkammer* in 1563. These, she has written, could display art objects, but more often than not they included natural and scientific objects as well: the point was thrill. To an extent, the curiosity cabinet mirrored Renaissance "discovery" and its expansion of the European "known world." Both attempted to order and classify an entire known world. Although the curiosity cabinet was perhaps the most important ancestor of the modern museum, it was not an art

Louvre in 1793 inaugurated a new era for the role of art, objects, and material culture in public life. As evinced in the dramatic canvas of Hubert Robert (1733-1808), *Projet d'aménagement de la Grande Galerie du Louvre* (1796), the museum furnished a public space where citizens could see the history of their nation recounted through a display of objects and canvases. As the art historian Andrew McLellan has pointed out, the project of Robert's spectators—sketching Old Master canvases, gesticulating at canvases on the walls, educating their children through art—is nothing less than nationalistic self-transformation, an attempt to make themselves responsible citizens of the new French Republic.[519]

This was not an exclusively French phenomenon: throughout the long nineteenth century, the great capitals of Europe—and, later, their more provincial American counterparts—all established imposing museums, that were encyclopedic in scope and grandiose in scale. These museums, which Alan Wallach and Carol Duncan have called "universal survey museums,"[520] included the Louvre; the British Museum in London, founded in 1753 but expanded significantly after 1802; the Altes Museum in Berlin, built between 1822 and 1830, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, constructed between 1870 and 1872. As universal as these respective museums aspired to be through the breadth of their encyclopedic collections, they represented and celebrated the image of the particular nations that had established them. Moreover, these public museums, as cultural monoliths, became the type of institutions that Michel Foucault identified with the emergence of the modern. Like the asylum, the clinic, and the prison, the museum presented a discourse that arbitrated what could be understood of the past and interpreted in the present.[521]

---

collection in the modern sense of the term. Those emerged in the next century, when paintings and sculpture became the most coveted objects, especially among Europe's crowned heads. The first great collection of paintings was likely that of Charles I of England, who amassed hundreds of Old Master paintings, especially Italian paintings. The best account of this early period of collecting is still Francis Haskell's. See Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion, and Collecting in France* (Ithaca, 1976). See also Anne Higonnet, "Not a Museum in the Usual Sense," *A Museum of One's Own*, pp. 2-24.

[519] See Andrew McLellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge, 1994).

[520] Carol Duncan and Allan Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum," *Art History* 3, no. 4 (1980): pp. 468-69.

[521] I am grateful, here, to the argument advanced by Tony Bennett, who advocates the inclusion of the museum on Foucault's list of "discourse"-generating institutions. See Bennett, "The Exhibitionary

But this was merely the first phase of the museum as an institution. In time, the encyclopedic museum was understood as a cold, aloof institution often too large to foster an environment insufficiently intimate for the experience of art. This explained, for instance, the vocabulary that emerged to describe the museum as a still mausoleum or, in the words of the artist Robert Smithson, a "tomb."[522] Thus the form of the museum began to be reimagined—and even redefined—by a generation of avid collectors who had taken advantage of the commercial and transnational art market that had transformed priceless works of art into items for sale. No longer was the museum an application of an abstract national identity; in the form of the collection museum, it had become the embodiment of personal identity. Perhaps the most comprehensive study of this second phase in the history of the museum is Anne Higonnet's *A Museum of One's Own* (2009), a survey of smaller, more intimate museums—often staged in the home of an individual collector—that showcased the inner life of the collector him or herself. "Encyclopedic museums were the action", she has argued, "and collection museums the reaction."[523]

Most of Higonnet's analysis focuses on the patterns among the considerable number of personal collection museums that emerged, in Europe and the North America, between the Revolutions of 1848 and the Second World War, but especially between 1890 and 1940. Among others, this included the Musée Condé near Paris (1898), the Wallace Collection in London (1900), the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston (1903), the Huntington Museum in Pasadena (1919), the Frick Collection in New York (1935), and Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, DC (1940). "When collection museums are grouped together," Higonnet has written, "[…] it becomes apparent that historical forces produced them just as surely as did their individual founders."[524] But, if these more intimate spaces reflected some of the "historical forces" that informed their encyclopedic counterparts, most importantly, they were points of intersection between those discourses

---

Complex," *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London, 1995). See also Donald Preziosi, *The Brain of the Earth*'s *Body: Art, Museums, and Phantasms of Modernity* (Minneapolis, 2003).

[522] See Robert Smithson, "Some Void Thoughts on Museums," in *Robert Smithson, the Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley, 1996), pp. 41-42.

[523] Higonnet, xiii.

[524] Ibid.

and individual subjectivities. In Higonnet's words: "Collection museums…connect the psychological to the social."[525]

Both personal and political, private collection museums are self-portraits that respond to the vicissitudes of an individual collector's life as well as the nature of his or her times. Individuals belong to their own inner lives, but they are also inscribed in concentric circles of affiliation: family culture, community, religion, and nation, as well as the identities of gender, sexuality, and class. In the end, however, they also belong to specific moments in time, even if they themselves do not recognize the particular natures of those moments or deliberately avoid reflecting on them. Without question, what individuals chose to collect was a function of particular tastes unique to them as individuals. But each individual exists at the intersection of multiple collectivities. As Bourdieu famously argued, taste is often a function of those collectivities, structures and categories that push and pull the course of an individual's life. The items and objects on display in a private collection museum thus serve a dual purpose: they tell us the "who" component of a collector's identity, but they also tell us the "what." Collections betray the sensibilities of unique, complicated, and often contradictory people who saw meaning, as did Béatrice Éphrussi, in Meissen monkey figurines, but they also betray, in terms of what was deemed to be desirable in a certain period, the nature of the time in which the collection was amassed. There are, after all, important similarities among the collections amassed in the same period of time, as in the five collections considered in this dissertation, most of which emphasized, in some form or other, the decorative arts of the *ancien régime*. If museums are "self-portraits," then, they are self-portraits composed of objects with meanings that depend, inevitably, on the history within which they emerged.

This is particularly so in these cases. The years between 1890 and 1940 were a period when the so-called "Jewish question" was a central fixture of French public discourse. After all, the period began with the Dreyfus Affair and before and after was periodically characterised by surges of anti-Semitism prompted in part by the arrival of Eastern-European refugees of Jewish origin. It culminated in the Stavisky scandal of 1934, the election of Léon Blum as France's first Président du Conseil of Jewish origin in

[525] Ibid., xvi.

1936, and, ultimately, the passage of Vichy's *Statut des Juifs* in the autumn of 1940. A significant and often overlooked common feature of many of the private collection museums established—and public bequests made—in France during those years is the Jewish character of their founders and benefactors. This chapter primarily considers the creation of four such museums: Moïse de Camondo's Musée Nissim de Camondo and Charles Cahen d'Anvers' Château de Champs-sur-Marne, both established in 1935; Théodore Reinach's Villa Kérylos, donated to the Institut de France in 1928; and Béatrice Éphrussi's Villa Île de France, bequeathed to the Académie des Beaux-Arts in 1934.

Of course, none of these houses or museums were "Jewish" in any obvious sense of the term—certainly not in terms of the art they showcased or the history they sought to preserve. Yet Jewishness, public and private, was an essential component of the respective lives of these individual collectors, all of whom defined themselves as Jewish and continued to live within the sphere of the Jewish family. Each of these collectors was related by marriage to each of the others, and most were institutional leaders of the French Jewish establishment. Each was thus inscribed in an elite milieu, the borders and essence of which was defined by their Jewishness. Most importantly, they lived in a time when that rarefied but insular milieu was confronted by formidable existential challenges: on the inside, by an appealing secular modernity and, on the outside, by disjointed but at times intense surges of anti-Semitism. If the museums they created in the 1920s and 1930s were never devoted to Jewish art or culture—and in almost all cases to the contrary—they must nevertheless be understood in terms of the collectors' Jewishness and the Jewishness of their world. The Jewish experience, after all, was a crucial and inextricable element in both the psychological and the social contexts in which these collectors were circumscribed—the very contexts that, according to Higonnet's account, intersect in every personal collection museum. The collections were material self-portraits of their founders; but collectively they were a demonstration of the nature of French-Jewish identity at a historical moment that challenged the nature of the compatibility of its constituent components. Consequently, the museums must therefore be interpreted as portraits of family memory as well as assimilationist celebrations of the French cultural genius.

But the circumstances of the creation of the museums are only part of their contemporary reality; they are also impacted upon, both directly and more indirectly, by what happened next. This generation of collectors had all died by the mid-1930s: Louis Cahen d'Anvers in 1922; Léon Fould in 1924; Théodore Reinach in 1928, Béatrice Éphrussi and Edmond de Rothschild in 1934; Moïse de Camondo in 1935. They could never have foreseen what lay in store for their descendants and their world. Their collections and houses, however, did live on and, in many cases, became sites that demonstrated the destruction of Jewish life in France and in Europe after 1940. Well into the German invasion, for instance, there were still family apartments in the Camondo mansion and museum on the rue de Monceau: the occupants of these rooms, Béatrice de Camondo and her children, Fanny and Bertrand Reinach, were all deported to Auschwitz via Drancy in 1943 and 1944. Her brother-in-law, Julien Reinach, was arrested at the Villa Kérylos in 1943, from where he was sent to Bergen-Belsen. Élisabeth Cahen d'Anvers, who spent her childhood at the Château Champs-sur-Marne, was murdered in Auschwitz in 1944. Léon Fould's Château Royaumont was transformed from a carefree paradise to a refuge for the family's extended Jewish relations, protected under the banner of the Spanish flag that his son-in-law and Francoist diplomat, Eduardo Propper de Callejón, raised outside. As a consequence, museums conceived as monuments to the splendours of *ancien régime* neoclassicism have become symbols of the richness of Jewish life *entre deux geurres* and, in many cases, Holocaust memorials themselves.[526] These collections, houses, and museums have added later twentieth-century afterlives to the experiences of their founders: the twin purposes of collection and celebration now blend into a narrative of destruction.

In that sense, these collections—each with overlapping forms of remembrance—have organic identities of their own, resulting from both the vicissitudes of history after

[526] This is especially evident in the case of the Musée Nissim de Camondo today. To enter, visitors must pass through a vestibule off of the rue de Monceau where the first visible item is a plaque that commemorates the murder of Béatrice de Camondo and her two children in Auschwitz. The effect is that the shadow of the Holocaust looms throughout the entire experience of visiting the museum: it appears as the inevitable end that the world of the Camondos was inexorably approaching in the 1920s and 1930s. In Beaulieu-sur-Mer, the Villa Kérylos, Théodore Reianch's Greek fantasy, features near its entrance a plaque commemorating the experience of Julien Reinach. Although not as dramatic as the Camondo plaque—Julien Reinach ultimately survived Buchenwald—the effect is similar: Kérylos appears as a halcyon holiday before the Holocaust to come.

1940 and the politics of memory in the French postwar era. If these collections were always material "self-portraits" of their founders, when they became museums they became evolving portraits, *lieux de mémoire*[527] that recall, at once, the respective moments in the history of art that their founders sought to collect, the *fin-de-siècle* social world in which they existed, and, finally, the terminal gravity of the Holocaust. If the collectors created these museums, their museums, over time, have changed our image of the collectors and what they represented.

I. The Musée Nissim de Camondo and an "Authentic" Eighteenth Century

Toward the end of his life—after his divorce, the untimely death of his son Nissim, and the departure of his daughter for married life in Neuilly—Moïse de Camondo appears to have resigned himself to a certain listless languor. As he wrote—not without irony—to a friend after New Years' Day 1934, a mere ten months before his death, he had essentially embraced the inevitability of physical demise:

> *Je vous souhaite également une bonne santé et une heureuse année. Quand vous aurez renoncé, comme moi, à toute coquetterie, vous irez chez Merovitch, 16, boulevard Haussmann et vous achèterez un de ces appareils contre la surdité qui vous rendra, comme à moi, le plus grand service* […]. *Il est évident qu'avant tout, il faut causer avec des gens ayant une voix distincte et sur un ton un peu élevé. L'appareil n'est pas fait pour les distraits et j'ai été moi-même assez long à m'y habituer.*[528]

---

[527] Pierre Nora's work has become an essential touchstone in any discussion of French historical memory, especially after the Second World War. For the most part, I find the famous concept of the "*lieu de mémoire*"—the site of memory—to be monolithic and to reduce the complexities of memory into singular narratives and "official" histories. In the case of these collectors, however, it has been useful, largely because of the ways in which Nora's work elucidates museum theory, at least it has been written by the likes of Neil Harris and Susan Crane. The value of Nora's analysis is two-fold in this case. First, these collectors actively transformed their collections into museums because they lived in what Nora identified as an "age of commemoration": each was an attempt to stop the flow of time and to preserve the memory of a bygone era he or she deemed superior to their contemporary world. Second, Nora has pointed out that history can be manufactured out of the commemoration of quotidian existence—daily lives and their effects. These intimate, private personal collection museums are precisely that: they in fact move us toward a more complicated, fragmented view of the past which, through the multiplicity of objects they contain, challenges the singularity of French Republican history. See Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory*, ed. Lawrence Kritzman and trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York, 1996-1998), Vols. 1-4. For examples of the ways in which Nora's "*lieux de mémoire*" concept relates to museum theory, see *Museums and Memory*, ed. Susan Crane (Stanford, 2000) and Neil Harris, "Museums and Controversy," *Journal of American History* 82 (December 1995), pp. 1102-1111. See also *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, ed. Bettina Messias Carbonell (Oxford, 2012).

[528] Moïse de Camondo to unnamed (female) friend, 10 January 1934, AMNC, Paris.

His biographers, Nora Seni and Sophie Le Tarnec, have suggested that with his increasing physical malaise came an inevitable confrontation with the failures in his life—failures from which Moïse ultimately sought solace in the material universe he had created. In their words: "*Moïse cherche-t-il à ne retenir du monde que la beauté après la somme de forfaits et de souffrances qu'il a endurée*?"[529] But even in this solace there was disquiet: his daughter, Béatrice, had shown little interest in maintaining his neo-Versailles on the rue de Monceau, and the son and heir to whom Moïse had planned to leave the collection had died in 1917. Moïse's response was to create a museum out of his home, a museum that would both memorialize his fallen son at the same time as it would celebrate the *ancien régime* aesthetic he had tirelessly pursued for decades.

This double motive he clearly delineated in the 1924 edition of his last will and testament, notarized by Maître Naret on 20 January:

> *Desirant perpéturer la mémoire de mon père le comte Nissim de Camondo, et celle de mon malheureux fils le lieutenant Nissim de CAMONDO, tombé en combat aérien le 5 septembre 1917, je lègue au musée des Arts décoratifs, Pavillion de Marsan à Paris, mon hôtel sis à Paris 63, rue de Monceau, tel qu'il se comportera au moment de mon décès, c'est-à-dire avec tous les objets d'art et d'ameublement qu'il contiendra, tels que tableaux, tapisseries, statues, bronzes, bustes, chenets, lustres, appliques, surtouts de table, porcelaines, tapis de la Savonnerie et d'Orient, tentures, meubles en ébénisterie, pendules, baromètres entiers, candélabres et bougeoirs, consoles, tables, sièges, objets de vitrines, boîtes en maroquinerie, gravures, pelles et pincettes, etc., etc., à l'exception d'un grand secrétaire à abattant signé de Leleu,[530] et qui se trouve dans mon Grand Bureau sous la Baccante de Madame Vigée Lebrun.[531] Ce meuble appartient à mon gendre Léon REINACH[532] et devra lui être immédiatement restitué. Il sera donné à mon Hôtel le nom de Musée Nissim de CAMONDO, nom de mon fils auquel cet Hôtel et ses collections étaient destinés. […] En léguant à l'État mon Hôtel et les Collections qu'il renferme, j'ai en vue de conserver dans son intégralité l'œuvre à laquelle je me suis attaché, de la reconstitution d'une demeure artistique du XVIIIème siècle. Cette reconstitution doit servir dans ma pensée à*

---

[529] Nora Seni and Sophie Le Tarnec, *Les Camondo ou l'éclipse d'une fortune* (Paris: Actes Sud, 1997), p. 255.

[530] Here Moïse refers to the drop-front oak sécretaire, c. 1770-1780—decorated in 'à la reine' marquetry—by the leading cabinetmaker Jean-François Leleu (1729-1807), who was named master of his workshop in 1764. Moïse displayed this piece in the library, and it was on the sécretaire's marble top that he placed his beloved sculpture by Houdon.

[531] Moïse means the painting "Geneviève-Sophie Le Couteleux du Molay," 1788, by Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755-1842), which hung in the large drawing room of the house.

[532] Léon Reinach (1893-1944) was Moïse's son-in-law who was murdered, along with Béatrice de Camondo Reinach and their two children, in Auschwitz in 1944.

l'éducation des Artistes et des Artisans, elle permettre en outre de conserver en France, réunis en un milieu spécialement approprié à cet effet, les plus beaux objets que j'ai pu recueillir de cet Art Décoratif qui a été une des gloires de la France durant la période que j'ai aimée entre toutes.[533]

The will betrays much of the collector's vision for the museum he sought to establish. On a superficial level, what became the Musée Nissim de Camondo, inaugurated on 21 December 1936, was merely an extension of the philanthropic activities that the Camondo family—along with other prominent nineteenth-century Jewish philanthropists—had practised for generations. Moïse's conception of a museum, in fact, bore an unmistakable similarity to the network of Francophone schools that the Alliance Israélite Universelle had launched in the family's native Constantinople in the mid-nineteenth century—all with the financial support of Moïse's grandfather, Abraham Salomon Camondo (1781-1873). Both the schools and the museum, after all, were arguments for the cultural supremacy of what Moïse called the "*gloires de la France*"; both were manifestations of a *mission civilisatrice* that sought to foster public knowledge of precisely that French cultural supremacy. The majesty of their antecedents, it follows, was what Moïse had hoped his collections would bestow "*à l'éducation des Artistes et des Artisanes*" of the future.

And yet, as Moïse's will made clear, a central effect of the new museum was to memorialize his son and father, both with the name Nissim. It is significant, in other words, that the collector did not choose to call his new creation the "Musée des Arts Décoratifs du XVIIIème siècle" or something similar; rather, he was insistent on naming it the very explicit Musée Nissim de Camondo. Although the transformation of the family home on the rue de Monceau into a museum remained loyal to its founder's desire for a "total reconstruction" of the *ancien régime* neoclassicism, there were spaces within it that deliberately juxtaposed the story of the family with eighteenth-century *objets d'art*. Within the original design of the museum, there was a "souvenir room" which Moïse conceived as a material mausoleum for his father and son. As he noted in his will, at no point in time were the family's effects to be altered. The visitor should never lose sight of the Museum as a private, family home:

Dès qu'il sera évacué, ce local pourra servir de bureau à la Conservation et conservera son ameublement actuel avec les portraits et les bustes de mes parents. J'entends que le portrait de

[533] Moïse de Camondo, Last Will and Testament, 20 January 1924, pp. 1-3, AMNC.

mon Père par Caislus [sic] Duran et les diverses photographies de mon fils qui se trouvent posées ou accrochées dans diverses pièces de l'Hôtel restent toujours à leurs places actuelles.[534]

The "souvenir room" was in fact the only room of the family's private apartments open to the public in the original 1936 design of the Musée Camondo: it contained some of the family photographs he described above, Carolus-Duran's imposing portrait of his father, suspended in darkness, and, as a centerpiece, a professional photograph of his son in military uniform. Here, in what was now a public space, was a preserved private enclave. In one sense, the souvenir room was a nostalgic departure from the discourse that governed the rest of the museum. But, in another, it was an attempt to illustrate the points of intersection between the family's experience and the narrative of French national grandeur on display. This was particularly evident in the prominently positioned photograph of Nissim in uniform, displayed on a second chest by Jean-François Leleu, the "master" cabinetmaker of the eighteenth century. The image—personal, intimate, and an emblem of the family's tragic fate—became a plot point in the evolution of the national narrative the museum's objects tell throughout the house. Likewise, Nissim, "*tombé en combat pour la France*," becomes a martyr for that legacy, and the Camondos trusted custodians—and even arbiters—of national patrimony.



Figure 34. The "Souvenir Room," Musée Nissim de Camondo. Visible are the Carolus-Duran portrait of Moïse's father, Nissim de Camondo, over the bed and photograph of his son, also Nissim, on the credenza.

[534] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

This was perhaps the most important of Moïse's motives in transforming his private collection into a public museum, especially given that for decades he had refused to lend particular objects for gallery exhibitions and shows. Reading the will in the context of Moïse's lived experience as the target of public anti-Semitic rhetoric, from the likes of Édouard Drumont and others, one cannot avoid the sense of pride it contains. The museum he sought to establish was to bear not only the name of his beloved son, but of the entire family. It would unite one of the finest collections of "*les plus beaux objets*" in France under the label of "CAMONDO," a name that was obviously Jewish and had recently become, in certain anti-Semitic circles, a synonym for Levantine and Oriental foreignness.[535] For years, Drumont—and, especially, the brothers Jules and Edmond Goncourt—had attacked Jews for a perceived inauthenticity in the lavish material worlds elite families such as the Camondo had constructed. A central component of French anti-Semitism was thus that Jews, in the assessment of the historian Michel Winock, personified bad taste and could never know—much less create—true beauty.[536] In fact, the Goncourts had said exactly this of Moïse's father and Alice Thal de Lancey, his American-born mistress who owned a property at Louvicennes that had previously belonged to Madame de Pompadour. "*L'ironique intérieur que celui de Louvicennes*," they wrote in a journal entry from June 1882, "*là où il habita Mme du Barry et où habite aujourd'hui Mme de Lancey et où le banquier Camondo remplace Louis XV*."[537]

In other words, the presence of a Jewish banker in an aristocratic eighteenth-century setting had apparently subverted the natural hierarchy the Goncourts, self-proclaimed arbiters of taste, had devoted their lives to maintaining. This was a challenge Moïse answered with his museum, a painstakingly "*reconstitution*" of the eighteenth-century aesthetic that the Goncourts, celebrated authors of the monographic series *L'Art du 18ème siècle*, had declared to be the exclusive property of France's non-Jewish

---

[535] See Drumont's comments on the Camondo's "Oriental" origins in *La France Juive* (1866): "*Le projet de Banque orientale, qui souleva particulièrement contre lui Camondo et les Juifs levantins, aurait donné à la France une grande influence en Orient."* Drumont, *La France Juive*, vol. I (Paris: Flammarion, 1866), p. 99.

[536] See Winock's article on the Goncourt's particular brand of anti-Semitism: his argument is ultimately that it tied Jewish alterity to the realm of aesthetics and considered Jews as fundamentally averse to the principle of "art for art's sake." See also Michel Winock, "L'antisémitisme des Goncourt," *Les Goncourt dans leur siècle. Un siècle de "Goncourt," (*Paris, 2005).

[537] Edmond and Jules Goncourt, *Journal*, t. II (Paris, 1989), p. 943.

aristocratic elite. Essentially, he was responding to the Goncourts on their own terms. By displaying one of most impressive collections of eighteenth-century *objets d'arts*, the museum would show that a Jew could not only be French but proudly so, a credible arbiter of what, exactly, the "*gloires de la France*" entailed. In that sense, his museum was about more than the prospect of assimilation, which implies a certain anonymity. On a fundamental level, the Musée Nissim de Camondo was intended as a public statement. Jews, the museum proclaimed, could indeed know and curate true and authentic beauty.

Of course, the notion of "authenticity" is central to the conception and execution of any museum. As the art historian Elizabeth Rodini has pointed out, it is a concept that particularly elucidates spaces such as the Musée Camondo, private collections that eventually became public museums.[538] In that vein, Siân Jones has articulated two distinct categories of authenticity in the museum. The first is the "materialist" approach that locates authenticity within specific objects, in terms of their origins, provenance, and unique individual histories: objects, in other words, are ends in and of themselves. The second approach, however, Jones calls "constructivist," a view that considers authenticity in terms of a museum's unified whole: the identities of specific objects on display matter less than the "authentic" rendition of a period, a topic, or theme.[539] Jones's framework is rather useful in understanding the case of Moïse and his museum. As his obsession with provenance and his dogged pursuit of specific objects with very particular pasts both suggest, Moïse was very much a materialist collector. Yet, as a museum designer, he was undoubtedly a constructivist. The project of a loving "*reconstitution*" he outlined in his 1924 will ultimately demanded an authenticity that made sense only in terms of the entire space as a whole.

What mattered was the ensemble, the unified whole. In the end, it was an ideal for which Moïse was even willing to sacrifice certain objects with the requisite eighteenth-century provenance for those that fitted better into the museum he imagined. He could

---

[538] See Rodini, "Preserving Memory at the Musée Nissim de Camondo," *Museum History Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 1, January 2014, p. 43. Her excellent analysis focuses primarily on overlapping modes of memorialization at the Musée Camondo, particularly on the impact of Holocaust memory on the existing collections and display.

[539] See Sîan Jones, "Negotiating Authentic Objects and Authentic Selves: Beyond the Deconstruction of Authenticity," *Journal of Material Culture*, 15 (2010), pp. 181-204. For an earlier version of this argument, see also *Why Fakes Matter: Essays on Problems of Authenticity*, ed. Mark Jones (London, 1992).

not locate sufficient bronze fixtures from the period, so he commissioned reproductions that he ultimately interspersed among the real ones. When he could not find an original wrought-iron balustrade, he ordered a copy of the one he had admired in the Hôtel Tassier in Toulouse. The same was occasionally true of his Louis XVI chairs, some of which were upholstered in contemporary fabrics, and with the rococo paneling he bought, which had to be altered to fit the dimensions of particular rooms.[540] These individual pieces may have been "fakes," but that was irrelevant. The historian David Lowenthal has termed this approach "genuineness": if the objects themselves were not authentic, together they composed a genuine truth.[541] Granted, artifice was inescapable at the Musée Camondo, housed in a building that was *itself* a copy of an eighteenth-century chateau. But for Moïse artifice appears to have been the only means of achieving any worthwhile authenticity.

In pursuit of this aim, Moïse was just as autocratic as he had been throughout the creation of his collection and the construction of his house decades before. It should come as no surprise that on the same day his last will and testament was notarized, he drafted a set of instructions for the curators and keepers of the future museum that would bear his name. The level of detail with which Moïse concerned himself in this two-page, fine-print document is truly remarkable: nothing was too petty to warrant his attention. Of the windows and the manipulation of light in the house, he stipulated the following: "*Toutes les fenêtres sont munies de stores extérieures contre le soleil, veiller à ce qu'il en soit fait un bon usage*."[542] Of the trees in the museum's inner courtyard: "*La cour est ornée de caisses en bois contenant de lauriers taillés*," he wrote. "*Ces arbres ne supportent pas la gelée et doivent être rentrés avant l'hiver*. […] *Les jours de beau temps il faut les aérer en laissant les portes ouvertes*."[543] He even thought through where and how visitors would enter in bad weather: "*L'entrée du public pourrait se faire les jours de pluie par la grille qui donne dans le passage à couvert faisant communiquer la cour avec le passage conduisant Blvd Malesherbes*," he insisted. He had also decided where

[540] See Rodini, p. 44.
[541] See David Lowenthal, "Changing the Past," *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 263-362.
[542] See Moïse de Camondo, "Instructions et conseils pour Messieurs les conservateurs du Musée Nissim de Camondo," 20 January 1924, AMNC, p. 2.
[543] Ibid.

these visitors would put their umbrellas: "*Cette grille est précédé d'un vaste trottoir dallé qui pourrait être recouverte en paillassons et où l'on pourrait installer des râteliers pour les parapluies*."[544] Should the curators of posterity have any questions whatsoever about his collection or his intent, he provided them with a contact: "*…mon ami Carle Dreyfus,"* he promised, *"sera à même de vous fournir des renseignements précieux. Il connait tous mes objets et tout ce que je sais moi-même sur leur compte*."[545] It was in this document as well that Moïse included the first mention of what would later become the museum's extensive archive, which he intended as a resource for scholars and artists interested in the provenance of particular pieces: "*Je possède en plus un petit carnet où j'ai mentionné tous mes achats, non pas malheureusement depuis mes débuts de collection mais seulement depuis une douzaine d'années*," he wrote, "*il contient donc d'utiles renseignements dont vous pourrez profiter si mes héritiers veulent bien vous en donner communication*."[546]

This obsession with control, as we have seen, was a fundamental element of Moïse's personality. But in this decidedly public project more was at stake: Moïse was after all creating a museum that would bear his name, a name that for some was a synonym for Jewish foreignness and for others was a symbol of Jewish financial plutocracy. "*Je désire que ce musée soit admirablement et d'une propreté méticuleuse*," he wrote in the first line of his instructions. In a sense, he had no choice: the museum—and every aspect of its execution—had to be above reproach. If objects, art, and, in general, material things had provided anti-Semites such as Drumont and the Goncourts an important means of articulating their conception of Jewish foreignness, Moïse could scarcely afford any imperfections. In an important way, the museum was his rejoinder to the unforgiving scrutiny he knew very well to expect.

Judging from critical assessments of the museum at the time of its opening in 1936, Moïse had successfully projected the image he sought to cultivate. Writing in *L'Illustration*, Jacques Guérin, a curator of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, noted that "*le nom de Camondo*"—which he never referred to as Jewish or Turkish—"*est déjà inscrit*

[544] Ibid.
[545] Ibid.
[546] Ibid.

parmi ceux des grands donateurs de la France."[547] Moïse, in Guérin's view, was the consummate cultural sophisticate: "*Le comte Moïse de Camondo*," he wrote, "*élégant sportsman dont la fine silhouette très parisienne a été jadis popularisée par Sem dans ses albums, était aussi un esprit très cultivé et s'intéressait aux arts depuis longues années*."[548] The journal *Art & Industrie* took a similar stance. It wasted no time in praising the Camondo family's cultural philanthropy, placing Moïse's new museum in the context of his cousin Isaac's major 1911 donation to the Louvre of nineteenth-century paintings: "*Pour la seconde fois*," its article began, "*nos collections publiques parisiennes doivent un magnifique accroissement à un member de la famille Camondo*."[549] Most importantly, however, the article invalidated the central contention of the previous generation's anti-Semitic critiques: "*Le comte de Camondo prit soin tout d'abord de constituer un cadre aussi authentique que possible; d'anciennes boiseries, panneaux, dessus de portes, encadrements de glaces et de tapisseries, corniches, etc., provenant d'anciens hôtels…*"[550] There was thus no question that a foreign-born Jew could indeed create an aesthetic universe that was as publicly valuable as it was authentic. Moïse would likely have been pleased: in a sense, his museum had made his point.

[547] Jacques Guérin, "Le musée Nissim de Camondo," *L'Illustration*, 26 December 1936, p. 530.
[548] Ibid., p. 531.
[549] "La Collection Camondo," *Art & Industrie*, July 1936, p. 3.
[550] Ibid., p. 5.

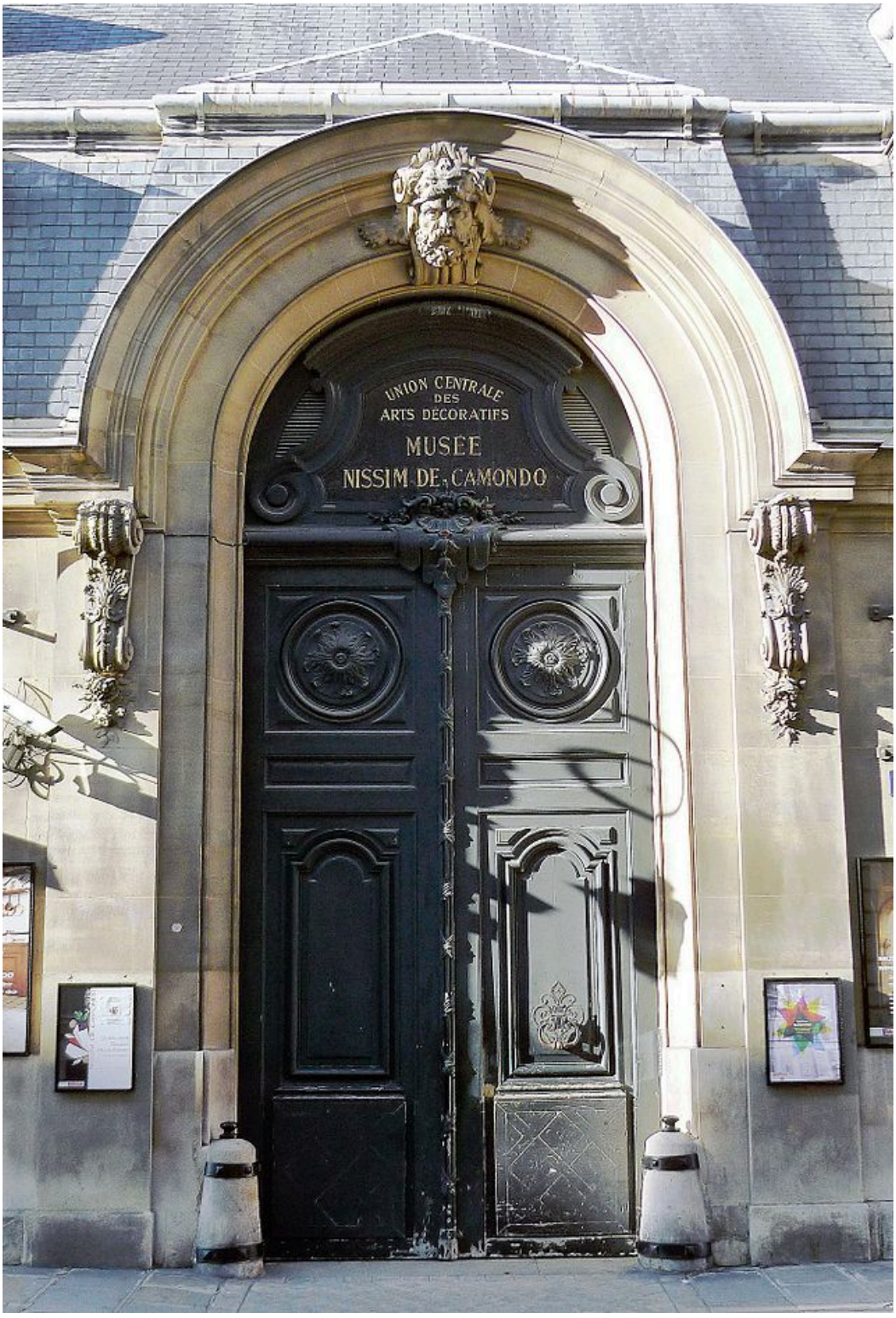

Figure 35. The rue de Monceau entrance of the Musée Nissim de Camondo, Paris. The entrance is unchanged from the museum's dedication in 1936.

II. The Château Champs-sur-Marne and a Jewish Return into French History



Figure 36. Chateau Champs-sur-Marne, March 2015.

Louis Cahen d'Anvers died in 1922, leaving his son, Charles, in charge of the beloved family estate at Champs-sur-Marne. In 1935—the same year his brother-in-law, Moïse de Camondo, bequeathed his rue de Monceau mansion to the state—Charles likewise donated the Château de Champs to the Conseil des Musées Nationaux. A paragon of early eighteenth-century French architecture, the historic Champs-sur-Marne had been the property of the Cahen d'Anvers since 1895, when Louis Cahen d'Anvers began restoring the chateau to its rococo grandeur. With his donation, Charles Cahen d'Anvers—living by then mostly in Argentina, where the family had extensive financial holdings[551]—had initially hoped that the historic property would serve as a weekend residence for the French president. Instead, the French state opened the property as a

[551] The Cahen d'Anvers, a traditional "Haute Banque" family, had interests in several industries in Argentina—silver, mining, and local infrastructure. Gilbert Cahen d'Anvers (1909-1995), Charles's eldest son, describes the family's partial relocation there in the late 1930s in the memoirs he published privately one year before his death, *Mémoirs d'un optimiste* (1994). Today, the family's descendants remain in Buenos Aires, where they are active in the city's public life. Gilbert's daughter, Mónica Cahen d'Anvers (b. 1934, Buenos Aires), for instance, is a well-known Argentine television journalist.

museum, where visitors could encounter what was immediately recognized to be one of the nation's finest examples of preserved period architecture.[552] The last will and testament of Louis Cahen d'Anvers did not articulate—as did, for instance, those of his contemporaries, Béatrice Éphrussi and Moïse de Camondo—a clear motivation for the public afterlife of his home and his collection. However, Charles Cahen d'Anvers did propose a clear vision for the family home as public space. In 1927, two years after his election as mayor of Champs, he wrote a "Notice Historique" for guests to consult as they wandered the grounds of Champs-sur-Marne. A lively essay in its own right, the text presented the Château de Champs as a microcosm of modern French history and, as such, an important piece of French cultural heritage. But the narrative Charles constructed was also political, especially vis-à-vis its conclusion. There was no difference, he suggested, between the Cahen d'Anvers family and the previous generations of the château's decidedly noble ownership. Each, it followed, had been equally invested in the project of perfecting and maintaining the highest French aesthetic ideal.

The Chateau de Champs did indeed have an illustrious history. Designed by Pierre Bullet (1639-1716), a pupil of the famed François Blondel[553] (1617-86), the chateau, in its symmetry and its measured neoclassicism, bore considerable similarities to Bullet's celebrated Parisian *hôtels* on the Place Vendôme, the epicentre of the French Baroque.[554] Bullet died before completing the design, but his son, Jean-Baptiste Bullet, completed it according to his father's plans in 1706. For its first decade, Château de Champs was the home of a financier, Paul Poisson de Bourvallais (d. 1719), later charged with embezzlement and imprisoned in the Bastille. After his imprisonment, Champs-sur-Marne earned its royal pedigree, undoubtedly the basis of its appeal for Louis Cahen d'Anvers in the late nineteenth century. In 1718, the chateau was sold to Marie Anne de Bourbon (1666-1739), the so-called "princesse de Conti" and the daughter of Louis XIV

[552] See, for instance, the celebrated horticultural historian Ernest de Ganay's 1934 article on the value of the house's gardens, designed by Achille Duchêne (1866-1947), who had also designed the gardens of Béatrice Éphrussi's Villa Île de France and Moïse de Camondo's Paris mansion. See also Runar Stranberg's 1963 analysis in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts* on the architecture of the chateau, which praised its preservation of history. De Ganay, "Le Château de Champs," *La Gazette illustrée des amateurs et jardins*, 1934. Stranberg, "Le Château de Champs," *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, no. 1129, 1963, pp. 81-100.
[553] Blondel was a formidable force in the French late Baroque, known most of all for his *Cours d'architecture*, which remained a seminal text for generations of students, such as Bullet. See Anthony Gerbino, *François Blondel: Architecture, Erudition, and the Scientific Revolution* (London, 2010).
[554] These included the Hôtel d'Evreux and the Hôtel Crozat, now the Hôtel Ritz.

and his mistress, Louise de La Vallière. To settle a debt, the princess sold the property to a La Vallière cousin, in whose family it remained and the future generations of which transformed it into a locus of Enlightenment social activity. By the mid-eighteenth century, the house's unique oval-shaped *salon chinois*—which the duc de La Vallière had installed around 1750—hosted Voltaire, Diderot, and even the elusive Madame de Pompadour, whose presence would elevate the house's mystique in the eyes of its future owners. In fact, between 1757 and 1759, Madame de Pompadour leased the chateau, and spent more than 200,000 livres renovating it to her liking. Of all the sites with enviable royal patronage—at least in the eyes of the late nineteenth-century collector—few could surpass Champs-sur-Marne. The Cahen d'Anvers were the owners of an eighteenth-century *bijou*, but they saw themselves as custodians of a dramatic piece of *ancien régime* history, a veritable theatre in which a certain portion of that history had unfolded.



Figure 37. Charles Cahen d'Anvers, Champs-sur-Marne, 1935.

In the narrative he wrote for visitors, Charles presented Champs-sur-Marne with an age-old provenance that reached to the ancient, mythic heart of *la France profonde*:

"*La Seigneurie de Champs doit son nom à ce que le pays avoisinant en 'champs' et en cultures*," he wrote, tying its origins to a certain conception of the land. The property was so old, he suggested, that its name appeared a frequent footnote in the annals of local history. In fact, it was a constant, impossible to date exactly: "*Elle remonte au XIIe siècle et peut-être au delà*," he wrote, "*puisque d'érudites écrivains nous citent dès cette époque les noms de certains seigneurs de Champs*."[555] In a certain sense, Charles seemed to echo the organicist conception of the French nation as articulated by the likes of Maurice Barrès. The nation, in his view, was distinct from its post-Revolutionary French iteration, articulated most succinctly by Ernest Renan. For Barrès, the nation evolved not from any Rousseauian "general will" but rather from the connection between individuals to the land and the inheritance of the past. Charles depicted Champs-sur-Marne as precisely such an inheritance: age-old, rooted, and, to some extent, a source of French national identity. In no small part, he considered his family's château something of a material synecdoche for the experience of the French past. What the nation had experienced in the Middle Ages, for instance, the denizens of Champs-sur-Marne had experienced: "*Les événements—pillage, incendie, épidémie—amenèrent les gens […] à se refugier à Champs*," he wrote, "*et nous possédons quelques renseignements sur un Jean de Pisseleu, curé de Champs, qui administrait en 1393 une abbaye déjà très ancienne à l'époque*."[556] In those very lines, Charles also betrayed the extent of his own—and, indeed, his family's—obsession with the history of the house, suggesting the extent of archival materials he had consulted to construct his narrative. This sense of earnest documentation continues throughout his essay, which locates Champs in sources as diverse as the memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon[557] and the canvases of the Flemish painter Adam Frans van der Meulen (1632-1690), who had been served as court painter

[555] Charles Cahen d'Anvers, "Le Chateau de Champs: Notice Historique," April 1927, p. 1. The document is held in the archives of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (BNF).
[556] Ibid.
[557] Describing the bankruptcy of Charles Renouard de la Touanne, treasurer during the reign of Louis XIV, Charles wrote the following, complete with precise citation: "*Mais la Touane [sic] fit faillite en 1701, et, décrété d'arrestation, mourut de saisissement sur le perron du château devant les exempts qui se présentait pour l'appréhender (Mémoires de Saint-Simon, Edition Régnier, T. 8, p. 302, Journal de Dangeau, T. 8, p. 117).*" Ibid., p. 2.

for Louis XIV.[558] If this level of detail was rather unusual for a visitor's guide, readers would emerge with the impression that the author had made his case beyond any reasonable doubt.



Figure 38. Carolus-Duran's portait of Louis Cahen d'Anvers, Champs-sur-Marne.

Ultimately, Charles's argument was that the story of Château de Champs was the story of France. His emphasis was almost always on the connection of the property to the historical evolution of the French nation, even in the relatively insignificant details of the property's past. "*Il faut réserver une mention toute spéciale à la marquise de Vivonne de Pisani,*" he wrote, "*qui menait à Champs un train considérable et y attirait nombre de personnages distingués de France et d'Italie (1606-1615).*" He justified his mention of Vivonne de Pisani as follows: "*Cette Marquise de Pisani, romaine de naissance,*" he

[558] Charles refers to a van Meulen painting that hung in the chateau's dining room. "*Cette peinture*," he wrote, "*où l'on reconnaît la tenue de l'équipage de Conti, nous montre l'aspect du château et de ses jardins à cette époque.*" Ibid., p. 5.

wrote, "*joua un certain rôle dans les ambassades du roi Henri IV et sa fille devint la célèbre marquise de Rambouillet*."[559] But, as was also true of Moïse de Camondo and Béatrice Éphrussi, Charles was clearly proudest of his home's connection with the royal family—or, as it happened, Madame de Pompadour, the mistress of Louis XV, perhaps the *ancien régime*'s most celebrated patron of the arts. This chapter of Champs's history took up the greatest portion of Charles's essay: this, in essence, was the point he most wished to communicate to visitors. "*La Vallière était d'ailleurs grand ami de la marquise*," he wrote of Madame de Pomapdour, "*et c'est d'accord avec lui qu'elle fit exécuter dans le château les embellissements dont nous admirons aujourd'hui l'ordonnance*."[560] This royal chapter, he continued, had made the house into the structure it was in the present day. Charles was careful, however, to make this point with typical archival substantiation: "*nous savons que cette femme de goût s'intéressa à l'embellissement du château,"* he wrote, "*car on retrouve la trace de dépenses considérables effectuées par Mme de Pompadour à Champs dans ses comptes conservés aux Archives de Seine-et-Oise et publiés en 1863 par M. Leroi, archiviste du département*." [561] As studied and as measured as Charles's observations remain throughout, he indulged his imagination in his description of the chateau's royal past. "*La marquise y eut-elle des rendez-vous avec Louis XV?"* he asked.[562]

The important point, however, was that the aesthetic of the house represented the *longue durée* of French history in all its diversity. Particular rooms in the house, Charles argued, embodied and evoked different moments in time:

> *Il ne faut pas en conclure que nous sommes redevables à Mme de Pompadour de toutes les beautés de Champs. Plusieurs époques y ont laissé leur empreinte caractéristique : les deux grands salons, l'un au rez-de-chaussée, l'autre au premier, et la salle à manger par exemple, ont conservé leurs boiseries et leurs décorations Louis XIV. Dans d'autres pièces, les boiseries sont de l'époque de la Régence ; ainsi, celle que nous supposons avoir été la chambre à coucher de la marquise est ornée dans ce style avec un certaine recherche ; l'artiste y a sculpté en plein bois le roman d'amour de deux colombes, tandis que les trumeaux s'enorgueillissent de paons aux*

[559] Ibid., p. 2.
[560] Ibid., p. 8.
[561] Ibid., p. 9.
[562] Ibid.

queues majestueuses. Le dessin des Jardins est dû à Blondel, nommé d'Isle, élève de Le Nôtre[563]*, dont on reconnaît la facture si sobre et pleine de noblesse.*[564]

The history that Charles considered the house to represent did not end in the early nineteenth century: it continued well into the present day. "*En 1850*," he wrote, *"Champs passa aux mains de M. Santerre, petit-neveau de l'officier qui fit rouler le tambour pour étouffer les dernières paroles de Louis XVI sur l'échafaud et fut finalement acquis en 1895 par M. Cahen d'Anvers."*[565] The Cahen d'Anvers, his presentation suggested, were part of the chateau's age-old narrative, at least as much as any of its previous occupants had been, royal or otherwise. As such, they were inextricably linked to the deeply rooted, organic conception of French nationhood that Charles considered the house to embody. In that sense, what he wrote was nothing less than a subtle "Jewish return into history,"[566] a view of the past that integrated Jews naturally, seamlessly, and almost self-evidently into French history. Reading his essay, visitors to Champs-sur-Marne would draw little if any distinction between the days when *ancien régime* aristocrats occupied the chateau and the days when foreign-born[567] Jews resided there. Both were plot points in the same evolving continuum. Yet, in the end, Charles depicted his family as something more than mere plot points. The Cahen d'Anvers were the active curators and the devoted protectors of both the legacy of their home and the legacy of the nation it represented. "*Celui-ci*," wrote Cahen d'Anvers *fils* of his father, "*entreprit avec Mme Cahen d'Anvers, passionnément éprise des choses de l'art, la lourde tâche de rendre au château son lustre d'autrefois*."[568] This was the language of sacrifice as much as it was the language of

[563] Here Charles refers to André Le Nôtre (1613-1700), perhaps the most famous landscape artist in French history and, notably, the principal designer of the gardens at Versailles. Le Nôtre's work is essentially synonymous with the "*jardin à la française*"—formal, ordered, and geometric.
[564] Ibid., p. 9-10.
[565] Ibid., p. 11.
[566] As popularized by Emil Fackenheim in his 1978 book, the term "Jewish return into history" typically refers to the establishment of the state of Israel. It can also, as evidenced by uses in the 1920s and 1930s, refer to the origins of the Zionist movement in the 1880s and the project of reclaiming Jewish political autonomy. Charles Cahen d'Anvers was no Zionist—and, indeed, hardly a practicing Jew—but his narrative seeks nevertheless to claim a rightful place for Jews in the narrative of French history he relays. See Fackenheim, *The Jewish Return Into History: Reflections in the Age of Auschwitz and a New Jerusalem* (New York, 1978).
[567] His father, Louis Cahen d'Anvers, was born in Antwerp in 1837; his mother, Louise Morpurgo, was born in Trieste in 1845.
[568] Ibid., p. 11.

nostalgia. The Cahen d'Anvers, Charles suggested, were exemplars of each—warriors, through art, for the recovery of the glorious French past.

III. The Villa Kérylos and the Presentation of an "*Immortelle Beauté*"



Figure 39. Villa Kérylos, Library, 1934 Visitor's Guide, Bibliothèque Nationale.

On 30 October 1928, Théodore Reinach's remains were sealed in the family tomb in the Cimitère de Montmartre, where both his wives, Evelyne Kann (d. 1927) and Fanny-Thérèse Kann (d. 1917), his brother Joseph (d. 1921), and an infant son, Jean, (d. 1888) had preceded him. Gathered there that day were the surviving members of his *milieu*, Paris's haute-bourgeois Jewish elite: his brother, Salomon; his daughters, Hélène

Reinach-Abrami and Gabrielle Reinach; and his sons, Julien, Paul and Léon Reinach, who came with his wife, Béatrice de Camondo and her father, Moïse. Béatrice Éphrussi, a distant relation, and Edmond de Rothschild, a fellow custodian of the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, both came, as did a significant number of Théodore's colleagues from the *Institut de France*.[569] All had gathered to mourn the loss of one of the great polymaths of the age. Louis-German Lévy, the chief rabbi of the Union libérale, delivered the eulogy of a man who, in his view, was as much a proud Jew as he was a devoted classicist:

> *Toujours ce qu'il y a en nous d'amour de la vérité et de la beauté se retrouvera dans son souvenir. Autour de sa mémoire chanteront, graves, douces, harmonieuses, les plus belles voix du ciel et de la terre. Sur son nom brilleront à jamais ces deux splendides rayons de la Hokhma divine: l'agile et souriante lumière de la Grèce et la pure et sainte lumière du génie d'Israël.*[570]

Lévy's concluding remark—about Théodore as a point of intersection between the "light" of ancient Greece and the "genius" of Israel—was also a parable for the house that the youngest Reinach brother had bequeathed to his beloved *Institut*. As a public museum—albeit one that remained partially under family control until 1967[571]—Kérylos became, predictably, a museum to the Greek ideal of perfection. "*C'est ici qu'en compagnie des orateurs, des savants et des poètes des grecs*," Théodore's library inscription read, "*je me ménage une retraite paisible dans l'immortelle beauté*." But the villa, through the personal effects that its rooms displayed to the public, also became a shrine to the man—and the family—that had built it, among the most prominent in the Third Republic's intellectual establishment. Kérylos was thus a material "self-portrait" in the sense that Anne Higonnet has defined the term, albeit one with a central, if subtle, contention: a Jew could indeed understand and create "*immortelle beauté*."

After the death of Théodore Reinach, the *Institut* assumed management of Kérylos. In 1934, the Institut, in collaboration with the Bibliothèque Nationale, commissioned a catalogue on Kérylos—complete with an introduction by Emmanuel Pontremoli—that documented the way in which the house was transformed into a museum.[572] A series of photographs of the villa's rooms, with furniture arranged to suggest the lived experience of daily, ordinary life, betray the Institut's intention to

[569] See Michel Steve, *Théodore Reinach* (Nice, 2014), p. 180.
[570] Quoted in Ibid., p. 180.
[571] See Fabrice Reinach, "Kérylos: Architecture d'un rêve."
[572] See *Kérylos* (Paris: Éditions Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 1934).

preserve the memory of the people who had lived at Kérylos, not just the unique design of the structure itself. In other words, at no point in a visit to the house was it possible to forget the presence of Théodore Reinach. The beds in each bedroom were made as if the occupants of the house would return that night; a chaise lounge in a reading room was dressed with an afghan and a pillow as if the person it had comforted had left the room merely for a moment. The villa's library, its undoubted centerpiece, showcased not merely the intricate Greek mosaics on the walls and floor but the passion of the man who had installed them. After 1928, the surviving Reinachs donated Théodore's books from his Paris house and his Savoy chateau, which meant that Kérylos displayed his library in its diverse, extensive entirety. One could see an entire case devoted to the *Revue des Études Grecques*; another devoted to the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*; a collection of volumes on numismatics; and shelf after shelf on mathematics, the classics, and histories of music, architecture, and the arts.[573] This reconstructed library was ultimately a bibliographic reconstruction of Théodore himself, visibly uniting for the first time the wide array of intellectual endeavours he had pursued throughout his long and prolific career. His famed standing desk was fitted with paper and pen: the character of Théodore Reinach was inextricably linked to the room, the house, and the ideal it represented.

Almost every interpretation of Kérylos published from the time of its dedication immediately recognized it as an authentic reconstruction of Greek beauty, but also as an argument for the durability of that ideal in the present day. In 1928, Gustave Glotz, the president of the Académie, referred to Kérylos as a site that accurately reflected the art and architecture of ancient Greece: it was a "*belle villa de Beaulieu qu'il avait fait orner de peintures empruntées aux vases antiques*."[574] Likewise, in a 1931 essay he wrote on Reinach and Kérylos, René Cagnat, the *Institut*'s Secrétaire Perpétuel, called the house "*une vraie maison méditerranéenne du type délien, à un seul péristyle et brodant sur ce thème pour en faire non point un pastiche, une archéologie froide, mais une chose vivante et habitable*."[575] This "true" Mediterranean house was an authentic celebration of

[573] Despite the Nazi destruction of the extensive papers and family archive Théodore maintained in this library at Kérylos, his books remained largely untouched and remain on display today.
[574] Gustave Glotz, *À l'Occasion de la Mort de Théodore Reinach* (Paris, 1928), p. 6. Archives of the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, *Institut de France*, Paris.
[575] René Cagnat, *Notice sur la Vie et les Travaux de Théodore Reinach* (Paris, 1931), p. 4. Archives of the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, Institut de France*, Paris.

ancient history, realized with the aesthetic standards of antiquity itself: "*tous les détails*," Cagnat continued, *"ont empruntés à des documents archéologiques habilement choisis, mosaïques, bas-reliefs, peintures, vases, lampes*."[576] But what Kérylos presented was ultimately a *living* history, a history that was not at all out of place in the French interwar era. The house, in Cagnat's assessment, was a nexus between past and present, between the dream of Delos and contemporary Republican France. "*On y vit dans un milieu antique, adapté aux lignes du paysage*," he wrote, "*on pourrait croire que la construction a toujours été là depuis l'époque où les colons phocéens venaient de mettre le pied sur la Côte d'Azu*r."[577] Establishing that connection had always been Théodore's aim.



Figure 40. Kérylos, Solarium, 1934 Visitor's Guide, Bibliothèque Nationale.

[576] Ibid.
[577] Ibid.

Kérylos was distinct from its immediate surroundings in several important ways. At the end of the Pointe des Fourmis, it jutted out into the bay from the harbour of Beaulieu-sur-Mer, visible from most points in the village. Architecturally, it also represented a significant departure from the pastel facades of the Beaux Arts mansions that formed the majority of the local built environment, especially in the first decade of the twentieth century. What also distinguished Kérylos was a plaque, prominently displayed at its entrance, which established the unique and even bizarre villa as the explicit construction of a Jewish patron. In capital letters, it listed the name "REINACH," a name that had become a synonym for a certain aspect of the Jewish experience in contemporary France, at least in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair. For Drumont and his followers, of course, this name evoked the presence of a fifth column subverting the national interest from within. For France's Jewish community, it had come to mean a crusader for the cause of assimilation and coexistence. But, if the Reinach name was also inscribed on the walls of Paris's Grand Synagogue de la Victoire, on a plaque outside the Consistoire Central Israélite de Paris, and on the family's memorial in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, it would now be found outside Kérylos, which represented a different project altogether. If they were crusaders, defenders, and even, as in Théodore's case, philosophers of the Franco-Jewish encounter, they were also aesthetic arbiters, custodians and creators of "*immortelle beauté*."

IV. The Villa Île de France as a "Musée Rothschild"

In 1934, at the age of 69, Béatrice Éphrussi de Rothschild died in Davos, Switzerland, alone in a hotel. There is a sense in which her death belongs in Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, containing as it does the mythic Berghof sanatorium, a departure from reality and a place of listless decay. After all, for a woman whose principal occupation had been the construction of fantastical mansions—immense, lavish, but ultimately rooted—a hotel carried with it a certain degree of metaphor: the transience of life confronted in the most transient of places. As the orienting theme she had chosen for the Villa Île de France suggested, escape had always been one of Béatrice Éphrussi's primary motivations as a collector and a designer. It was fitting, then, that in her Davos

hotel room, she was designing yet another escape—a new property in Monte Carlo, nearer her beloved casino. "We do not fear being called meticulous," Mann wrote in *The Magic Mountain*, "inclining as we do to the view that only the exhaustive can be truly interesting." These words apply rather well to Béatrice, whose dogged pursuit of material dreams was as exhaustive in life as it would be in death. With no living descendants, she bequeathed the Villa Île de France—as well as the entirety of her collections in each of her homes—to the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* with the explicit stipulation that it be transformed into a museum. The museum was to serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, it was to be a complete environmental installation that presented her *objets d'art* and art collections in the unchanged setting of a lived-in, real-life home. On the other, it was to be a Rothschild museum, positing an association between an extensive collection of European masterworks, the European enlightenment, and the decidedly European, cosmopolitan family that had collected them. If her life as a collector had often been in opposition to her family and its style, the museum she conceived was ultimately an argument for the Rothschild family as curators of an elevated, authentic European aesthetic.

In February 1933, Béatrice notarized her Last Will and Testament, the document in which she clearly articulated her plans for a museum and in which she authorized a donation of six million francs for its creation:

> *Je lègue à l'Institut de France pour l'Académie des Beaux-Arts ma villa Ile de France St.-Jean Cap Ferrat Alpes Maritimes avec tout le mobilier et les objets d'arts et le jardin qui l'entoure pour en faire un musée—je désire qu'on mette sur la porte d'entrée l'inscription suivante, gravée en lettres d'or ou gris foncé sur une plaque de marbre rose—Musée Ile de France fondé par Madame Ephrussi en souvenir de son père Alphonse de Rothschild et de sa mère Eleonora de Rothschild. Je lègue à ce musée tous les objets d'art que je possède soit à Paris, 19 ave. Foch—soit à Mt. Carlo Villa Soleil et Villa Rose de France—tableau meubles porcelaines tapisseries etc. exceptés ceux dont j'aurais disposés autrement—je désire que le Musée garde l'aspect actuel d'un salon dans la mesure du possible que les objets précieux soient dans les vitrines.*[578]

The wish that Béatrice expressed in the last line of her will articulated a certain type of museum that was as different from the encyclopedic museums in major European capitals as it was from the late-nineteenth-century house museum. If the private collection

[578] Béatrice Éphrussi de Rothschild, Last Will and Testament, 25 February 1933, OE 405, Rothschild Archive, London (RAL).

museum was a reaction to the daunting breadth of the encyclopedic museum and the national narrative it often displayed, it was typically—even in the instances when it occupied a collector's home—still a museum space in the traditional sense. Items were displayed in a more intimate setting, to be sure, but that setting was often still a gallery in which viewers encountered art on the walls or objects in glass vitrines. Béatrice, however, envisaged a slightly different type of museum: "*je désire que le Musée garde l'aspect actuel d'un salon dans la mesure du possible*," she wrote, "*que les objets précieux soient dans les vitrines*." By emphasizing "*l'aspect actuel*," she intended the living spaces in the Villa Île de France—the bedrooms, the washrooms, the dining rooms, and the kitchens—to be integrated into the display of the collections exactly as they were. Traditional display techniques—such as glass vitrines—were to be used only insofar as they protected "*objets précieux*" that were likely to break otherwise. Compared with other private collection museums established in the early decades of the twentieth century, Béatrice's museum—in much the same way as Moïse de Camondo and Théodore Reinach would conceive their own respective museums—pursued a more mimetic approach that eschewed traditional, taxonomic modes of display. The Villa Île de France—as well as the Musée Nissim de Camondo and the Villa Kérylos—sought to recreate a total environment, but a total environment that never lost sight of the real, contemporary people who had lived among the material things on view.

Of course, by the early decades of the twentieth century, museum display practices had gradually embraced installations that favoured the "period room" as a means of evoking the ethos of a particular moment in history. This was a trend in opposition to the age-old technique of presenting linear genealogies of historical evolution through a sequence of adjacent rooms, each devoted to a specific style or type of art object. Typically, Alexandre du Sommerard (1779-1842), the French collector of medieval and Renaissance *objets d'art* and the founder of what became Paris's Musée de Cluny, is credited as the source of this approach. At the Cluny, a diversity of objects—furniture, paintings, and porcelains—serve as what the art historian Stephen Bann has called "synecdoches" for "an historically authentic milieu."[579] Later in the nineteenth

[579] See Bann's comparison of Alexandre du Sommenard's more innovative, environmental display practices with the traditional, taxonomic approach of Alexandre Lenoir (1761-1839), conservator of the

century, the Swedish folklorist Artur Hazelius adapted the technique of the period room for Skansen, his open-air museum in Stockholm, which illustrated different chapters of pre-industrial Swedish history. After this, Elizabeth Rodini has argued, the period room became a fixture, and in a variety of national contexts.[580] In Britain, for instance, as Kate Hill has suggested, the increasing popularity of the period room corresponded to a changing way of remembering the past, which, by the late nineteenth century, had expanded to include more room for the personal, intimate, and gendered stories parallel to larger, macro-historical narratives.[581] But if the type of museum Béatrice Éphrussi imagined for the Villa Île de France generally fitted into this context, it was also a departure from the form of a museum that was merely a series of period rooms, as was the case of many private collection museums. As was the case with the Musée Camondo and the Villa Kérylos, the Villa Île de France was an evocation of a bygone era, but, first and foremost, it was always preserved as a home—the home of people with real names and real lives.

This, perhaps, was Béatrice's most ambitious goal for her museum: a redefinition of the Rothschild name from its pejorative "Rothschild Jew" connotation to a synonym for a guardian of French and European cultural heritage. As she stipulated in her will, not without a reminder of her obsessive interest in even the smallest details: "*je désire qu'on mette sur la porte d'entrée l'inscription suivante, gravée en lettres d'or ou gris foncé sur une plaque de marbre rose—Musée Ile de France fondé par Madame Ephrussi en souvenir de son père Alphonse de Rothschild et de sa mère Eleonora de Rothschild*." In much the same way as the Musée Camondo, the Villa Île de France would neither efface nor conceal the Jewishness of its founder or her family. On the contrary, it would proudly affirm the family's identity, associating her formidable collection of the finest French art objets d'art—Sèvres porcelains, Savonneries carpets, Fragonard canvases—with the name "Rothschild," the most recognizable Jewish name of all. Aside from a cursory mention of her desire to create "*l'aspect actuel d'un salon*," Béatrice's will makes little

---

Revolutionary Musée des monuments français, which housed art and objects looted from chateaux and aristocratic homes across France. Bann, "Historical Texts and Historical Objects: The Poetics of the Musée de Cluny," *History and Theory*, 17 (1978), pp. 251-266.

[580] Elizabeth Rodini, "Preserving and Perpetuating Memory at the Musée Nissim de Camondo," p. 42.

[581] See Kate Hill, "Collecting Authenticity: Domestic, Familial, and Everyday 'Old Things' in English Museums, 1850-1939," *Museum History Journal*, 4 (2011), pp. 203-22.

mention of any conception of "authenticity" *per se*. But her decision to name the museum as she did—"*en souvenir de…Alphonse Rothschild*"—suggests a motivation similar to the one that propelled Moïse de Camondo. This was the desire to challenge, even subtly, the strain of French anti-Semitism that insisted Jews could never know true beauty and could never achieve aesthetic authenticity.

No one, after all, had been a greater target of this aesthetic anti-Semitism than Béatrice's father, Alphonse de Rothschild. In *La France Juive* (1866), Drumont had included an entire section[582] on the Rothschild chateau at Ferrières, of which Alphonse had been the principal custodian after the death of his father, James, and where Béatrice herself had lived as a child. The neo-Renaissance fantasy, in his assessment, had constituted a grotesque spectacle of inauthenticity, an inadequate Jewish performance of a counterfeit and hollow Frenchness. "*On vit dans un perpétuel mensonge*," he wrote of contemporary France, where sites like Ferrières had been invaded by the Rothschilds and other Jewish elites. "*Et il est difficile, pour l'observateur, de raisonner d'après des apparences de situations et des étalages de sentiments qui, la plupart du temps, sont absolument faux*."[583] The majesty of French history, for Drumont, was contained in certain places not unlike the *lieux de mémoire* Pierre Nora would later imagine. But these were ultimately places that had fallen to Jewish interlopers: "*Fontainebleu est à Éphrussi, Versailles est à Hirsch, Ferrières est à Rothschild!*" he lamented.[584] The Goncourts were even more unsparing in their assessment of Alphonse de Rothschild in particular. For them, he was the avatar of aesthetic inauthenticity. Recalling a dinner party with Alphonse in June 1899, Jules Goncourt wrote the following in his diary:

> *C'est curieux comme dans le logis de ces gens millionnairement riches, je suis persécuté par une pensée, qui ne vient pas du tout chez les collectionneurs pauvres : je suis hanté par l'idée de la fausseté des objets d'art qui m'entourent, par la fausseté des peintures, par la fausseté des sculptures et surtout par la fausseté des bronzes dorés, l'objet de fabrique artistique que les opulents prisent le mieux, payent le plus cher et qui me semblent, la plupart de temps, sortir de l'atelier d'une faussaire comme le docteur Camus*.[585]

[582] This section is the entire fifth chapter of *La France Juive*'s second volume.
[583] Drumont, *La France Juive* (1866), vol. II, p. 71.
[584] Ibid., p. 82.
[585] Goncourts, *Journal*, 4 June 1899, vol. III, p. 277.

The Villa Île de France, in a certain sense, was Béatrice's rejoinder to this verdict, as devastating as it was dismissive. Her collection was a pastiche of European cultural products, to be sure, but in terms of the quality of the objects it contained, it was an emphatic defense against these accusations of Jewish aesthetic "*fausseté*."

As the reception of Béatrice's donation suggests, her argument was at least somewhat successful. After her death, her younger brother, Édouard de Rothschild (1868-1949), wrote to Charles Widor, the Secretary of the Académie des Beaux Arts, to inform him of his late sister's bequest. In relaying the news, Édouard's letter repeated the essence of his sister's intentions: "*le testament de ma sœur*," he wrote, "*…contient une disposition par laquelle elle lègue à l'Institut de France, pour l'Académie des Beaux-Arts, sa villa du Cap Ferrat, avec tout le mobilier, les objets d'art et le jardin qui en dépendant, pour en faire un Musée en mémoire de nos parents*."[586] A week later, Édouard had not yet heard back from the Académie, and he wrote again to Widor, expressing his displeasure. There was a certain degree of urgency in his appeal, to confirm that his sister's request—and, with it, the Rothschild family name—would be appropriately honored. "*J'espère que ma lettre ne s'est pas égarée*," he wrote, "*car je suis surpris de n'avoir reçu jusqu'ici aucune réponse. Veuillez agréer, Monsieur le Secrétaire Perpétuel, l'assurance de mes sentiments de haute considération*."[587] The next day, Widor, at the age of 90, assuaged Édouard's anxieties with a dramatic and self-deprecating apology that was also a portrait of the Rothschilds as the guardians of the French cultural past:

> *Monsieur, Je suis consterné de l'apparence d'ingratitude. Samedi après la séance j'ai déposé à votre porte des cartes au nom de mes confrères profondément émus du nouveau bienfait qu'ils tenaient de Madame Ephrussi, votre sœur très regretté. De là chez notre admirable et incomparable confrère Edmond de Rothschild auquel l'art, la science, la France sont de plus en plus redevables. Le baron et la baronne ignoraient encore la donation faite à l'Académie. J'ai 90 ans, les jambes enflées, or cet après-midi, je prononce mon oraison funèbre en dirigeant l'orchestre du Conservatoire à St. Sulpice. Si l'enflure n'atteint pas le cœur, je vous demanderai de vouloir bien me faire savoir quand il vous sera possible de me recevoir. Les Edmond de Rothschild ne doutent pas de moi, permettez-moi vous aussi, cher baron Edmond, de me disculper. Votre oncle me rappelait samedi que c'est rue St. Florentin que je lui avais été présenté, il y a 54*

[586] Baron Édouard de Rothschild to Charles Widor, 11 April 1934, OE 405, RAL.
[587] Rothschild to Widor, 18 April 1934, Ibid.

ans, à la table d'Alphonse de Rothschild. Veuillez agréer, Monsieur, l'assurance de mes sentiments très distinguées…[588]

In Widor's assessment, the Rothschild legacy was thus properly understood in terms of French national legacy: the two were ultimately one and the same. As he wrote of Edmond, a fellow member of the Académie: "*De là chez notre admirable et incomparable confrère Edmond de Rothschild auquel l'art, la science, la France sont de plus en plus redevables*." Edmond's service was to art, to science, and, most importantly, to France, the same entity Béatrice had enriched with her gift. This point he made even more emphatically the following day in a letter to Édouard, confirming the Académie's official receipt of Béatrice's bequest. "*L'Académie a accepté le legs à l'unanimité des membres présents et m'a chargé de vous transmettre ses remerciements les plus vifs pour la nouvelle libéralité qu'elle reçoit de la famille Rothschild*," he wrote, "*l'inlassable protectrice des arts*."[589] In the span of a single generation, then, the Rothschild family had gone from being public exemplars of aesthetic "*fausseté*" to the protectors of what was valuable in French art—and this in the assessment of the most prestigious cultural institution in the land.

Widor was not alone in this opinion. Even *L'Intransigeant*, the rightwing and formerly anti-Dreyfusard newspaper, proclaimed its support for what was already being called the "Musée Rothschild[590]": "*Les dispositions prise par l'Académie en vue de réaliser la généreuse pensée de Mme Ephrussi seront communiqués ultérieurement*," its article read. "*Voilà, à un monument où les Beaux-Arts sont si durement frappés, un beau geste qui mérite d'être hautement loué*."[591] Barely two months after the Stavisky Affair—which had reignited anti-Semitic riots against a perceived Jewish financial domination—this was no small victory. In the increasingly uncertain political atmosphere of the mid-1930s, the Villa Île de France was therefore evidence that Jewishness and Frenchness could more than coexist. In some instances, Béatrice's rose palazzo contended, the former could advance and even refine the latter.

---

[588] Widor to Rothschild, 19 April 1934, Ibid.
[589] Widor to Rothschild, 20 April 1934, Ibid.
[590] Widor himself, by the summer of 1934, began referring to Béatrice's bequest of the Villa Île de France as the "Musée Rothschild," an association which suggests the ways in which the family was fundamentally linked to the public afterlife of Béatrice's collections and home.
[591] "En Faveur des Beaux-Arts," *L'Intransigeant*, 16 April 1934, OE 405, RAL.

V. Afterlife: *Lieux de Mémoire*



Figure 41. Plaques inside the entrance to Musée Nissim de Camondo, February 2015.

In the context of the 1920s and 1930s, each of these museums—the Musée Nissim de Camondo, the Château de Champs-sur-Marne, the Villa Kérylos, and the Villa Île de France—was by and large a "successful" argument for the value of a French-Jewish exchange. As various journalistic and academic appraisals suggest, the images that the founders chose to present in their museums were largely met with praise and, more importantly, public acceptance. No one seemed to challenge any of the silent arguments these museums advanced, all of which were a variation on the essential value of the French-Jewish encounter, in the past but especially in the present. That present, of course, was increasingly fraught. Some of the collectors—Beatrice Ephrussi, Edmond de Rothschild, and Moise de Camondo—were still alive after the Nazi rise to power in Germany in 1933. Moïse de Camondo, certainly the most explicit about his museum's political project, even lived until after the passage of the Nuremberg Laws. Yet, with the exception of one letter he wrote in May 1935, declining an offer to lend a piece from his collection to an exhibition in New York because of "*la situation politique, si troublée en Europe*,"[592] his perception of European politics—and of a Jewish future in Europe—remains unclear. The same is true for the other members of his *milieu*. The writings and correspondence they left behind do not reveal what, if anything, they thought about the prospect of an institutionalized anti-Semitism or a social landscape where the assimilation they had advocated had become an utter impossibility.

Five years after the death of the last of these collectors, France fell to the Wehrmacht in a matter of a few weeks. With the exception of the Villa Kérylos, these museums, as state property, were largely spared the spoliations that many private Jewish collections endured. During the German Occupation, they were closed as other French museums were closed, and ultimately re-opened on the same schedule as other national museums, such as the Louvre and the Jeu de Paume. If they experienced other sporadic closures between June 1940 and August 1944, there is no evidence that these were a function of their "Jewish" identities. Although most of these museums did indeed bear the Jewish names of their founders—and continued to do so under German occupation—their contents, critically celebrated pieces of French cultural patrimony, were never confiscated or removed. None of them, for instance, lost artworks or *objets d'art* for

[592] Moïse de Camondo to Herbert Winlock, 4 May 1935, AMNC, Paris.

inclusion in the infamous "Le Juif et la France" exhibition of so-called "degenerate" art staged at the Palais Berlitz in 1941. There was a certain irony in that omission. Jews were incapable, the exhibition maintained, of making art. Yet a good number of the finest public displays of eighteenth-century French art had been created and curated by Jews, an association none of the museums was ever made to hide or refute during the war. The subtle arguments that these respective museums quietly advanced—about the potential for a productive assimilation—continued to be made.

But in the aftermath of the war, the museums each became fundamentally inscribed in a history of destruction that the collectors themselves neither witnessed nor even anticipated, as the archives suggest. They became *lieux de mémoire*, sites that evoked a troubled Jewish present as much as a particular vision of a "glorious" French past. This is particularly evident in the case of the Musée Nissim de Camondo. As autocratic and authoritative as Moïse de Camondo was over every aspect of his museum—even in death—it eventually escaped his control. Less than ten years after its establishment, the Musée Nissim de Camondo would make a different argument altogether from the one Moïse himself had so carefully designed. In Guérin's essay for *L'Illustration*, he included the following expression of gratitude to Moïse's daughter, Béatrice: "*…nous avons aidés par la fille du comte de Camondo, Mme Léon Reinach*," he wrote, "*à qui la France d'abord et le Musée des arts décoratifs se doivent d'exprimer toute leur respectueuse reconnaissance pour la générosité et pour la bonne grâce avec lesquelles elle a facilité toutes choses*."[593] Peripheral to her father's project for a family museum—which, in truth, was essentially a mausoleum for the family's male members—Béatrice, who had never enjoyed much of her father's attention, would eventually become the unlikely and unfortunate centre of the museum.

By the late 1930s, Béatrice de Camondo-Reinach was living alone at 64, Boulevard Maurice Barrès in the fashionable Paris suburb of Neuilly. Estranged from her husband, Léon Reinach, since the birth of their son, Bertrand, in 1923,[594] Béatrice, by all accounts, lived the *comme il faut* life of the wealthy heiress. In Pierre Assouline's somewhat novelistic depiction, she spent her time socializing, entertaining and, above all,

[593] Guérin, "Le musée Nissim de Camondo," p. 532.
[594] The couple's divorce was not finalized until the 26 October 1942. See Seni and Le Tarnec, note 3, p. 267.

pursuing her passion for riding.[595] After Moïse's death, Béatrice was involved in her father's museum, but, as the archives suggest, only as a formality.[596] After the German occupation of Paris and the anti-Semitism they—along with French authorities—institutionalized, the few studies that mention Béatrice invariably portray her as delusional. For Seni and Le Tarnec, for instance, she suffered from an "*imprudence mortelle*."[597] In one account, Béatrice was even seen riding horses in the Bois de Boulogne—escorted by a German officer—as late as the spring of 1943, well after the imposition of the yellow star and the infamous Vel d'Hiv roundups.[598] As was the case for many other "*israélite*" French Jews of her class and social standing—who, by the 1940s, knew themselves as French first and Jewish merely in terms of heritage—it was probably inconceivable to Béatrice that the Nazi attacks on foreign Jews would be levied against her and her family.[599] After all, her brother, Nissim, had died in the service of France, while her father and her uncle had made extensive philanthropic donations in celebration of the nation's cultural past. Although their origins were Turkish, the Camondos, by the time of Nazi occupation, had lived in France for nearly a century: they were foreigners no longer. "*Coupée de la réalité, obstinée,*" write Seni and Le Tarnec, "*elle demeure toujours dans son duplex du boulevard Maurice-Barrès, à Neuilly*."[600] It was from that house that she was eventually arrested, in the summer of 1943, with her two children, Fanny and Bertrand. They were sent to Drancy,[601] a place the French

[595] See Assouline, *Les dernier des Camondo*.
[596] To my knowledge, the most significant document that describes Béatrice's involvement in her father's museum is the guest list she made for the opening ceremony on 21 December 1936, which includes the names of many others in the Camondos' social orbit.
[597] Seni and Le Tarnec, p. 267.
[598] Ibid.
[599] See, for instance, the journals of Hélène Berr (1921-1945), the so-called "French Anne Frank" and the daughter of Raymond Berr (1888-1944), the head of Établissments Kuhlmann, a major French industrial firm, during the war. Hélène's diary, first published in France in 2007, more than 60 years after it was composed, describes in painful detail the experiences of a young, wealthy French woman coming to understand herself as a Jewish "foreigner" after Nazi occupation. In much the same way as Béatrice de Camondo, Hélène and her family remained in their sumptuous apartment in the seventh arrondissement throughout the German occupation of Paris. The diary chronicles the Nazi persecution of the city's Jews, a group in which Hélène initially does not consider herself a member. See *Journal: une vie confisquée*, ed. Mariette Job (Paris, 2007).
[600] Seni and Le Tarnec, p. 267.
[601] The entry numbers of Béatrice and her children in Drancy were 413, 414, and 415, respectively.

historian Adam Rayski, himself a survivor, memorably dubbed "*le dernier cercle avant l'enfer*."[602]



Figure 42. Béatrice de Camondo-Reinach, undated, rue de Monceau, Paris. AMNC.

[602] Rayski, the prolific historian and co-founder of the Conseil représentif des institutions juives de France (CRIF), includes this line in *Le Choix des juifs sous Vichy*, *entre soumission et résistance* (Paris, 1992).

Not unlike the novelist Irène Némirovsky, who believed that her high social status and social relationships with Nazi officials would protect her from persecution, Béatrice de Camondo either refused to understand or, in fact, could not understand the political realities of Nazi occupation.[603] As it was for Némirovsky, this was also true of Béatrice even as she took quiet precautions to protect herself. In 1942, just as Némirovsky had in 1939, she converted to Catholicism to declare her "Frenchness,"[604] but never, apparently, did she see value in attempting to use her considerable resources to procure an exit from France, either for herself or her children. Indeed, among the most difficult documents to read in the Camondo archive are the numerous letters between Béatrice and the newly established *Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives* (GGQJ).[605] The Commissariat requested detailed information regarding her extensive assets and her various sources of income—all in order to determine how much to charge in the new taxes levied against Jews. Béatrice, as these documents attest, complied with every request on time and paid every centime asked of her. In one document, she provided the Commissariat with a long list of those to whom she paid pensions, mostly employees and long-time acquaintances of the family. After most of her assets were frozen, these were stipends that she insisted should continue to be paid—an argument she made within the framework of the German racial laws, accepting their distinctions and parameters. She insisted that the authorities transfer a total of 210,000 francs to the

[603] Since the publication and surprising success of *Suite Française* in 2004, her unfinished novel of German occupation written as she was in hiding in Issy l'Évêque, Irène Némirovsky herself has garnered significant attention and generated a great deal of controversy. Némirovsky's conversion to Catholicism in 1939 and unflattering depictions of Jews in her fiction has led several commentators, such as Myriam Anissimov in France and Ruth Franklin in the United States, to label her as a "self-hating Jew." These accusations, in turn, have led others, such as Olivier Philipponat and Patrick Lienhardt, to salvage her reputation, enshrining her as a Jewish martyr and Holocaust victim. By and large, the "Némirovsky debate" is beside the point. Her writings and lived experience serve as windows into the sensibility of assimilated French Jewish elites—especially women—confronting the unfathomable and unprecedented imposition of identity categories they themselves neither accepted nor understood. In that sense, the story of Irène Némirovsky is the story of Béatrice de Camondo, Hélène Berr, and, indeed, of thousands of others in wartime France, struggling to articulate their place as newly declared foreigners in the only home they had ever known. See Anissimov, "Préface," *Suite Française* (Paris, 2004) and Ruth Franklin, "Scandale Française," *The New Republic*, 30 January 2008. See also Olivier Philipponat and Patrick Lienhardt, *La Vie d'Irène Némirovsky* (Paris, 2007).

[604] Seni and Le Tarnec, Ibid.

[605] An ironic reality was that a major office of this institution, headed by Xavier Vallat, was housed in 21, rue la Boétie, the former gallery of the art dealers Paul and Léonce Rosenberg, among the most important promoters of Picasso, Matisse, and other artists soon to be labeled "degenerate" by Nazi authorities. The French journalist Anne Sinclair describes this history in her recent memoir, *21, rue la Boétie* (Paris, 2013).

seventeen names on a list she provided. "*À ma connaissance*," she wrote, "*toutes ces personnes sont Aryennes sauf Mme Tedeschi qui a un compte bloqué, et Mme Danon. Beatrice Reinach*."[606] She mostly won her case, although, in the end, the Nazi authorities granted little more than half of the amount she had requested. On 21 February 1942, the GGQJ wrote to its financial branch:

> *En vue du payment de pensions à d'anciens serviteurs de la famille de la juive Léon REINACH née Béatrice de CAMONDO, […] j'ai l'honneur de vous informer que je vous autorise à virer une somme de frs: 125,000 au crédit du compte ouvert au nom de l'interessée dans les écritures de la Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas. Cette opération sera effectuée par prélèvement sur les consignations qui aurait été réalisées pour le compte de cette juive par la Direction des Domaines de la Seine.*[607]

In March 1944—six months after her husband and children had suffered the same fate[608]—Béatrice de Camondo-Reinach was deported to Auschwitz, having arrived on convoy 69 from Drancy. Records show that she was murdered in the gas chamber on 4 January 1945, barely two weeks before Soviet forces liberated the camp. With her died the entire bloodline of the Camondo family as well as its cosmopolitan past. All that remained of either was the museum on the rue de Monceau.



Figure 43. Fanny Reinach (1920-1943) and Bertrand Reinach (1923-1943). AMNC.

[606] "Pensions servies par Madame Léon REINACH, née de Camondo," undated, AMNC.
[607] CGQJ to Directeur Général de la Caisse des Dépôts et Consignetions Contentieux, 21 February 1942, AMNC.
[608] Léon Reinach, who had spent much of the occupation in the un-occupied zone, at Kérylos and at other family properties, was arrested in Pau trying to pass from France into Spain. He was deported, along with his two children, on convoy 62 on 20 November 1943.

Much the same applied to Béatrice's brother-in-law, Julien Reinach, and the Villa Kérylos, of which he served as principal custodian. On 21 October 1941, he wrote to Vichy's own branch of the CGQJ, protesting at a host of fines that, in his view, only applied to Jews living in occupied France, not those living in the "free" zone. Writing from the Villa Kérylos, he essentially put into words the argument that his father, Théodore, had made with the house. His life, his work, and, most importantly, his family were all vehicles that had contributed to the cultural life of the French nation. What he provided in the seventh of eight separate points contesting the anti-Jewish taxes was essentially a *curriculum vitae*, a reminder of the Reinach family's prominent position within the institutions of French academic and political power. Of course, there was a sense in which Julien's letter echoed Béatrice's: he, too, employed the logic of Vichy itself to make his case, emphasizing in his own underlining the ways in which he personified the regime's principles of "*travail, famille, patrie*":

> *J'ai partagé ma vie entre le service de la patrie, la fondation d'une famille et un travail constant dans un nombre de domaines scientifiques et littéraires. (Je suis membre du Conseil d'administration de la Société de législation comparée, de la Société des anciens élèves de l'Ecole des langues orientales, --comissaire [sic] aux comptes de l'Institut des Etudes slaves, --membre des sociétés de linguistique, d'histoire du droit, d'histoire moderne, des auteurs et compositeurs dramatiques, etc…). Des poèmes de moi ont été dits en Sorbonne (traduits du russe et du hongrois) ; une pièce traduite de l'allemand (en vers) a été jouée à Reims sous les auspices de Mgr. L'Archevêque ; j'ai activement collaboré à plusieurs publications juridiques et littéraires juridiques et littéraires, notamment à la Table vicennale des arrêts du Conseil d'État, ex-garde des Sceaux, qui m'avait proposé pour le grade de Conseiller d'Etat à la vielle de la loi dont vous assurez l'exécution.*[609]

Like his brother and his sister-in-law, Julien was deported to Drancy in 1943 and then to Bergen-Belsen. Unlike them, he ultimately survived, although the injuries he sustained in the camp stayed with him until his death in 1962. If the Villa Kérylos represented the breadth of Théodore Reinach's academic endeavours—and, to some extent, their intersection in a particular vision of Republican France—it also represented, after the war, the end of that vision. It was at Kérylos, after all, that Julien was arrested.

[609] Julien Reinach to CGQJ, Vichy, Beaulieu-sur-Mer, 27 October 1941, AMNC, Paris.



Figure 44. Léon Reinach, undated, rue de Monceau, Paris. AMNC.

In the context of the French postwar era, public discourse became obsessed with wartime collaboration through what Henry Rousso famously called the "Vichy Syndrome." In that environment, the Musée Nissim de Camondo, the Villa Kérylos, the Villa Île de France, the Château de Champs-sur-Marne, and with other estates, such as Royaumont, which had not yet been donated, became far more than monuments to the "*gloires de la France*." They became family mausoleums, of interest not necessarily because of the art and *objets* they displayed but because of the people that created them. As in the case of the Musée Nissim de Camondo and the Villa Kérylos, they even became Holocaust memorials, testaments to the nightmares of history at least as much as its splendours. The entry to the former bears a plaque from its 1936 opening in the name of Nissim de Camondo, "*tombé en combat aérien*." Beneath is smaller plaque, added in the 1980s:

Mme Léon REINACH
Née Béatrice de CAMONDO
Ses enfants Fanny et Bertrand REINACH
Derniers Descendants du Donateur
Et M. Léon REINACH
Déportés en 1943-1944
Sont Morts À Auschwitz

CONCLUSION

Toward the beginning of Henry James's *The Golden Bowl* (1904), the Prince Amerigo makes an observation to Maggie Verver, his American fiancée. "You Americans," he tells her, "are almost incredibly romantic." Maggie emphatically agrees, citing as an example her father, the wealthy financier and art collector Adam Verver:

> "His relation to the things he cares for […] is absolutely romantic. So is his whole life over here—it's the most romantic thing I know."
>
> "You mean his idea for his native place?"
>
> "Yes—the collection, the Museum with which he wishes to endow it, of which he thinks more, as you know, than of anything in the world. It's the work of his life and the motive of everything he does." […]
>
> "Has it been his motive in letting me have you?"
>
> "Yes, my dear, positively—or in a manner. […] You're at any rate a part of his collection […] one of the things that can only be got over here. You're a rarity, an object of beauty, an object of price. […] You belong to a class about which everything is known. You are what they call a *morceau de musée*."[610]

As a point of context, Adam Verver—in much the same way as many of the collectors considered in this thesis—was a private collector for whom the arrival of old age presented the prospect of an immortal public persona. Consequently, Verver sought to create what he called a "museum of museums," an institution that would rank among, and perhaps even surpass, the great, extant public collections of art and objects across the world. This particular passage, however, bears repeating not because of Verver's grand project but because of the relationship it articulates between people and things, or, rather, the inter-changeability between the two. In the eyes of a passionate collector, James suggests, there is little difference: the Prince Amerigo, a living being, is ultimately yet another object Verver could acquire, possess, and display. "You," his daughter tells the Prince, "are what they call a *morceau du musée*." It is easy to accept that for collectors like Adam Verver, or, for that matter, Moïse de Camondo or Béatrice Éphrussi, human relationships sometimes appeared as items for sale. Slightly more difficult—and yet more valuable still—is the notion that the inter-changeability between people and objects worked in both directions. If, as this thesis has suggested, collections are "self-portraits,"

[610] See James, *The Golden Bowl* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 9-10.

the objects within them, long after their owners die or disappear, become metonyms for the collectors who saw value in them. Objects, after all, can survive when people cannot. In some cases, they are all that survive.

I. Exile from the Cosmopolitan Past

Despite the fundamental optimism—and, in a sense, the romance—of the individual museums that various French-Jewish elites established in the 1920s and 1930s, their cosmopolitan world evaporated in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the Second World War. Although French authorities, unlike their Danish and Bulgarian counterparts, were willing collaborators in the Nazi genocide, French Jewry fared better than most Jewish communities that had experienced Nazi occupation, in either eastern or western Europe. The French-Jewish population in 1946 is estimated to have been 180,000—160,000 of whom were former citizens; 20,000 of whom were foreign refugees. Of pre-war European Jewish populations (excluding the Soviet Union), few could boast a higher percentage of survival than France.[611] Yet regardless of the numbers, the nature of Jewish life in France would never be the same. Following the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the beginnings of French decolonisation in the 1950s, hundreds of thousands of North-African Jews arrived in France, many seeking refuge from Arab anti-Semitism after Israel's victory in the Six-Day War.[612] This, as the historian Esther Benbassa and others have shown, fundamentally altered the French-Jewish community. The majority of these newcomers were Orthodox, and their arrival stimulated a religious resurgence and a renewal of Jewish education in the *métropole*.[613]

In terms of salvaging Jewish life in Europe after the Holocaust, France was a relative success story. But what was rebuilt was ultimately a Jewish culture none of the collectors would have recognized and an interpretation of Jewish life that, indeed, many of their descendants found unpalatable. Gone, in other words, was the world of the

---

[611] See David Weinberg, "The Renewal of Jewish Life in France After the Holocaust," Yad Vashem, Jerusalem. http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%202464.pdf

[612] On this demographic shift, the historian Esther Benbassa provides a succinct but thorough summary in *The Jews of France: A History from Antiquity to the Present* (Princeton, 2001), esp. "The Influx of North African Jews," pp. 185-189.

[613] See Benbassa, Ibid., esp. "The New Face of French Jewry," pp. 190-201.

israélite, Jewish in culture but secular in spirit, proudly French but cosmopolitan in ethic. In that sense, the museums that Moïse de Camondo, Thédore Reinach, Béatrice Éphrussi, Charles Cahen d'Anvers, and others established in the interwar period are ultimately relics. They are no longer arguments about the compatibility of Frenchness and Jewishness, which assumed an entirely different set of meanings after the war. In a changed landscape, these personalised museums are memorials for a certain assimilated, cosmopolitan Jewish culture that no longer exists. They are not, as they once were, engaged in contemporary discourse; they are fading memories, sites that remind visitors not merely about the Holocaust but about what the Holocaust destroyed.

As Tony Judt has written, the continent that in 1913 had been—and even in 1939 still was—"an intricate, interwoven tapestry of overlapping languages, religions, communities and nations" was "smashed into the dust by 1945."[614] On a macroscopic scale, Hitler and Stalin's nationalistic and ethnic cleansing campaigns—particularly in Eastern Europe but also in Western Europe, albeit to a lesser degree—had resulted in a new continent where, as a result of redrawn boundaries, occupation and genocide, uprooted individuals returned to relatively homogenous polities. Pre-war cosmopolitans who survived the war thus emerged, in 1945, into a new sphere in which their respective individual identities were ultimately confined within singular entities, national or ethnic. Without exception, the collectors featured in this thesis all belonged to this category of pre-war cosmopolitans: all of them had either lived part of their lives or had family relations in a variety of European and Mediterranean locations, from Frankfurt to Vienna to Istanbul. They were proudly French, as this thesis has shown, but, in some sense, they were also consummate Europeans. The collectors themselves, of course, had all died by the mid-1930s, but their descendants—custodians of the same cosmopolitan sensibility—lived on. Some, like Léon Reinach and Béatrice de Camondo, were murdered in Auschwitz. Others, like Hélène Fould-Springer (1907-1997) and Colette Cahen d'Anvers (1911-1969), survived. In Judt's formulation, the challenge for cosmopolitan Europeans such as these became "surviving the peace," maintaining the multifaceted, individual identities they had before 1939 in a postwar continent that insisted on singular

[614] Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London, 2005), pp. 8-9.

categorisation.[615] Literally and figuratively, they embarked on lives of exile: from a vanished prewar Europe and also from the intricate selves they had designed in that place and time. Fortunately, both Hélène Fould-Springer and Colette Cahen d'Anvers described this experience of bifurcated exile in privately published memoirs. Ultimately, the stories of these two women during and after the war evince the destruction of the world their parents and grandparents had worked so tirelessly to construct, often with objects and art.



Figure 45. *The Fould-Springer siblings: Max, Hélène, Thérèse, Liliane*. Royaumont, Paris, 1938. PA.

As it was for so many others, 1940 was a traumatic experience for Hélène Fould-Springer. When the so-called *drôle de guerre* became an actual conflict, Hélène, an entirely assimilated, acculturated Jew, was made to flee her family's Palladian Château Royaumont for Vichy, the south of France and, finally, to Larache, Morocco. Her husband, Eduardo Propper de Callejon, was the First Secretary in the Spanish Embassy in Paris, but his connections could not protect her family from persecution. In search of safety, her mother and all of her siblings dispersed from the Château to a variety of destinations: Marie-Cécile to Montreal; Thérèse, along with her husband, the British writer Alan Pryce-Jones, to Britain; and Max Fould-Springer and Liliane de Rothschild on the last train to Spain from Nice, departing as late as November 1942, just before the

[615] Ibid.

Germans annexed the entirety of France. Of course, compared with the struggles of millions of other uprooted citizens and refugees who fled through France in the so-called "exodus," Hélène's was not a particularly arresting flight. She and all of her immediate family members survived. Yet if the previous world war had been an abstraction in which her family had merely "*jouaient au bridge*," 1940 exacerbated a personal sense of rupture, when her already dwindling sense of control over her own life was taken from her altogether. In the end, this rupture ultimately led to her conversion from Judaism to Catholicism, a trajectory she recounts in *Absents de nous-mêmes,* recollections she initially began as early as 1936 but published privately only in 1961.

What emerges in *Absents de nous-mêmes*—written under the pseudonym "Hélène Praday"—is a narrative attempt to overcome the fundamental illegibility of the author's lived experience. She deals primarily in generalities, abstractions and metaphors seemingly assembled in a particularly liberated form of free-indirect discourse. We are told, for instance, that her image has been deformed "*comme une ombre*,"[616] only to be told in the next portion that her sense of displacement, as if she were a blind woman in a crowd, is akin to "*le tas de varech à marée basse*."[617] Her theme, however, is displacement, the failure to recognise a changed, inner self. "Praday" begins a passage in which she quotes Anatole France to describe the feeling that "*toutes nos misères véritables sont intérieures, et causées par nous-mêmes*."[618] In moments like these, she begins, "*on est seul, face à face avec soi-même, et c'est un nouveau et hideux visage de nous-même qui se présente à nous*."[619] She emphasises distance, the distance between the true self, separated from the artifice of performance, the "*nouveau et hideux visage*" she finds herself obliged to don in order to interact with others. This distance furnishes an environment in which Praday is not only absent from herself but also one in which vitality has been replaced by theatre, a theatre in which she has lost sight altogether of the identity she had fashioned herself. "*Le désir de plaire m'a quittée*," she observes. "*Je ne suis à present qu'une sorte d'automate. Je me sens si éloignée de ce que je devrais être,*

[616] Hélène Praday, *Absents de nous-mêmes*, (Paris, 1961), p. 69. Propper Family Archive, New York City (PA).
[617] Ibid., p. 70.
[618] Ibid., p. 57.
[619] Ibid., p. 65.

que je deviens, pour moi-même, un mannequin encombrant… et c'est avec se sentiment que je m'habille."[620]

That Praday describes this distance in terms of "*une sorte d'automate*" speaks to the degree to which Hélène found her her self-exile as an experience bereft of any agency. After all, the automaton, the robot, is a piece of mere machinery that simply executes actions without reflection or consideration. The new terrain into which Hélène Praday has been exiled thus lacks humanity: she has been, in her own words, "*laissé pour compte, échoué, rejeté par la vie même*." Building on that theme, she expresses a certain degree of frustration at her lack of an internal locus of control. "*Mon image déformée, ce double empoisonné qui me suit, comme une ombre, m'écoeure, par son manque d'harmonie*, et *je cherche à me venger sur elle*" she writes.[621] She seeks revenge on the self that has been imposed on her, but a revenge she can never quite enact.

This, in Hélène's retrospective account, is the point at which her breakdown occurred, the point at which she recognised that her absence from the self she had known and fashioned was permanent and that the distance from that original self—"*si éloignée de ce que je devrais être*"—was ultimately untraversable. "*Je me sens alors comme l'aveugle bousculé par la foule*," she wrote. "*Le programme de la journée se dessine pour les autres, quant à moi, je perds pied, de plus en plus…*"[622] The moment at which she began to lose her footing was ultimately when she understood that she had become foreign even to herself. "*Hélas*," she observed, "*je suis emprisonnée dans un dur cocon*." But, as she is quick to point out: "C'est de moi *que j'essaye de m'évader*."[623]

Hélène's self-exile was fully realised by the end of 1942, when in November the *Wehrmacht* had occupied the entirety of France after Operation Torch, the Allied landing in North Africa. As her husband had yet to be transferred from Larache, she was living in North Africa at the time, and it was there that she converted to Catholicism. Before she and her husband, Eduardo, had left Cannes in 1941, her brother and sister, Max Fould-Springer and Liliane Fould-Springer de Rothschild, had resisted leaving France and joining them in Morocco. By 1942, despite the fact that Eduardo had arranged for exit

[620] Ibid., p. 69.
[621] Ibid.
[622] Ibid., p. 70.
[623] Ibid., p. 71.

visas for them much earlier, the two managed to escape on 13 November, in the midst of Operation Torch and, as Hélène would later put it, "by the skin of their teeth."[624] She added: "I swore to myself that if they did manage to escape unharmed, my way of giving thanks would be to convert from Judaism to Roman Catholicism, then and there."[625] When news of their safety came, Hélène wrote that she was overwhelmed, as she "had not told anyone of my intention to convert…not even Eduardo."[626] Her rationale, however, was not that she experienced any notable religious epiphany or even a spiritual transformation. She merely wished to depart a religion that "would surely," in her words, have casued her family to have been arrested "and sent to their deaths in a concentration camp."[627] Cancelling her Jewishness was her own decision, but it was a decision made under the duress imposed by the same aggressors who sought to eradicate Jews and Jewishness altogether. When she was received at L'Église Ste. Jeanne d'Arc in Tangier in the fall of 1942, Hélène had escaped those aggressors, but, in doing so, she had also enshrined her departure from the self she had known.



Figure 46. Hélène Fould-Springer, self-sketch of "Hélène Praday," Morocco, 1941. PA.

[624] Hélène Propper de Callejón, *I Loved My Stay* (London, 1998), p. 121. PA.
[625] Ibid.
[626] Ibid.
[627] Ibid.

II. Material Destruction, Material Memory

There was a cruel irony in Colette Cahen d'Anvers's experience of exile, particularly with regard to the materiality of her *milieu*. If the prewar world of the *israélite* had been, at least to some extent, a material construction of exhaustive collections and decorative objects, its destruction was ultimately carried out through the liquidation of those same material traces. For Colette—the granddaughter of one of the greatest collectors in the history of modern France—the experience of Nazi captivity was ultimately an experience of conscription in the Nazi project of destroying Jewish material property. Although her father and brother, along with the rest of her family, had long since moved to Argentina by the outbreak of the Second World War, Colette had remained in France. Like her aunt, Élisabeth Cahen d'Anvers, her cousin, Béatrice de Camondo, and her cousins-in-law, Julien and Léon Reinach, she was arrested in 1943 and sent to the French detention camp at Drancy. Unlike them, however, she was not deported to a concentration camp outside of France. Instead, in July of the same year, Colette was conscripted into a unit that would assist in sorting confiscated Jewish property to be sent to Germany and beyond at Lévitan, the formerly Jewish-owned department store in the rue Saint-Martin.

As Jean-Marc Dreyfus and Sarah Gensburger have written, Lévitan was one of three Nazi labor camps inside Paris, where more than eight hundred Jewish prisoners were forced to sort furniture and objects seized by Nazi forces from over 38,000 Jewish-owned apartments across the city.[628] Colette was one of them, but because of her particular family background the experience carried perhaps even greater pain. It was precisely because of families like the Cahen d'Anvers, after all, that places like Lévitan had been transformed into labor camps: the institutionalised envy of places such as the family's Château Champs-sur-Marne or their mansion in the rue Bassano had necessitated a veritable factory for the destruction of Jewish material wealth. Colette would later recall Lévitan in her memoir, *Eight Years of a Life*, written in English after the war. When she saw the store's name appear out of the window of her bus, she

[628] See Jean-Marc Dreyfus and Sarah Gensburger, *Nazi Labor Camps in Paris: Austerlitz, Levitan, Bassano, July 1943-August 1944* (Oxford, 2011).

recognised it immediately: it was "where all the cheaper type of furniture has been made ever since Paris was a small fortified village," she wrote, "hundreds of years ago." Even if nothing from Lévitan had ever found its way into a Cahen d'Anvers home, Colette was nevertheless horrified by the spectacle of thousands of objects piled in heaps, each a metaphor for a life uprooted, as hers had been. These lives, as she pointed out, came from across the social spectrum, blended together in a violent pastiche:

> The lots we received were sometimes pathetically miserable and poor—rags, or dishes containing remnants of a meal cut short by the dreaded ring at the door. Sometimes they would be well known paintings of international repute, and silver worth a king's ransom.[629]

The true labour, she wrote, was in sorting these objects and, in a sense, the human traces that were often were still on them:

> Some of the cases we received were in a hopeless muddle and we had to spend hours sorting them out, especially the ones in which we found a horrible tangle of threads, lace, ribbon, elastic, needles, and goodness knows what else.[630]

Colette's observed the profound role of material destruction in the human destruction of the Nazi genocide. First, of course, came the murder of people, but second came the removal and destruction of every object those people had owned or loved or used. Only when the material remnants of a person's life had been destroyed, it followed, would a person truly vanish. "The Gestapo arrested these unfortunate people, whose only crime was being born a Jew," she wrote, "and throw [sic] them into concentration camps to die."[631] As she noted, that task required minimal effort. But a person's material effacement required a much more exhaustive effort to achieve: "a moving gang would take over," she wrote of this continuous project, "and pile into packing cases everything they could lay their hands on, and bring it to our camp to be sorted and packed."[632] No one was safe: "Sometimes it would be a private house, rich or poor, an office, factory, shop, shack, doctor's or dentist's office, from which they grabbed anything and everything."

What Colette witnessed was the literal destruction, object by object, of the world of her family and its peers—a world that, in a certain sense, they had dreamed, designed,

---

[629] Colette Cahen d'Anvers-Moore, *Eight Years of a Life*, undated. Archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), Washington, DC, p. 35.
[630] Ibid.
[631] Ibid.
[632] Ibid.

and decorated. Nowhere in her memoir, however, does she discuss the material destruction and dispersal that the Cahen d'Anvers experienced in the Second World War, perhaps the most extensive of any family in their *milieu*. She writes of the family's experience in the Holocaust, but only briefly and only in part:

> I learned that a sister of Father's, who was an old lady crippled with rheumatism, and who could not harm a fly even if she tried, had been sent off in the last convoy. As was to be expected, she never came back.[633]

Colette was alluding to the twice-divorced Élisabeth Denfert-Rochereau (née Cahen d'Anvers), who had lived alone at the time of her arrest. She died en route to Auschwitz at the age of 69. But Colette does not mention the fate of Élisabeth's material memory, or, for that matter, that of another aunt immortalised by Renoir, Irène Cahen d'Anvers, the estranged wife of Moïse de Camondo. Both, to use Colette's phrase, were certainly "well known paintings of international repute." But the afterlives of these two portraits are ultimately material microcosms for the afterlives of the individuals they depicted, removed forever from a context that no longer existed.

Élisabeth, after all, had been, along with her sister, Alice, the subject of Renoir's *Rose et Bleu* (1881), a portrait of the two of them as girls on the rue Bassano, dressed in fine white lace and sashes of pink and blue. The portrait's fate is particularly significant. Louis Cahen d'Anvers, their father, had hated the portrait, and had left it hidden in obscurity in one of the family's Paris properties. In 1900, he eventually sold it to the well-known art dealer Alexandre Bernheim (1839-1915) for his gallery in the rue Lafitte. For a time, *Rose et bleu* hung in the private Monte Carlo collection of Bernheim's son, Gaston (1870-1953), who ultimately sold it to the New York dealer Sam Salz (1894-1981). Eventually, Salz sold the portrait to the Wildensteins, who then sold *Rose et bleu* in 1952 to the São Paulo Museum of Art.[634] In the end, the picture travelled from France to South America—in much the same way as many of the descendants of the Cahen d'Anvers, who have established themselves in Argentina in the late 1930s. Like the surviving members of the family, *Rose et bleu* has existed in South America longer than it was ever in France: it, too, remains in a perpetual exile from the cosmopolitan past.

---

[633] Ibid., pp. 31-32.
[634] See *Catálogo do Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand: Arte Francesa e Escola de Paris*, ed. Luis Marquez (São Paulo, 1998), pp. 124-141.

Renoir's portrait *Irène Cahen d'Anvers* (1880), however, represents a different trajectory altogether. Irène, as featured in the first chapter of this thesis, publicly fled the French-Jewish elite in 1902. She divorced her husband, Moïse de Camondo, abandoned her two young children, Nissim and Béatrice, converted to Catholicism, and married Carlo Sampieri, who, at the time, had run her husband's racing stables. For years, Irène's portrait remained in her parents' townhouse on the rue Bassano, but, after their deaths, it hung in the Neuilly apartment of her daughter, Béatrice de Camondo-Reinach. Irène herself had no interest in owning the picture: since the 1930s, she had been living off her inheritance in Cannes, residing in what was then the Villa les Araucarias, a modernist structure designed in 1925 by Charles Nicot and Émile Molinié.

On 10 March 1942, the infamous *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg* (ERR) confiscated the portrait from Béatrice's apartment on the boulevard Maurice Barrès. Shortly thereafter, it was sent to Hermann Goering himself, who, for a time, hung it in his private collection.[635] After the war, by September 1945, it was recovered and was processed at the Munich Central Collecting point, and, in March 1946, it was restituted to Irène, who had apparently recognized it in an exhibition catalogue.[636] In the same way that she had disposed of the family that had commissioned and displayed this portrait—and, in a sense, the culture that had valued such things, she sold the canvas almost immediately, having received permission from the French government to allow the painting to leave France.[637] As the sole living relation of her first husband, however, she inherited the entire fortune of the Camondo. The records do not reveal why, exactly, Irène sold her Renoir, but, in addition to its profit potential, it perhaps represented a memory she did not wish to preserve. Her beloved son, Nissim, had died in the First World War; her daughter, Béatrice, and her sister Elisabeth were both murdered in Auschwitz. Freeing herself of the object was conceivably an attempt at freeing herself of the past. If the collections, creations, and material fantasies of the pre-war *israélite*

[635] See Nancy Yeide, *Beyond the Dreams of Avarice: The Hermann Goering Collection* (Dallas, 2009), no. D100.
[636] Ibid.
[637] Ibid. Irène sold the painting in 1949 to Emil Georg Bührle (1890-1956). This was a particularly ironic choice, as, in subsequent decades, Bührle and his heirs would be legally required to return thirteen stolen pieces in their collection to French-Jewish owners.

establishment were all that remained of that past, the sale was perhaps Irène's final act of liberation.

Today, the portrait hangs in Zurich's Fondation Bührle under a plaque that reads "La petite Irène." If the image is well known, its history is not. In 1960, for instance, it would reappear in Jean-Luc Godard's *À bout de souffle*. The character of Patricia, played by the actress Jean Seberg, hangs a poster of the portrait on the wall of her studio apartment and asks Michel, the rogue existentialist, who is prettier, herself or the young woman in the poster. In the film, the young woman in that poster is pretty, timeless, but, most of all, nameless: she has neither context nor identity. At the time Godard's film debuted, Irène Cahen d'Anvers de Camondo-Sampieri (d. 1963) was still alive, but the world of "La petite Irène" had evaporated long before. In the end, her portrait was not so much a "*morceau du musée*" as it was a fragment of a vanished culture, in transition from family heirloom to meaningless souvenir.



Figure 47. Jean Seberg with "La Petite Irène," *À bout de souffle* (1960).

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

This thesis relies heavily on archival materials pieced together from a variety of different sources—national, institutional, and private archives alike. In Paris, I conducted research in the Archives Nationales de France, the Archives of the Institut de France, the Archives of the Consistoire Central, the Archives of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, the Archives of Musée Nissim de Camondo, and the Musée de l'Art de d'Histoire de Judaïsme. In Aix-en-Provence, I conducted research in the Bibliothèque Méjanes; in Beaulieu-sur-Mer and the Cap Ferrat, I visited local archives and the (limited) archival holdings of the Villa Kérylos and the Villa Éphrussi de Rothschild, respectively. In London, I relied heavily on the Rothschild Archive. In Washington, D.C., I conducted research at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Finally, in New York City, I relied on the private family archive of Felipe Propper de Callejón—the son of Hélène Fould-Springer and Éduardo Propper de Callejón—who very graciously shared with me many photographs, diaries, and documents.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Archives Nationales de France

MC/ET/LXIV/963: Marriage Contract between Moïse de Camondo and Irène Cahen d'Anvers

MC/ET/XCIX/1087: Sale Record for 60 and 63 rue de Monceau, Paris

MC/ET/XCIX/1272: Camondo Citizenship Records, 26 October 1895

MC/ET/XCIX/1287: "Donation Par Monsieur le Comte Isaac de Camondo au Musée du Louvre." 31 March 1897.

Archives of the Institut de France, Paris

Fonds Théodore Reinach (1860-1928)

- Correspondance between Théodore Reinach and Gustave Glotz, 1909.

- "Discours de M. Gustave Glotz Président de l'Académie à l'occasion de la mort de M. Théodore Reinach Membre de l'Académie lu dans le séance 2 novembre 1928," 1928.

- "Notice sur la Vie et les Travaux de M. Théodore Reinach par M. René Cagnat Secrétaire Perpétuel," 1928.

Procès Verbaux, 1909
Procès Verbaux, 1910
Procès Verbaux, 1911
Procès Verbaux, 1912

Procès Verbaux, 1913
Procès Verbaux, 1914
Procès Verbaux, 1915
Procès Verbaux, 1916
Procès Verbaux, 1917
Procès Verbaux, 1918
Procès Verbaux, 1919
Procès Verbaux, 1920
Procès Verbaux, 1921
Procès Verbaux, 1922
Procès Verbaux, 1923
Procès Verbaux, 1924
Procès Verbaux, 1925
Procès Verbaux, 1926
Procès Verbaux, 1927
Procès Verbaux, 1928

Fonds Emmanuel Pontremoli (1865-1956)
- Plans for the Villa Kérylos, miscellaneous

Fonds Villa Île de France, St.-Jean-Cap Ferrat
- Miscellaneous records

Archives of the Consistoire Central

Fonds Reinach
- Marriage certificates of Joseph, Salomon, and Théodore Reinach

Fonds Rothschild
- Marriage certificate of Béatrice Rothschild to Maurice Éphrussi

Fonds Grande Synagogue—Architecture—Rue de la Victoire

Fonds Synagogue—Architecture—Rue Buffault

Archives of the Alliance Israélite Universelle

Fonds France VII, 56.02
- Assorted Correspondence
- Théodore Reinach, "L'Actualité des Prophètes d'Israël"

Archives of the Musée Nissim de Camondo (AMNC), Paris

Correspondance Moïse de Camondo, vol. I, 1880-1890
Correspondance Moïse de Camondo, vol. II, 1890-1900
Correspondance Moïse de Camondo, vol. III, 1900-1910

Correspondance Moïse de Camondo, vol. IV, 1910-1920
Correspondance Moïse de Camondo, vol. V, 1920-1930
Correspondance Moïse de Camondo, vol. VI, 1930-1935

Correspondance Nissim de Camondo, vol. I, 1914-1916
Correspondance Nissim de Camondo, vol. II, 1916-1917

Correspondance Renée Dorville, 1914-1917 (acquired by the museum in late 2014)

Correspondance Iréne de Camondo (née Cahen d'Anvers), 1890-1900
Last Will and Testament of Moïse de Camondo, 1924

Fonds Musée Nissim de Camondo (1936-present)

Fonds Béatrice de Camondo-Reinach (1894-1944)

Archives of the Musée de l'Art et d'Histoire de Judaïsme, Paris

Reinach-Abrami, Hélène. *Le Bien-Aimée* (Paris, 1935), published privately.

Bibliothèque Méjanes, Aix-en-Provence

Fonds Salomon Reinach
- Boîte 1: Correspondance Salomon Reinach—Hélène Reinach-Abrami
- Boîte 27: Correspondance Salomon Reinach—Albert Cahen d'Anvers
- Boîte 131: Correspondance Salomon Reinach—Edmond de Rothschild
- Boîte 134: Correspondance Salomon Reinach—Joseph Reinach
- Boîte 136: Correspondance Salomon Reinach—Hélène Reinach-Abrami

Rothschild Archive, London (RAL)

Sonia Warshawsky Cahen d'Anvers, *Baboushka Remembers* (London, 1972), privately published.

Moscow Papers, Edmond de Rothschild (all to do with art purchases)
- Folder 807
- Folder 811
- Folder 812

- Folder 813
- Folder 814
- Folder 815
- Folder 825
- Folder 826
- Folder 829
- Folder 832
- Folder 836
- Folder 837

Moscow Papers, Béatrice Éphrussi (all to do with Villa Île de France and gardens)
- Folder 1389
- Folder 1390
- Folder 1391
- Folder 1392
- Folder 1393
- Folder 1394
- Folder 1395

Laffitte Papers, Béatrice Éphrussi
- Box 8, OC186, OC187
- Box 9, OC198
- Box 10, OC202
- Box 63, OE447
- Box 19, OC261
- Box 32, OE334
- Box 36, OE340
- Box 37, OE341
- Box 53, OE392
- Box 54, OE393 (Beatrice/Maurice separation)
- OE394 (Maurice Estate)
- Box 55, OE395 (Maurice, debts)
- Box 57, OE405 (Béatrice's estate, Villa Île de France, etc.)
- Box 58, OE406
- Box 70, OE 465 (Maurice Éphrussi/Béatrice Éphrussi Separation);
- OE466 (Béatrice's patents)
- OE468 (Béatrice's Villas)
- Box 71, OE469 (Béatrice Cote d'Azur)
- Box 95, OE532

Archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), Washington, DC

Journal 1939-1944, Renée (née Cahen d'Anvers) de Monbrinson, unpublished.

Eight Years of a Life, Colette (née Cahen d'Anvers) Moore, unpublished.

Propper Family Archive, New York City

Praday, Hélène. *Absents de nous-mêmes* (Paris, 1961), published privately.
--. *Giboulées* (Tangier, 1941), published privately.

Propper de Callejón, Eduardo. Miscellaneous correspondence.
--. Diary, June 1940, unpublished.
--. Memoir Draft, 1963, unpublished.

Propper de Callejón, Hélène. *I Loved My Stay: The Autobiography of Hélène Fould-Springer* (London,1998), published privately.

PRINTED PRIMARY SOURCES

À la mémoire des Reinachs (Paris, 1950).

Balzac. *Le Cousin Pons* (Paris, 2007).

--. *La Maison Nucingen* (Paris, 2014).

Barrès, M. *Les Déracinés* (Paris, 1902).

Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Oxford, 1993).

Benda, J. *La Jeunesse d'un Clerc* (Paris, 1936; reissued 1968).

--. *La Trahison des Clercs* (Paris, 1927).

Benjamin, W. *Illuminations* (New York, 1968).

--. *Reflections* (New York, 1978).

Berr, Helene. *Journal: une vie confisquée*, ed. Mariette Job (Paris, 2007)

Boniface de Castellane, Mémoires 1867-1932, ed. Emmanuel de Waresquiel (Paris, 1987).

The Boston Daily Globe, "Dog Wedding," 17 January 1897.

"La Collection Camondo," *Art & Industrie*, July 1936.

Cahen d'Anvers, *Charles Le Château de Champs : Notice Historique*, (Paris, 1927). Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Dairnvaell, G.M. *Histoire édifiante et curieuse de Rothschild Ier, rois des juifs par Satan* (Paris, 1846). Accessed through Special Collections, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, 19 May 2014.

David-Néel, A. *Mystiques et Magiciens du Tibet* (Paris, 1924; reissued 2003).

De Gramont, Élisabeth. *Mémoires* (Paris, 1928).

--. S*ouvenirs du monde, de 1890 à 1940* (Paris, 1966).

Discours Prononcés aux obsèques de M. Le Comte Cahen (d'Anvers) Le 14 Septembre 1881 par M. Isidor (Grand Rabbin de France) et M. Zadoc Kahn (Grand rabbin de Paris). (Paris, 1881). Bibliothèque National de France.

Drumont, E. *La France juive: Essai d'histoire contemporaine*, t. I and t. II (Paris, 1886).

--. *Mon Vieux Paris*, t. I and t. II (Paris, 1879)

De Fouquières, A. *Traces écrites* (Paris, 1951)

Fourier, Charles. *Le nouveau monde, in Oeuvres complètes de Charles Fourier, vol. VI. Paris: Librairie Sociétaire, 1841-48*. The Making of the Modern World. Web, accessed through Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. 19 May 2014.

-- *Théorie de l'unité universelle, vol. i. in Oeuvres complètes de Charles Fourier, vol. II. Paris: Librairie Sociétaire, 1841-48*. The Making of the Modern World. Web, accessed through Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. 19 May 2014.

--. *Théorie des quatre mouvements, in Oeuvres complètes de Charles Fourier, vol. I. Paris: Librairie Sociétaire, 1841-48*. The Making of the Modern World. Web, accessed through Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. 19 May 2014.

Frankl, L. A. *The Jews in the East*, vol. II, http://dbooks.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/books/PDFs/600052692.pdf

Gimpel, R. *Journal d'un collectionneur: marchand de tableaux* (Paris, 1963),

Guérin, J. "Le musée Nissim de Camondo," *L'Illustration*, 26 December 1936.

Hazlitt, W. C. *The Confessions of a Collector* (London, 1897).

Huysmans, J.-K. *À Rebours* (Paris, 1884; reissued 1977).

Goncourt, E. and Goncourt, J. *Journal: Mémoires de la Vie Littéraire 1866-1886*

Henry James, *The American* (New York, 2005).

--. *The Golden Bowl* (Oxford, 1983).

Arthur Meyer, *Ce que mes yeux ont vu* (Paris, 1911).

Michelet, Oeuvres complètes de J. Michelet. Histoire de France, t. XIV. La Régence (Paris, 1893-98

Némirovsky, I. *David Golder, The Ball, Snow in Autumn, The Courilof Affair*, trans. Sandra Smith (New York, 2008).

--. *Les chiens et les loups* (Paris, 2004).

--. *Suite Française* (Paris, 2004).

Ovid, *Metamorphosis*, trans. David Raeburn (London, 2004),

Pontremoli, E. "Avant Propos," *Kérylos* (Paris, 1934), Bibliothèque Nationale Français.

Proudhon, P-J. *Carnets*, ed. Pierre Haubtmann, vol. I and II (Paris, 1960).

Proust, M. *Du côté de chez Swann* (Paris, 1992).

--. *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* (Paris, 1992).

--. *Le Côté de Guermantes* (Paris, 1992).

--. *Selected Letters*, ed. Philip Kolb., vol. II (New York, 1989).

Reinach, F. "Le Rêve de Théodore Reianch. La vie à Kérylos de sa construction au Musée." In *Architecture du rêve*. Actes du 3ème colloque de la Villa Kérylos à Beaulieu-sur-Mer les 29&30 octobre 1992 (Paris, 1994).

Reinach, S. *Cultes, Mythes et Religions* (1908; Paris, 1996).

--. *L'accusation du meurtre rituel* (Paris, 1893).

--. *L'archiviste. Drumont et Dreyfus: Etudes sur la 'Libre Parole' de 1894 à 1895* (Paris, 1898).

--. *Un episode de la vie des Juifs polonais aux dix-huitième siècle* (Paris, 1891).

Reinach, T. *Charles de Valois et les juifs* (Paris, 1901). Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

--. *Histoire des Israélites depuis l'époque de leur dispersion jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris, 1901 edition) Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

--. *Le Judaïsme prophétique et les espérances de l'humanité* (Paris, 1920). Bibliothèque Naitonale de France.

--. *Les Monaies juives* (Paris, 1888). Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

--. *Un préfet juif il y a deux mille ans* (Paris, 1900). Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Jean Renoir, *Renoir* (Paris, 1962).

Sartre, *Réflexions sur la question juive* (Paris, 1944, reissued 1980).

Stranberg, R. "Le Château de Champs," *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, no. 1129, 1963, pp. 81-100. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Toussenel, Alphonse. *Les juifs rois de l'époque: histoire de la féodalité financière* (Paris: Libraire de l'École societaire, 1845). The Making of the Modern World. Web, accessed through Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, 19 May 2014.

"The Tyranny of Things," *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1906, pp. 715-716.

Veblen, T. *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (1899; Oxford, 2009).

Verlaine, P. "À la Promenade," Les Fêtes Galantes, Oeuvres complètes de Paul Verlaine, t. I (Paris, 1907).

Veblen, T. *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (1899; Oxford, 2009).

Zola, E. *La Curée* (Paris, 1981).

--. *Écrits sur l'art*, ed. Jean-Pierre Leduc Adine (Paris, 1991).

Zweig, S. *The World of Yesterday*, trans. Harry Zohn (Lincoln, 1964).

PRINTED SECONDARY WORKS

Agulhon, M. *Marianne au combat: L'imagerie et la symbolique républicaine de 1789 à 1880* (Paris, 1992).

Anderson, B. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London, 2009).

Anderson, T.P. "Édouard Drumont and the Origins of Modern Anti-Semitism," *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 53, No. 1, p. 28-42.

Antébi, E. *Edmond de Rothschild. L'homme qui racheta la Terre sainte* (Paris, 2003).

Appiah, K. A.. *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton, 2005).

--. *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York, 2007).

Arendt, H. *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York,

--. *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1973).

--. *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*, ed. Liliane Weissberg (Baltimore, 2000).

Aron, R. *Histoire de Vichy, 1940-1944* (Paris, 1954).

Auslander, L. "Beyond Words," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 110, no. 4 (October 2005), pp. 1015-1045.

--. "The Boundaries of Jewishness or When is a Cultural Practice Jewish?" *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 8, no. 1 (March, 2009), pp. 47-64.

-- "Coming Home? Jews in Postwar Paris," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (2005), pp. 237-259.

--. *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (Berkeley, 1998).

Assouline, P. *Le dernier des Camondo* (Paris, 1999).

--. *Grâces lui soient rendues: Paul Durand-Ruel, le marchand des impressionistes* (Paris, 2004).

--. *L'homme de l'art: D.-H. Kahnweiler, 1884-1979* (Paris, 1989).

--. *Le portrait* (Paris, 2009).

Astro, A., ed. *Discourses of Jewish Identity in Twentieth-Century France* (New Haven, 1994).

Axtmann, R. "Cosmopolitanism and Globality: Kant, Arendt and Beck on the global condition," *German Politics and Society*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 20-37.

Avineri, S. *Herzl: Theodor Herzl and the Foundation of the Jewish State*. (London, 2014).

--. *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (New York, 1981).

--. *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* (Cambridge, 1968).

Azéma, J.-P. *1940, l'année terrible* (Paris, 1990).

--. with François Bédarida. *La France des années noires* (Paris,1993).

--. with Olivier Wieviorka. *Vichy, 1940-1944* (Paris, 1997).

Bailey, C. B. *Renoir's Portraits: Impressions of an Age* (New Haven, 1997).

Bann, S. "Historical Texts and Historical Objects: The Poetics of the Musée de Cluny," *History and Theory*, 17 (1978), pp. 251-266

Barbier, F. "Les origins de la maison Fould: Beer Léon et Bénédict Fould (vers 1740-1864)." *Revue Historique*, Vol. 281, Number 1, (January-March 1989), pp. 159-192.

--. *Finance et politique: la dynastie des Fould, XVIIIe-XXe siècle*. (Paris, 1991).

Barker, S., ed. *Excavations and Their Objects: Freud's Collection of Antiquity* (Albany, 1996).

Basch, S., Espagne, M., and Leclant, J., ed. *Les Frères Reinach* (Paris, 2008).

Baudrillard, J. *Le système des objets* (Paris, 1968).

Baumgarten, E. *Mothers and Children: Jewish Family Life in Medieval Europe* (Princeton, 2004).

Beck, U. and Ciaran Cronin. *Cosmopolitan Vision* (Cambridge, 2006).

--. and Edgar Grande, *Cosmopolitan Europe* (Cambridge, 2007).

Beizer, J. *Ventriloquized Bodies: Narratives of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century France*. (Ithaca, 1994).

Belhoste, J.-F. *Royaumont au XIXe siècle: les métamorphoses d'une abbaye*. (Paris, 2008).

Belk, R. *Collecting in a Consumer Society* (Oxford, 1995).

Benbassa, E. *The Jews of France: A History from Antiquity to the Present* (Princeton, 2001).

--. *Sephardi Jewry: A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community, 14th-20th Centuries*, with Aron Rodrigue (Berkeley, 2000).

--. *Suffering as Identity: the Jewish Paradigm*, trans. G.M. Goshgarian (London, 2010).

Benhabib, Seyla. *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens* (Cambridge, 2004).

--. *Another Cosmopolitanism* (Oxford, 2008).

Bennett, T. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London, 1995).

Berger, G.. *Dies Springer-Villa. Erbauer and Bewohner* (Vienna, 1992).

Birnbaum, Pierre. *Destins juifs: de la Révolution française à Carpentras* (Paris, 1995).

--. *Les Fous de la République: Histoire politique des Juifs d'État de Gambetta à Vichy* (Paris, 1992).

--. *Histoire politique des juifs de France: entre universalisme et particularisme*. Paris, 1990.

--. *Le Moment antisémite. Un tour de la France en 1898* (Paris, 1998).

--. *Un mythe politique, "la République juive:" de Léon Blum à Pierre Mendès-France* (Paris, 1988).

--. and Ira Katznelson. *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

--. *La République et le cochon* (Paris, 2013).

Blom, P. *To Have and To Hold: An Intimate History of Collectors and Collecting* (New York, 2002).

Blume, M. *Côte d'Azur: Inventing the French Riviera* (London, 1992).

Bohlman, P. V. *Jewish Music and Modernity* (Oxford, 2008).

Bonin, H. "La banque d'investissement française à la Belle époque: l'héritage de la Haute Banque du XIXème siècle," *Cahiers du Groupe de Recherche en Économie Théorique et Appliqué*, November 2007. http://gretha.u-bordeaux4.fr/sites/default/files/2007-20_0.pdf

--., *Histoire de la société générale 1864-1890: Naissance d'une* banque t. I (Paris, 2006).

Bonyhady, T. *Good Living Street: Portait of a Patron Family, Vienna 1900* (New York, 2011).

Bowie, K. *Les grandes gares parisiennes au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1997).

Braudel, F. *Capitalism and Material Life, 1400-1800*, trans. Miriam Kochan (London, 1974).

Brennan, T.. "Cosmopolitans and Celebrities," *Race & Class,* Vol. 31, no. 1 (1989), pp. 1-20.

Brook, T. *Vermeer's Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World* (London, 2008).

Brown, B. "The Collecting Mania," *University of Chicago Magazine*, Vol. 94, No. 1 (October, 2001): http://magazine.uchicago.edu/0110/features/mania.html

--. *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of Amerian Literature* (Chicago, 2003) and *The Material*

--. *Unconscious: American Amusement, Stephen Crane, and the Economies of Play* (Harvard, 1996).

Brown, F. *The Embrace of Unreason: France 1914-1940* (New York, 2014).

--. *For the Soul of France: Culture Wars in the Age of Dreyfus* (New York, 2010).

Burke, Peter. *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (Yale, 1994).

Burns, M. *Dreyfus: A Family Affair, 1789-1945* (New York, 1991).

--. *France and the Dreyfus Affair: A Documentary History* (New York, 1998).

--. *Rural Society and French Politics: Boulangism and the Dreyfus Affair, 1886-1900* (Princeton, 1984).

Burrin, Philippe. *La France à l'heure allemande, 1940-1944* (Paris, 1995).

Busi, F. *The Pope of Anti-Semitism*: *The Career and Legacy of Édouard-Adolphe Drumont* (London, 1986).

Byrnes, R. *Antisemitism in Modern France*, v.1 (Rutgers, 1950).

Robert F. Byrnes, "Édouard Drumont and La France Juive," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (April, 1948), pp. 165-184.

Calimani, R. *The Ghetto of Venice* (New York, 1987).

Callen, A. "Renoir: the Matter of Gender," in *Renoir: Master Impressionist*, ed. John House, (Syndey, 1994), pp. 41-50.

Callil, C. *Bad Faith: A Forgotten History of Family, Fatherland and Vichy France* (New York, 2006).

Caplan, J. *Written on the Body: The Tattoo in European and American History*. (London, 2000).

-- and John Torpey, ed. *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World* (Princeton, 2001).

Carbonnell, B. M., ed. *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts* (Oxford, 2012).

Caron, Vicki. *Uneasy Asylum: France and the Jewish Refugee Crisis, 1933-1942*. (Stanford, 1999).

Chatwin, B. *Utz* (London, 1988).

"Charles Éphrussi," *Grove Art Dictionary*, http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T026431

Christ, Y. et. al., ed. *Champs-Élysées, Faubourg Saint-Honoré, Plaine Monceau* (Paris, 1982).

Clerc, M. *Hache, ébénistes à Grenoble* (Grenoble, 1997).

Cohen, R. *Jewish Icons: Art and Society in Modern Europe* (Berkeley, 1998).

Conisbee, P. *Painting in Eighteenth-Century France* (London, 1981).

Crane, S. *Collecting and Historical Consciousness in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ithaca, 2000).

--. *Museums and Memory* (Stanford, 2000).

Darnton, R. *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York, 1984).

Davis, N. Z. *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (Harvard, 1995).

Deetz, J. *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life* (New York, 1977).

De Gary, M.-N. and Jean-Marie del Moral. *The Camondo Legacy: The Passions of a Paris Collector* (London, 2008)

Dell, T. *The Frick Collection, V: Furniture in the Frick Collection* (New York, 1992).

De Waal, Edmund. *The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance* (New York, 2010).

--. *The White Road: A Pilgrimage of Sorts* (London, 2015).

Diamond, H. *Fleeing Hitler: France 1940* (Oxford, 2011).

Druick, D. *Renoir: the Artist in Focus* (Chicago, 1997).

Duncan, C. and Allan Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum," *Art History*, Vol. 3, no. 4 (1980), pp. 448-469.

Dumas, A. *Renoir's Women* (London, 2005).

Faber, R. *Deutschbewußtes Judentum und jüdischbewußtes Deutschtum: Der Historische und Politische Theologe Hans-Joachim Schoeps* (Würzburg, 2008).

Fackenheim, E. *The Jewish Return Into History: Reflections in the Age of Auschwitz and a New Jerusalem* (New York, 1978).

Faroult, G. and Sophie Eloy, ed. *La Collection La Caze: Chefs d'oeuvre des peintures de XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris, 2007).

--., with Monica Preti, *Delicious Decadence: The Rediscovery of Eighteenth-Century Painting in the Nineteenth Centur*y (London, 2014).

Farré, J.-A. "L'Ambassade de Lequerica et les relations Hispano-Françaises 1939-1944." *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, No. 158 (April 1990), pp. 65-78.

Felman, S. *What Does a Woman Want*? *Reading and Sexual Difference* (Baltimore, 1993).

Ferguson, N. *The House of Rothschild*, vol. I. *Money's Prophets: 1798-1848* (London, 1999).

--. *The House of Rothschild*, vol. II. *The World's Banker: 1849-1999* (London, 2000).

Forth, C. E. and Elinor Accampo, ed. *Confronting Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle France: Bodies, Minds, and Gender* (London, 2010).

"Fould," *Dictionnaire des dynasties bourgeoisies et du monde des affaires* (Paris, 1975), pp. 385-389.

Fralon, J-.A. *Le juste de Bordeaux: Aristides de Souza Mendes* (Paris, 1998).

Franklin, R. "Scandale Française," *The New Republic*, 30 January 2008.

Freeman, L. *The Development of Social Network Analysis* (Vancouver, 2004).

Friedländer, S. *Nazi Germany and the Jews 1939-1945: The Years of Extermination* (New York, 2007).

Finkelstein, N. *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitations of Jewish Suffering* (London, 2000).

Flam, J., ed. *Robert Smithson, the Collected Writings* (Berkeley, 1996).

Foster, B. and Michael Foster, *Forbidden Journey: The Life of Alexandra David-Néel* (New York, 1989).

Garb, Tamar. *Bodies of Modernity: Figure and Flesh in Fin-de-Siècle France* (London, 1998).

--. *The Body in Time: Figures of Femininity in Late-Nineteenth Century France* (Seattle, 2008).

--. *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity* (London, 1995).

--. *The Painted Face: Portraits of Women in France, 1814-1914* (New Haven, 2007).

--. "Renoir and the Natural Woman," *The Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1985, pp. 3-15.

Gasc, Nadine and Gérard Mabille. *Le Musée Nissim de Camondo*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1991.

Gerbino, A. *François Blondel: Architecture, Erudition, and the Scientific Revolution* (London, 2010).

Gildea, R. *Children of the Revolution: The French, 1799-1914* (Harvard, 2008).

--. *France Since 1945* (Oxford, 1996).

--. *Marianne in Chains: Daily Life in the Heart of France During the German Occupation* (New York, 2004).

--. *The Past in French History* (New Haven, 1994).

--. with Olivier Wieviorka and Anette Warring. *Surviving Hitler and Mussolini: Daily Life in Occupied Europe* (New York, 2006).

--. *The Third Republic from 1870 to 1914* (London, 1988).

Gille, B. *Histoire de la maison Rothschild*, t. 1 (Geneva, 1965).

Gilman, S., ed. *Hysteria Beyond Freud* (Berkeley, 1993).

Ginzburg, C. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (London, 1980).

--. *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi. (Baltimore, 1989).

--. "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm," Theory and Society, Vol. 7, No. 3 (May, 1979), pp. 273-88.

--. *Threads and Traces: True False Fictive*, trans. Anne C. Tedeschi and John Tedeschi (Berkeley, 2012).

Girard, X. *The French Riviera in the 1920s* (Paris, 2015).

Goldstein, J. "The Wandering Jew and the Problem of Psychiatric Anti-Semitism in *Fin-de-Siècle* France," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 20, No. 4, (Oct., 1985), pp. 522-51.

Graetz, M. *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France: From the French Revolution to the Alliance Israelite Universell*e, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Stanford, 1996).

Green, N. *The Pletzl of Paris: Jewish Immigrant Workers in the Belle-Époque* (New York, 1986).

Greene, J. P. "Balzac's Most Helpless Heroine: The Art Collection in Le Cousin Pons," *The French Review*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (October, 1995), pp. 13-23.

Griffin, L. and van der Linden, Marcel, ed. *New Methods for Social History* (Cambridge, 1998).

Gruber, R. E. *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing European Jewish Culture* (Berkeley, 2002).

Guez, O. "Are There Any Europeans Left?", trans. Edward Gauvin. *The International New York Times*, 2 March 2013.

Guth, Paul. “Le Palais Abbatial de Royaumont.” *Connaissance des Arts*, February 1957, pp. 25-26.

Habermas, J. *The Crisis of the European Union: A Response*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge, 2012).

Harris, Neil. *Cultural Excursions: Marketing Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America* (Chicago, 1990).

--. “Museums and Controversy,” *Journal of American History* 82 (December 1995), pp. 1102-1111.

Harris, Ruth. *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (London, 1999).

--. *The Man on Devil’s Island: Alfred Dreyfus and the Affair that Divided France* (London, 2010).

--. *Murders and Madness: Medicine, Law, and Madness in the Fin-de-Siècle* (Oxford, 1989).

Harvey, David. *Paris: Capital of Modernity* (London, 2005).

--. *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (New York, 2009).

Haskell, F. *History and Its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven, 1993).

--. *The King’s Pictures: The Formation and Dispersal of the Collections of Charles I and His Courtiers* (New Haven, 2013).

--. “Museums and Their Enemies,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 19, No. 2, (Summer, 1985), pp. 13-22.

--. *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspect of Tastes, Fashion and Collecting* (Ithaca, 1980).

--. *Taste and the Antique: the Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500-1900* (New Haven, 1981).

--. “A Turk and His Pictures in Nineteenth-Century Pars,” *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Patronage, 1982), pp. 40-47.

Hazareesingh, S. *Intellectual Founders of the Republic: Five Studies in Nineteenth-Century French Political Thought* (Oxford, 2001).

--. *Le Mythe Gaullien* (Paris, 2011).

Herman, J. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York, 1992).

Hertzberg, A. *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York, 1968).

--. *The Zionist Idea* (Philadelphia, 1997).

Higonnet, A. *Berthe Morisot* (New York, 1990).

--. *A Museum of One's Own: Private Collecting, Public Gift* (Reading, 2010).

--. "Self-portrait as a museum," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No. 52 (Autumn, 2007), pp. 189-211.

Higonnet, P. L.-R. *Paris: Capital of the World*, trans. Arthur Goldhamme (Harvard, 2002).

Hill, K. "Collecting Authenticity: Domestic, Familial, and Everyday 'Old Things' in English Museums, 1850-1939," *Museum History Journal*, Vol. 4 (2011), pp. 203-22.

Hirsch, Y. *Rester Juif?* (Paris, 2014).

Horowitz, E. "Giotto in Avignon, Adler in London, Panofsky in Princeton: Some Reflections on the Story of an Illuminated Fifteenth Century Italian Manuscript and Its Meaning," *Jewish Art*, Vol. 20, 1994, pp. 98-111.

Hyman, P. *The Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace: Acculturation and Tradition in the Nineteenth-Century* (New Haven, 1991).

--. *From Dreyfus to Vichy: The Remaking of French Jewry, 1906-1939*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.

--. *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History* (Seattle, 1995).

--. *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley, 1998).

--. and Cohen, S. M., *The Jewish Family: Myths and Reality* (New York, 1986).

Irwin, D. *Neoclassicism* (London, 1997).

Jackson, J. *France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford, 2003).

Johnson, L. R. *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends* (Oxford, 2011).

Jones, E. "Anal-Erotic Character Traits," in *Papers on Psychoanalysis* (Baltimore, 1938).

Jones, M., ed. *Why Fakes Matter: Essays on Problems of Authenticity* (London, 1992).

Jones, S. "Negotiating Authentic Objects and Authentic Selves: Beyond the Deconstruction of Authenticity," *Journal of Material Culture*, Vol. 15 (2010), pp. 181-204.

Judt, T. *The Burden of Responsibility: Blum, Camus, and the French Twentieth Century* (Chicago, 1998).

--. *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London, 2005).

Kalman, J. *Rethinking Antisemitism in Nineteenth-Century France* (*Cambridge*, 2010).

Katz, J. *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933* (Harvard, 1980).

Kauffmann, G. *Édouard Drumont* (Paris, 2008).

Keats-Rohan, K. "Prosopography and Computing: A Marriage Made in Heaven?", *History and Computing*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2000), pp. 1-11.

--. *Prosopography Approaches and Applications: A Handbook, Prosopographica et Genealogica*, vol. 13, Occasional Publications of the Unit for Prosopographical Research, Linacre College, Oxford, 2007.

Kristeva, J. *Étrangères à nous-mêmes* (Paris, 1987).

Kymlicka, W., ed. *The Rights of Minority Cultures* (Oxford, 1998).

Lacan, J. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Alan Sheridan (New York, 1981).

Philippe Landau, *Les Juifs de France et la Grande Guerre: Un patriotisme républicain 1914-1918* (Paris, 1999).

Lebens, U. "Béatrice Éphrussi de Rothschild: Collector and Curator," The Rothschild Archive, 2008-9.
https://www.rothschildarchive.org/materials/review_2008_2009_beatrice_ephrussi_1.pdf

Les Laques du Japon. Collections de Marie-Antoinette (Paris, 2002).

Laskin, D. *The Family: Three Journeys into the Heart of the Twentieth Century*. (New York, 2013).

Leff, L. *The Archive Thief: The Man Who Salvaged French-Jewish History in the Wake of the Holocaust* (Oxford, 2015).

--. *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity: The Rise of Jewish Internationalism in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford, 2006).

Levin, M. *Republican Art and Ideology in Late Nineteenth Century France* (Ann Arbor, 1986).

Lindemann, A. S. *Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews* (Cambridge, 1997).

--. *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs: Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank, 1894-1914* (Cambridge, 1991).

Lohrmann, *Zwischen Finanz und Toleranz: Das Haus Habsburg und die Juden*. (Vienna, 2000).

Long, V. "Les collectionneurs juifs parisiens sous la Troisième République (1870-1940)," *Archives Juives*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (2009), pp. 84-104.

Lowenthal, D. *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 1985).

Lyotard, J.-F., *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis, 1988).

Malino, F. and Sorkin, D., ed. *From East and West: Jews in a Changing Europe, 1750-1870* (Oxford, 1990).

Malinovich, N. *French and Jewish: Culture and the Politics of Identity in Early Twentieth Century France* (London, 2007).

Manciet, J. *La Sphinge* (Paris, 2011).

Mann, M. *The Sources of Social Power, Volume 2: The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760-1914* (Cambridge, 1993).

Marton, Kati. *Wallenberg* (New York, 1982).

Marquez, L., ed. *Catálogo do Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand: Arte Francesa e Escola de Paris* (São Paulo, 1998).

Marrus, M. *The Holocaust in History* (Brandeis, 1987).

--. *The Politics of Assimilation: The French Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (Oxford, 1971).

Marrus, M and Paxton, R. *Vichy France and the Jews* (Stanford, 1981).

Mazower, M. *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York, 2008).

McLellan, A. *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge, 1994).

Melikian, S. et. al., *La Décoration*, Vol. I (Paris, 1963).

Mendelsohn, E. "Jews, Communism and Art in Interwar America," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry,* No. 20, 2004, pp. 99-133.

--. *Painting a People: Maurycy Gottlieb and Jewish Art* (Hanover, 2008).

Miller, M. B., *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920* (London, 1981).

Muensterberger, W. *Collecting: An Unruly Passion* (Princeton, 1994).

Mounk, Y. *Stranger in My Own Country* (New York, 2014).

Moyn, S. *A Holocaust Controversy: The Treblinka Affair in Postwar France* (Brandeis, 2005).

--. *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Harvard, 2012).

Nicholas, L. H. *The Rape of Europa: The Fate of Europe's Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War* (New York, 1995).

Nicolet, Claude. "Prosopographie et histoire sociale: Rome et l'Italie à l'époque républicaine," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, Vol. 25, No. 5 (Sept.-Oct., 1970), pp. 1209-1228.

Nirenberg, David. *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*. New York: Norton, 2013.

Nora, P. *Realms of Memory: Constructing the French Past*, Vols. 1-3, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York, 1996-1998).

Nord, P. *Impressionists and Politics: Art and Democracy in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 2000).

--. *France 1940: Defending the Republic* (New Haven, 2015).

--. "Manet and Radical Politics," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 19, No. 3, (Winter, 1989), pp. 447-480.

--. *Paris Shopkeepers and the Politics of Resentment* (Princeton, 1986).

--. *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Harvard, 1995).

Nussbaum, M. "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," in *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism* (Boston, 1996).

Nye, R. *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (Oxford, 1993).

O'Neill, N. *Art and Visual Culture on the French Riviera, 1956-1971: The École de Nice* (London, 2012)

Le Palais Abbatial de Royaumont: 19, 20 & 21 septembre 2011 (Paris, 2011).

Painter, K., ed. *Mahler and His World* (Princeton, 2002).

Parker, J. and Le Corbeiller, C. *A Guide to the Wrightsman Galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1979).

Passeron, J.-C. and Revel, J. *Penser par cas* (Paris, 2005).

Paxton, R. O. *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* (New York, 2001).

Payne, S. *A History of Spain and Portugal*, Volume 2 (Madison, 1976).

--. *The Franco Regime: 1936-1975* (Madison, 1987).

Pearce, S. *On Collecting: An Investigation Into Collecting in the European Tradition* (Oxford, 1995).

Penslar, D. J. *Jews and the Military: A History* (Princeton, 2013).

--. *Shylock's Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe* (Berkeley, 2001).

--. *Zionism and Technocracy: The Engineering of Jewish Settlement in Palestine, 1870-1918* (Bloomington, 1991).

Pérouse de Montclos, J-M., *Le guide du Patrimoine*: *Paris* (Paris, 2004).

Philipponnat, O. and Lienhardt, P. *La Vie d'Irène Némirovsky* (Paris, 2007).

Pinfold, J. "Horse Racing and the Upper Classes in the Nineteenth Century," *Sport in History*, Vol. 28, issue 3, 2008.

Platt, C. *Marks of Opulence: The Why, When, and Where of Western Art* (London, 2005).

Poliakov, Léon. *Histoire de l'antisémitisme* (Paris, 1955-1977).

--. *Jewish Bankers and the Holy See from the Thirteenth to the Seventeenth Century*, trans. Miriam Kochan (London, 1977).

Post, R., ed. *Another Cosmopolitanism* (Oxford, 2008).

Poznanski, R. *Les Juifs en France pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale*. (Paris, 1994).

Pradère, A. "Baron van Hoorn: An Amateur of Boulle, Antiquity, and the Middle Ages under the Empire," *Furniture History*, Vol. 43 (2007), pp. 205-25.

--. "Boulle. Du Louis XIV sous Louis XVI," *L'Objet d'Art*, no. 4 (February, 1988), pp. 28-43.

--. *French Furniture Makers: The Art of the Ébéniste from Louis XIV to the Revolution, trans Perran Wood* (London, 1989).

Pratz, M. *Histoire de la décoration d'intérieure* (London, 2008).

Preston, Paul. Franco. New York: HarperCollins, 1994.

--. The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution, and Revenge. New York: Norton, 2006.

--. The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-century Spain. New York: HarperCollins, 2008.

Prévost-Marcilhacy, P. "Charlotte de Rothschild, artiste, collectionneur, mécène," in *Mélanges en l'honneur de B. Foucart*, ed. B. Jobert, vol. II (Paris, 2008), pp. 251-265.

--. *Les Rothschilds: bâtisseurs et mécènes* (Paris, 1995).

--. "Les Rothschild collectionneurs de peintures italiennes," *Le goût de l'art italien dans les grandes collections: Prédécesseurs, modèles et concurrents du Cardinal Fesch*, ed. P. Costamagna et. al., (Ajaccio, 2008), pp. 55-66.

Preziosi, D. *The Brain of the Earth's Body: Art, Museums, and Phantasms of Modernity* (Minneapolis, 2003).

Prochnik, G. *The Impossible Exile: Stefan Zweig at the End of the World* (New York, 2014).

Pryce-Jones, D. *Fault Lines* (New York, 2015).

Ravid, B. and Davis, C. *The Jews of Early Modern Venice* (Baltimore, 2001).

Rayski, A. *Le Choix des juifs sous Vichy, entre soumission et résistance* (Paris, 1992).

Reddy, W. "Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions," *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 30 (1997), pp. 327-51.

--. *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001).

Reitlinger, G. *The Economics of Taste* (London, 1961-1977).

Riding, A. And the Show Went On: Cultural Life in Nazi-Occupied Paris. New York: Knopf, 2010.

Roberts, M. L. *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Chicago, 2002).

Rodini, E. "Preserving Memory at the Musée Nissim de Camondo," *Museum History Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (January 2014), pp. 36-54.

Roditi, E. "Camondo's Way," *Grand Street*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Winter, 1987), pp. 145-66.

Rodrigue, A. *French Jews, Turkish Jews: the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860-1925* (Bloomington, 1990).

--. *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry: Community and Leadership* (Bloomington, 1992).

--. "Rearticulations of French Jewish Identities after the Dreyfus Affair," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Spring-Summer 1996), pp. 1-24.

--. "Totems, Taboos, and Jews: Salomon Reinach and the Politics of Scholarship in Fin-de-Siècle France," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 10 (Winter 2004), pp. 1-19.

Rosenberg, P. *Chardin* (Paris, 1999).

--. *Dominique Vivant-Denon: L'oeil de Napoléon* (Paris, 1999).

--. *Fragonard* (New York, 1988).

--. *From Drawing to Painting: Poussin, Watteau, Fragonard, David, and Ingres* (Princeton, 2000).

--. *Nicolas Poussin* (Paris, 1994).

--. *Vies anciennes de Watteau* (Paris, 1984).

Rothschild, E. G. *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth Century History* (Princeton, 2011).

Rothschild, G. *Contre bonne fortune* (Paris, 1983).

Rousso, H. *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer.(Harvard, 1994).

Sabean, D. *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 1984).

--. *Property, Production and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700-1870* (Cambridge, 1990).

-- *Kinship in Neckarhausen, 1700-1870* (Cambridge, 1998).

Said, E. *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Harvard, 2000).

Saisselin, R. *Bricobracomania: The Bourgeois and the Bibelot* (Rutgers, 1984).

Samuels, M. *Inventing the Israelite: Jewish Fiction in Nineteenth Century France* (Stanford, 2010).

--. *The Spectacular Past: Popular History and the Novel in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, 2004).

Schecter, R. *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (Los Angeles, 2003).

Schama, S. *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (Berkeley, 1988).

--. *Two Rothschilds and the Land of Israel* (New York, 1978).

Schorske, C. *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York, 1980).

Schwarzenbach, A. *Die Geborene. Renée Schwarzenbach-Wille und ihre Familie.* (Zurich, 2004).

Sen, Amartya. *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (London, 2006).

Seni, N. "The Camondos and Their Imprint on 19th-Century Istanbul," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (November 1994), pp. 663-675.

--. and Le Tarnec, S. *Les Camondo ou l'éclipse d'une fortune* (Paris, 1997).

Shanley, M. L., ed. *Just Marriage* (Oxford, 2004).

Silver, K. *The Circle of Montparnasse: Jewish Artists in Paris, 1905-1945* (New York, 1985).

--. *An Expressionist in Paris: The Paintings of Chaim Soutine* (New York, 1998).

--. *Making Paradise: Art, Modernity and the Myth of the French Riviera* (MIT, 2001).

--. *Sarah Bernhardt: The Art of High Drama* (New York, 2005).

Silverman, Debora. *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Aesthetics, and Style* (Berkeley, 1992).

Sinclair, Anne. *21, rue la Boétie* (Paris, 2013).

Sirinelli, J.-F. *Génération intellectuelle. Khâgneux et normaliens dans l'entre-deux-guerres* (Paris, 1988).

--. *Intellectuels et passions françaises. Manifestes et pétitions au XXe siècle* (Paris, 1990).

Simches, S. O., *Le Romantisme et le goût esthétique du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1964).

Snyder, T. *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York, 2010).

--. *The Red Prince: The Fall of a Dynasty and the Rise of Modern Europe* (London, 2009).

Solomon, A. *Far From the Tree: Parents, Children, and the Search for Identity* (New York, 2012).

Stammers, T. E. "Collectors, Catholics, and the Commune: Heritage and Counterrevolution, 1860-1890," *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Winter 2014), pp. 53-87.

Stearns, C. and Stearns, P. "Emotionality: Clarifying the History of Emotion and Emotional Standards," *American History Review*, Vol. 90 (1985), pp. 813-36.

Stewart, S. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Duke, 1993).

Steve, M. *Béatrice Éphrussi de Rothschild* (Nice, 2008).

--. "Un monument pastiche, le Musée Nissim de Camondo à Paris," *Histoire de l'Art*, no. 28, October 1994, p. 63.

--. *Théodore Reinach* (Nice, 2014).

Stille, A. *Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families Under Fascism* (New York, 1991).

Stone, L. "Prosopography," *Daedalus*, Vol. 100, No. 1, (Winter, 1971), pp. 46-79.

Suleiman, S. R. *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Harvard, 2006).

Sutherland, C. *Nationalism in the Twenty-First Century: Challenges and Responses* (London, 2012).

Sweets, J. *Choices in Vichy France: The French Under Nazi Occupation* (Oxford, 1986).

Sznaider, N. *Jewish Memory and the Cosmopolitan Order* (Cambridge, 2011).

Tadmor, N. *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Household, Kinship, and Patronage*. (Cambridge, 2001).

Tomkins, C. "Living Well is the Best Revenge," *The New Yorker*, 28 July 1962. http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1962/07/28/living-well-is-the-best-revenge

Tomkins, *Living Well is the Best Revenge* (New York, 1998).

Treglown, J. *Franco's Crypt: Spanish Culture and Memory Since 1936* (New York, 2013).

Trivellato, F. *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, 2009).

Ulrich, L. T. *The Age of Homespun* (New York, 2001).

--. et. al., ed. Ulrich, L. T. et al, ed. *Tangible Things: Making History Through Objects*, (Oxford, 2015).

--. "Vertuous Women Found: New England Ministerial Literature, 1668-1735," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 28, (1976), pp. 20-40.

Vaill, A. *Everybody Was So Young: Gerald and Sara Murphy, a Lost Generation Love Story* (New York, 1998).

Vian des Rives, R. *La Villa Éphrussi de Rothschild* (Paris, 2002).

--. *La Villa Kérylos* (Paris, 2001).

Vinen, R. *The Unfree French: Life Under the Occupation* (London, 2007).

Walzer, M. “Imaginary Jews.” *The New York Review of Books*. 14 March 2014. http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/mar/20/imaginary-jews/?insrc=toc

Wasserman, S. and Faust, K. S*ocial Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*. (Cambridge, 1994).

Wasserstein, B. *The Ambiguity of Virtue: Gertrude van Tijn and the Fate of the Dutch Jews* (Harvard, 2014).

Watson, J. *Literature and Material Culture from Balzac to Proust: The Collection and Consumption of Curiosities* (Cambridge, 1999).

Waugh, A. *The House of Wittgenstein: A Family at War* (New York, 2009).

Weber, E. *France Fin de Siècle* (Harvard, 1986).

--. *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s*. (New York, 1996).

Weinberg, D. “The Renewal of Jewish Life in France After the Holocaust,” Yad Vashem, Jerusalem. http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%202464.pdf

Weintraub, S. *Charlotte and Lionel: A Rothschild Love Story* (London, 2003).

Weissbach, L. S. “The Jewish Elite and the Children of the Poor: Jewish Apprenticeship Programs in Nineteenth-Century France,” *AJS Review*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring, 1987), pp. 123-142.

--. “The Nature of Jewish Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century France and the Mentalité of the Jewish Elite,” *Jewish History*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1994) pp. 191-204.

Wieviorka, A. *Auschwitz, 60 ans après* (Paris, 2005).

--. *Déportation et génocide. Entre la mémoire et l’oubli* (Paris, 2003).

--. *L’Heure d’exactitude: Histoire, mémoire, temoignage* (Paris, 2011).

Wieviorka, O. *Divided Memory: French Recollections of World War II from the Liberation to the Present*, trans. George Holoch (Stanford, 2012).

--. *Orphans of the Republic: the Nation’s Legislators in Vichy France*, trans. George Holoch. (Harvard, 2009).

Winock, Michel. “L’antisémitisme des frères Goncourt,” in *Les Goncourts dans leur siècle. Un siècle de “Goncourt”* (Paris, 2005), pp. 193-203.

--. *Les Derniers Feux de la Belle Époque. Chronique culturelle d'une avant-guerre 1913-1914* (Paris, 2014).

--. *Édouard Drumont et Cie: antisémitisme et fascisme en France* (Paris, 1982).

--. *La France et les Juifs de 1789 à nos jours (Paris, 2005).*

Wolf, J. *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford, 2004).

Yates, A. *Selling Paris: Property and Commercial Culture in the Fin-de-Siècle Capital* (Harvard, 2015).

Yeide, N. *Beyond the Dreams of Avarice: The Hermann Goering Collection* (Dallas, 2009).