

ELÈNA MORTARA

WRITING

FOR JUSTICE

*Victor Séjour, the Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara,
and the Age of Transatlantic Emancipations*

WRITING FOR JUSTICE

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ET. CARJAT.

POTHEY

VICTOR SÉJOUR

ELÈNA MORTARA

WRITING FOR JUSTICE

Victor Séjour,
the Kidnapping of
Edgardo Mortara, and
the Age of Transatlantic
Emancipations

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In memoriam

Momolo Mortara (1816–1871)

Alberto Mortara (1909–1990)

This is an age of the world when nations are trembling and convulsed. A mighty influence is abroad, surging and heaving the world, as with an earthquake. And is America safe? Every nation that carries in its bosom great and unredressed injustice has in it the elements of this last convulsion.

For what is this mighty influence thus rousing in all nations and languages those groanings that cannot be uttered, for man's freedom and equality?

—Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1852

A dying mother's heart-shrieks,
Are sweeping o'er the wave,—
How can ye sleep, with that haunting cry,
Praying her child to save?
—Adah Isaacs Menken, "To the Sons of Israel," 1859

But I am a man.

—Victor Séjour, Preface to *The Fortune-Teller*, 1860

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INTRODUCTION: CROSSING BORDERS

AN ENGRAVING OF 1857, kept at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, shows the main protagonist of this book, Victor Séjour: a Louisiana-born free man of color, Séjour was brought up in a French-speaking home in New Orleans and, after emigrating to Paris as a young man, became a renowned playwright in that city. The engraving represents him smiling in his gentleman's clothes, in a posture of relaxed elegance, communicating a sense of self-assurance, associated with full acceptance into society and with social and professional achievement—conditions that in those troubled times a mixed-race person could gain more easily in Paris, “the capital of the nineteenth century,” than in the man’s original country across the Atlantic. In 1837, even before becoming a famous playwright, Séjour had published a short story, “Le Mulâtre” (“The Mulatto”), about the tragic plight of a young mulatto slave in Saint-Domingue, which has by now achieved the reputation of being the first fictional narrative text published, not anonymously, by a black American writer. And yet, how is it that this writer may be a discovery for many serious readers of American literature? The point is that this short story, like the rest of Séjour’s poetic and dramatic writing, was written in French and was published in Paris. So it is only thanks to the new approaches that have entered the field of American studies—resulting from the awareness of the international dimension and multilingual nature of the literature of the United States—that the American literary canon has now started opening up to include such a writer into its larger canon. Thus, Séjour’s work sheds new light on the complex nature of American literature. The growing recognition of this literary figure is, on the other hand, not only a consequence of the finally acknowledged writer’s objective relevance, but also a sign of our own present-day scholarly interests. The revelation becomes twofold: we are helping to enlighten an obscure past that finally comes to the foreground, but this enlightenment sheds some light on us, and on our critical concerns and world views as well.

My discovery of Victor Séjour took place several years ago through my interest in his dramatic representation of the famous Mortara case, the abduction by the Pope’s guards of a Jewish boy in Bologna in 1858. I was struck by the attention of this writer, an American-born expatriate of color

and a Catholic, to the story of an Italian Jewish family grievously wronged by the Inquisition, a current event that had created a huge international scandal on both sides of the Atlantic. When I first started researching the playwright who, in the course of the events, had dared to write a play against the kidnapping, I thought my main theme would be the crossing of borders that the experience of this writer best exemplifies. What I found more and more fascinating and worth being studied, in fact, was the outstanding “in-betweenness” of this figure, in all aspects of his personal experience and identification. That liminality found expression in his linguistic identity, as an American speaking French in New Orleans; in his racial identity, as a free Creole of color from Louisiana; in his national identity, for his crossing of national borders and living as a voluntary exile in Paris for most of his life; in his religious identity, as a Catholic originally from a Protestant country; and, at least partially (as we shall see), in his *writing for justice* across religious borders, when writing as a Catholic in defense of a Jewish family, whose human rights had been violated by the Pope.

Originally, I even thought of titling my work in progress *Cross-Cultural Encounters* or else *Crossing Borders*. Cross-cultural encounters is, in fact, one of the major themes of this study, and it is a theme that resonates in much of the work of the primary writers of the so-called American Renaissance. While not seeking to place Victor Séjour on a par with Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, Herman Melville, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, my aim is to contextualize his work and to create a space for him in the literary canon. The motif of cross-cultural encounters and of a human crossing of borders is, in my view, pervasive in much of the writing of the most-widely acclaimed authors of mid-nineteenth century American literature. It is enough to mention briefly Melville’s moving description, in *Moby-Dick*, of the “squeeze of the hand” of sailors from all parts of mankind working on the whale ship, with all the subterranean ambiguity and tensions that scene of brotherhood contains; or just consider the ways in which Thoreau in *Walden* and Whitman in “Facing West from California’s Shore” regard an imagined Orient, both of them using the image of an expanse of water to propel their imagination toward the East, and how, by defining their own identity in relation to a larger humanity beyond their national borders, they show the attractions and the tensions involved in these attempted imaginary contacts. As for Nathaniel Hawthorne, the New England writer was actually living in Rome at the time of the events we are discussing; his case will be dealt with in some detail in this book. Within this high literary context, the currently less famous Louisiana-born writer living in France (at that time a well-known playwright in his country of adoption), with his dual vantage point in both America and Europe and his experience

of crossing racial and national lines, offers a provocative literary case, shedding new light on transnational writing.

As I started concentrating my attention on this figure within his historical context, I also began reading the papers of the time in order to understand the details of a literary career accompanied by controversies and public attention. Since my initial interest was in his dramatic hit of 1859, *La Tireuse de cartes* (*The Fortune-Teller*), the play inspired by the Mortara case, written at the highest point of his career in terms of public success and critical recognition, I was plunged into the political and cultural world of those years: the troubled times at the end of the 1850s, which would soon lead to the Civil War in the United States and to the emancipation of its black slaves, and which were also climactic years of turmoil and change in parts of Europe, such as Italy and the Papal States. By following the heated debates aroused by Séjour's writing and trying to understand the various connections between literature and the historical context, I became more and more aware of the centrality and interconnection of one question, modulated in various geographical and political contexts on both sides of the Atlantic at that time: the question of *emancipation*. That issue obviously concerned the tragic condition of black slaves from Africa in the United States, but also concerned other forms of oppression and discrimination suffered in different parts of the western world. And those other struggles for liberty and equal rights were also being conducted under the common banner of a fight for "emancipation." I am using quotation marks here, to underline that it was exactly *that* word that was used historically at the time, to define a series of battles against barriers of color and race—but also of religion, nationality, and gender—that were animating the international scene in those tormented mid-century years.

This commonality of problems, which was recognized by the more committed and liberal spirits of the time, has sometimes been lost in later scholarship because of an excess of specialization that may not allow one to see the entire picture of an age. Each researcher sees his or her limited field of study, be it Black Emancipation, Catholic Emancipation, Jewish Emancipation, Italian Emancipation, Women's Emancipation, and so on, in splendid solitude. At this point, the theme, and need, of crossing involves the figure of the researcher as well, since, in order to get a sense of the whole, there is the necessity of *crossing borders* of disciplines, while at the same time keeping a careful watch on the specific features and historical *differences* of each case involved. This double necessity has come to me as a natural pathway in the exploration that has engaged me; what I mean to say is that the multiple belongings and crossings of the writer-object of my study required a larger vision, allowing me to see, from that fortunate crossroad viewpoint, both

the encounters and conflicts at stake. As a consequence, at the end of this research, I have come to this conclusion, which I now consider essential: on both sides of the ocean, the mid-nineteenth century was the Age of Emancipations, where the plural signifies the contemporary presence of a plurality of struggles for freedom and equality in progress on both sides of the Atlantic that were then reaching their apexes of crisis and resolution. This was the context of Victor Séjour's personal experience and writing, and this was the context in which the first major flowering of American literature was born and developed.

Though this global vision needs to be regained nowadays, the existence of multiple problems of emancipation across national borders was perceived by the most cosmopolitan and liberal minds of those times. An early case of a sharp articulation of the problem of emancipation comes from Heinrich Heine. In 1828, while traveling from Munich through northern Italy toward Genoa, the cosmopolitan German writer stopped on the battlefield of Marengo, where in 1800 Napoleon had defeated Austria at the end of his Italian campaign. On that historical spot, he started debating within himself about the main problems of his time, in particular the clash between what he considered the musty value of nationality, with all its load of vanity, hatred, and ridiculous prejudices, and the liberating value of universality, as commonality of differences, that he trusted. He then wondered: "But what is the great question of the age?" "It is," he answered himself with firm persuasion, "that of emancipation. Not simply the emancipation of the Irish, Greeks, Frankfurt Jews, West Indian negroes, and other oppressed races, but the emancipation of the whole world, and especially that of Europe."¹ These prophetic reflections, reported by Heine in the Italian section of his *Reisebilder* (*Pictures of Travel*) of 1828 (accompanied by the general remark, "Every age has its problem, whose solution advances the world"), were followed by his utopian vision of a "blessed time" when the earth would be transformed into an assembly of peers sitting together around the same table² and, in another text specifically devoted to the issue of emancipation, by his counter-observation of a reality of multiple oppressions, privileges, and civil inequality among human groups, each one seeking to ascend socially but oppressing those placed by unjust laws below them: "The Creole demands equality with the European, but oppresses the Mulatto, and flares up in a rage when the latter puts himself on an equality with him. Just so does the Mulatto treat the Mestizo, and he in turn the Negro. The small citizen of Frankfurt worries himself over the privileges of the nobility, but he worries himself much more, when any one suggests to him the emancipation of his Jews."³ Heine knew very well that what he considered to be the greatest question of the time was far from being solved. It was a task that he

envisioned for his and the following generations. And he was right in his understanding that the problem was one that crossed national borders.

A few decades later, in the mid-nineteenth century, the evidence of what Heine had so clearly foreseen became abundantly clearer. A sense of growing crisis loomed, offering both increased peril and the chance of a new beginning. Sensitive writers can once again be cited as witnesses of what was happening. In the United States, in 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe in her “Concluding Remarks” at the end of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* directly addresses the readers to incite them against slavery. After the previous fiction, she urges her fellow citizens to look at the reality of that shame to be abolished and feels it important to alert them to the explosive nature of the situation, by inserting the struggle against that American injustice within a worldwide frame of contemporary struggles: “This is an age of the world when nations are trembling and convulsed. A mighty influence is abroad, surging and heaving the world, as with an earthquake. And is America safe? Every nation that carries in its bosom great and unredressed injustice has in it the elements of this last convulsion. / For what is this mighty influence thus rousing in all nations and languages those groanings that cannot be uttered, for man’s freedom and equality?”⁴

This powerful description of the international scene at the start of the 1850s—the pre-Civil War years for the United States—can be taken as an introduction to what I have called the Age of Emancipations, which reached its most critical times on both sides of the Atlantic at the end of that decade. Among the countries that were trembling under the effect of the earthquake evoked by Harriet Beecher Stowe, there was “*il bel paese*,” “the beautiful country” (in Dante’s words) and the Garden of Europe, rich in natural beauties and history, and a must in the traditional Grand Tour of foreign artists and intellectuals, that is Italy, a centuries-long cultural and linguistic entity, politically fragmented and prey to frequent invasions in the course of its history. Italy was still an unborn nation suffering the pangs of a possible birth. The “legal” kidnapping of six-year-old Edgardo Mortara took place in Bologna, within the Papal States (one of the state-entities in the patchwork of duchies and kingdoms on the Italian peninsula that would soon be transformed through a revolutionary process into the new Italian nation). The case aroused scandal and emotion in international public opinion, across national and religious borders, and became a political affair, known as “the Mortara case,” with demonstrations, political meetings, and diplomatic initiatives in several European countries and in the United States.

As in the United States, where the southern “aristocrats” were not willing to give up their rights of “property” represented by the slaves they owned, so in the Kingdom of the Church of Rome, and in other illiberal states, the

old world of absolute power was desperately resisting change and fiercely fighting against the new, with its liberal belief in freedom of conscience and religion, basic human rights and rights of citizenship. An innumerable number of written texts of all sorts were produced in those years, to expose the drama of a family and a clash of civilizations: newspaper articles, letters, declarations, essays, pamphlets, poems, and plays. The only contemporary visual documents of the event one knows of are a series of preparatory studies and sketches, and an impressive painting, by the German-Jewish artist Moritz Oppenheim, entitled *Der Raub des Mortara-Kindes* (The kidnapping of the Mortara child, also known as The kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara), which portrays the dramatic moment of the abduction. The painting was lost for over a century and recently reappeared in New York, at an auction by Sotheby's, where it was sold to a private American collector. The fact that it was painted in 1862, four years after the event, and in Germany, shows the persistent memory of that violence, well beyond the borders of one nation. Séjour's play, which opened in Paris in December 1859 in the presence of the French Emperor Napoleon III, was the first drama inspired by the case to be produced in any country. France, because of its recent alliance with the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia and its role that same year in what is known as the Second War of Italian Independence, was then actively participating in the revolutionary events of the Italian Risorgimento, which would very soon lead to the unity of Italy and the birth of the Italian Kingdom in 1861. So the Parisian stage and Séjour's work were not only part of a broader international debate, but probably also instrumental in a specific political scheme, as this book will show.

In an age in which several struggles for freedom and equality were defined, as we shall see, by the keyword of Latin origin "emancipation," the Italian Risorgimento, seen as a revolutionary movement of emancipation from foreign and internal oppression, was followed with special interest beyond its geographical territories, so much so as even to be considered by recent scholarship as "the one inescapable international event"⁵ in the life of every major writer of the American Renaissance. The international visibility of such political, revolutionary, and military leaders of the Risorgimento as Cavour, Mazzini, and Garibaldi testifies to the resonance of the Italian movement of "Resurgence"; and the nickname given to the most internationally famous of the three leaders, Giuseppe Garibaldi, known as the "Hero of Two Worlds," is itself revealing. A very large oil on canvas by the British artist George Housman Thomas, which was first exhibited with great success at the Royal Academy of London in 1854, gives a visual impression of Garibaldi's charismatic figure as perceived by his contemporaries. This impressive painting by the Rome correspondent and illustrator for the English

weekly the *Illustrated London News*, entitled “Garibaldi at the Siege of Rome, 1849,” portrays the Italian general riding magnificently on a beautiful white horse. Next to him, just a little behind, the only figure given similar dignity and visual importance at the center of the scene is that of his black palfrenier-lieutenant from Latin America, Andrés Aguiar, who had followed Garibaldi to Italy and is also shown riding elegantly on a black horse, while all around on the battlefield all the other red-shirted soldiers are either wounded on the ground or standing on foot in this bloody battle scene. This faithful ex-slave from Uruguay (whom the *Illustrated London News* in a caption defined as Garibaldi’s “Negro servant”) died in defense of the Roman Republic on June 30, 1849. We can read that in Garibaldi’s memoirs, whose first edition was published, not in Italy but, translated into English by Theodore Dwight, in New York, in 1859, the same year in which Victor Séjour’s *La Tireuse de cartes* was first performed. The French version of the memoirs, by Alexandre Dumas, came out in 1860. This web of trans-national connections, stretching across Europe and North America, gives an idea of the intricacy of relations that the new age of international communication media was making possible.

The image of Garibaldi next to his black friend from South America hints at the larger historical context of the writings discussed in this book, although in this study the viewpoint will be placed in Paris, an international magnet city of the time, and will be enriched by the sensibility of a writer endowed with multiple experiences of crossings. The painting by Housman Thomas also conveys some of the main themes that will be covered here, such as the international relevance of the Italian Risorgimento and its impact on American and European culture, and, most of all, the high ideals that were at stake on those battlefields, the variety of liberal struggles for emancipation—emancipation from slavery, emancipation from civil exclusion and discrimination based on religious difference, and emancipation from foreign and internal oppression and despotism—which were being fought, in various circumstances, but with common aims of equality and justice for all citizens, on both sides of the Atlantic. In particular, by comparing the political situations of the United States and Italy in the mid-nineteenth century, it appears that two apparently opposite processes were taking place at the end of the 1850s: the United States moving toward civil war while Italy was moving toward its first unification; yet between the increasingly “disunited” United States and the not-yet-united Italy there was a striking commonality of concerns and issues at stake—in the name of emancipation. The Mortara affair, and Sèjour’s writing about it, must be placed and scrutinized within this larger context of struggles for basic human rights. In addition, Garibaldi’s friendly physical closeness to his black assistant in the

1854 painting suggests, with the immediacy of an authentic visual document of that time, other debated subjects running through this book: Séjour's multiple liminality; his recurrent treatment of the mulatto theme, and of experiences of "passing" in both overt and coded forms; his connection with the contemporary tradition of early African American writing and his outstanding historical role in that literary history; his familiarity with other experiences from the larger American continent, through his father originally from Haiti; his generous, though perhaps partial, understanding, as a liberal Catholic and a man of color, of a Jewish family drama; the challenges of an attempted crossing of borders in the name of humanity; and the cultural negotiations at stake.

Victor Séjour, this American-born, French-speaking, mixed-race, Catholic, expatriate writer, successful in mid-nineteenth century Paris, is an ideal figure for people interested in transnational, cross-cultural, comparative studies. With his multiple belongings, and the way he dealt—or sometimes avoided dealing—with crucial, problematic issues in his writings, Séjour seems to satisfy all criteria for a contemporary scholarly interest and to confirm the value of a critical method, the transnational, that opens up a larger vision of the world and is able to acknowledge real-life situations in their variety, including transborder identity conflicts. In this challenging context, thanks to the crossing of multiple borders he experienced himself, this research has become a fascinating adventure. For many reasons, both scholarly and (as I will explain in the final part of my work) personal, I have discovered even more than I could have imagined when I began exploring this fascinating area of research. It was a joy to read original documents and be able to apply quite naturally in this search one's knowledge of various languages, from English to French, Italian, and German. The pluriliminality of this writer requires such an approach, if one wants to read the writer's work in the original and follow closely the debates aroused by that writing. All these factors, including reading sources in the relevant languages, place the researcher in a true transcultural situation and make up part of a stimulating phase of studies among literary scholars of America. Current theories of transnational American studies, with their emphasis on finding connections across cultures rather than on viewing American culture in its "exceptionalist" isolation, in fact, have prompted an increase of studies documenting the abundance of contacts between the United States and countries beyond its borders in the mid-nineteenth century. This has permitted, on the one hand, reconsidering canonical writers by placing them in a larger context of international contacts, and, on the other hand, seeing and appreciating liminal figures, whose writings shed new light on the intercourse of cultures and on the plural nature of American literature itself.

Among the expatriate literary figures that should be better known, there is Victor Séjour, a francophone writer who was from the beginning of his career infused with high ideals of humanity and “awakened” to the ubiquity of oppression. But at times, due to some degree of censorship at work, he in part avoided the very crucial issues that had propelled him in the first place, and, despite his sensitivity to the representation of conflicts and to the condition of oppressed minorities, he was not able to fully overcome his ideological limits in his understanding of the “other.” In my portrait of the writer, I have paid attention to his age of plural emancipations, which his work uncovers and explores in all its complexity. I have tried to draw what seem to me both lights and shadows, without any romantic idealization of his figure. There is a tension that powers Séjour’s work and denies any easy answer to the confrontations he dramatizes. One of the main issues is the challenge to find common ground among cultures, in the name of a common humanity, while also acknowledging what has been called the “dignity of difference.” In the following pages, while negotiating this thorny territory, I hope to contribute to our knowledge of an age, the Age of Emancipations, and of a New Orleans-born, expatriate writer who lived a life of multiple identities.



A CREOLE AMERICAN
WRITER IN PARIS

FROM NEW ORLEANS TO FRANCE: SÉJOUR'S
EARLY LIFE AND "LE MULÂTRE"

VICTOR SÉJOUR (1817–1874), the son of a free woman of color from New Orleans and of a well-to-do mulatto man of Haitian origin, was a franco-phone “free Creole of color,” or *homme de couleur libre* (H.C.L.), and a Catholic, born and raised in pre–Civil War New Orleans, Louisiana. At the time of his birth, Victor was his parents’ natural son, as his father, Louis Séjour, a native of Saint-Marc, in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, who had arrived in New Orleans probably in 1809, and his mother, Héloïse Ferrand, married only several years later, in 1825.¹ Louisiana, the former French colony purchased by the United States from Napoleon I in 1803, had become part of the Union only five years before Séjour’s birth and is the origin and cultural springboard of a story of literary encounters along an elusive ethnic border.

In 1836, after attending a prestigious black school, Académie Sainte Barbe, in his native town, Séjour, perhaps upon the invitation of an uncle living in Paris, moved to this metropolis across the ocean to complete his education, a step that was not unusual as part of a young man’s instruction in the wealthy, cultivated French-speaking-Creole milieu to which his family belonged.² These were not easy times for either native-born or immigrant Afro-Creoles in Louisiana: after a period of partial legal emancipation for free people of color, the state’s 1830 white legislature had reaffirmed harsh antimiscegenation laws that were creating racial prejudice, legal disadvantage, and ostracism toward all persons of mixed origin and mixed African ancestry. In France, on the contrary, after the July revolution of 1830, a law of April 24, 1833, had officially recognized the full rights of French citizenship to all *hommes de couleur libres*, placing them, “without any distinction,” as proclaimed proudly by a French abolitionist paper in 1834, “within the great family.” While France had decreed that “all free men born in its bosom or in its colonies were citizens, whatever their color,” this equality, as strongly

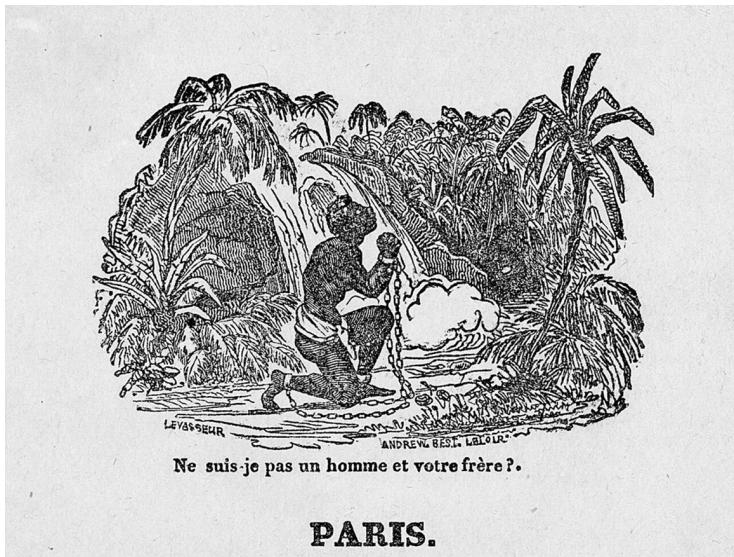
denounced by the same paper, was not recognized “in the Southern provinces of the Unites States.”³ Séjour, who had already been acclaimed a prodigy as a poet at the New Orleans writers’ forum, La Société des Artisans (the Artisans’ Society), remained in Paris and made his literary career living as an expatriate, becoming a successful writer and playwright. He wrote fiction, poetry (in 1841 his heroic ode “Le Retour de Napoléon” gained him entrance to Parisian literary circles), and twenty-two plays, which were produced in Paris between 1844 and 1875. His dramatic works were received positively and, at least until the mid-1860s, when his fortunes declined, well attended (some of them ran for several months, sometimes even simultaneously), and were regularly reviewed by critics such as Théophile Gautier and Jules Janin.

An engraving of his figure drawn by Étienne Carjat in 1857 (see frontispiece) shows Séjour standing next to a luminous column where the titles of some of his dramas are engraved in large capital letters, behind which a garden is lightly sketched.⁴ He is slim and elegantly dressed in white trousers and a shining black tail-coat in the gentleman’s style of his time. His posture shows confidence, his right hand is casually hidden in his trousers’ pocket, his left arm is held to his side. He has a long, well-kept moustache, and long, wavy, well-groomed hair; his lips are mellow; his forehead is broad above his bushy eyebrows. His large face, on which one can detect a light “mezzotinto” color, smiles with an intelligent gaze toward the onlooker. In 1857, Victor Séjour was close to the height of his literary fortune. Meanwhile, on both sides of the Atlantic battles were being fought in the name of liberty, equality, and justice. The young successful writer was far from indifferent to these themes and values, as his literary productions, and in particular his early works, show.



Ever since the beginning of Séjour’s writing career, one of the most prominent themes in his literary production was the predicament of individuals with multiple identities. It was a condition he had personally experienced through his mixed racial identity, inherent in his being a Creole of color, and further complicated by his multiple national identity after his moving from the United States to France. The issue of plural racial or religious identities, and the dramatic culturally and socially produced existential conflicts involved in cross-cultural encounters are first explored in depth in two of his early works, “Le Mulâtre” and *Diégarias*.

“Le Mulâtre” (“The Mulatto”) is a powerful antislavery short story that was published in Paris in March 1837, when Victor Séjour was only nine-



1.1. "Am I Not a Man and Your Brother?" Wood engraving of a slave in chains, published on the cover of the abolitionist monthly *Revue des colonies* 3, no. 1. Paris, July 1836. Drawing by Levasseur, engraving by Andrew, Best and Leloir. Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

teen years old and had just moved to France from New Orleans.⁵ It came out in *Revue des colonies*, the French abolitionist journal founded in 1834 by "a Society of men of color" ("une Société d'hommes de couleur") and edited by a mulatto abolitionist leader from Martinique, Cyrille Auguste Bissette, whom Séjour had met in Paris. The statements about the French law of April 24, 1833, quoted earlier, are from an 1834 issue of this periodical. The antislavery aims of the monthly are made visibly manifest by the moving illustration of a slave in chains, claiming freedom in the name of human brotherhood, which appeared on the cover of the magazine in July 1836. The black figure in chains, surrounded by a luxuriant landscape of palms and a waterfall, is kneeling on one knee and imploring, in the words of the caption: "Ne suis-je pas un homme et votre frère?" (Am I not a man and your brother?).⁶ This image, with its added rich Caribbean landscape, was the French colonial version of a "widespread antislavery emblem," whose design, with its motto "Am I Not A Man and A Brother?" surrounding "an African in Chains in a Supplicating Posture," was taken from the seal of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, first engraved in London in

1787, and shipped with a cargo of cameos to Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia one year later.⁷

“Le Mulâtre” was Victor Séjour’s first published work and is now considered the earliest known work of fiction published by an African American,⁸ though one who was writing in French and living abroad. This literary “primacy” (destined to be challenged by new discoveries of texts continually made in the ever-shifting landscape of “literary archeology”) is a historical achievement that can only increase our interest in Séjour. Yet, after pointing out the “record,” we should try to cross the racial boundary that even liberal critics often observe and read this story within the larger American literary context, connecting it to what was happening in other influential areas of the nation. Séjour’s story deserves to be valued alongside those of his great, and now more famous, contemporaries Hawthorne and Poe, who were just then writing their first tales.⁹ Our picture of the crucial decade of the 1830s, essential in paving the way to the subsequent midcentury masterpieces, becomes more varied and rich in points of view and literary voices and motifs if one enlarges the critical frame to include, for instance, the literature of French Louisiana and its expatriates.¹⁰ From a stylistic point of view, our appreciation of the taste of the age is broadened when we realize that Séjour’s story is to some extent part of the literary gothic tradition that includes the work of his major contemporaries, although the dark and bloody themes of his semi-gothic tale spring from very different contexts and materials.

All this leads to a second observation. Séjour’s work challenges the assumption that American literature is monolingual, and compels us to face the reality of a multilingual literature, crossed by many linguistic rivers, running underneath and sometimes becoming more visible in different places and historical periods. The research into multilingual America has greatly advanced in recent years,¹¹ as awareness of the linguistic (and ethnic) complexity of American culture has increasingly characterized contemporary studies. The new multilingual, inclusive approach has contributed to a widening of the literary canon of the literature of the United States and to a modification of its corpus (as Séjour’s case demonstrates). Our vision of the literary landscape has been transformed by the crossing of language borders, as we have learned to listen to the voices of those who wrote in languages other than English.

We are also accustomed to imagine the American 1830s as a literary age moving toward cultural independence from Europe, a trend having its climactic expression in Emerson’s famous Cambridge oration of 1837, later titled “The American Scholar,” the so-called manifesto of America’s intellectual independence, with its strong statement against European influence:

“We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe.”¹² Yet with an American expatriate like Séjour we are forced to see another side of the historical and artistic situation and to reflect on the importance of transnational contacts that were much deeper and more extended than one would expect, even in those years. Séjour’s work testifies to the existence of a transnational body of literature that we are only beginning to fully recognize. In France, where the mulatto theme had already moved to the center of the narrative stage in works such as Gustave de Beaumont’s novel *Marie: ou, l’esclavage aux États-Unis; tableau de mœurs américaines* (1835),¹³ Séjour came into contact with an abolitionist magazine that would offer him a platform from which to air his views, in the same year (1837) that Emerson’s manifesto of American cultural independence was published. The historical importance of Séjour’s story and the impact of its publication in France on its fortunes are now recognized by scholars of African American literature. As the editors of *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* point out:

Le Mulâtre provided a remarkable precedent for the tradition of African American antislavery protest fiction that, a decade and a half later, made an auspicious start in English with Frederick Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave* (1853) and William Brown’s *Clotel* (1853). Publishing *Le Mulâtre* in French probably cost the author an American readership outside the city of his birth; even the most cosmopolitan of African American writers, such as Douglass and Brown, seem to have known nothing about Séjour’s early foray into antislavery fiction.

Yet who is to say that Séjour’s decision to publish in a black-owned journal in France was not the right—indeed, the only—way to ensure that his explicit and grisly tale of racial exploitation, rape, murder, and suicide would ever see print?¹⁴

As a matter of fact, a text like “Le Mulâtre” and its author Victor Séjour oblige us to cross national and linguistic boundaries and to enter a larger geographical and cultural space, where the Americas meet with Africa and Europe across the Atlantic. And in this larger, more fluid multicultural space, which in part corresponds to the one defined by Paul Gilroy as “Black Atlantic,”¹⁵ a primary role is played by the multilingual colonial territories of the Antilles, the archipelago situated between North and South America, bordered by the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean; here, at the turn of the nineteenth century, on the western side of the island of Hispaniola (the second largest island in the Caribbean after Cuba), the French colony of Saint-Domingue (described by Davis as “the richest and most productive colony in the New World”), had been the stage of a bloody but successful black uprising against white colonial power, which had eventually

led to the abolition of slavery and the creation of the Republic of Haiti in 1804.¹⁶ These momentous historical events were destined to have an enormous influence not only in Afro-Caribbean and French colonial history, but also, through their example, continuously evoked (depending on the viewpoint, either as a dream or as a threat), on the whole course of the nineteenth-century African American history that followed.¹⁷ For worlds and histories are indeed “connected” and “entangled,”¹⁸ and they were so even before our so-called Global Age. It is this part of the world and these events, the former French colony of Saint-Domingue and the Haitian Revolution, that are the setting and backdrop of Séjour’s narrative of 1837.

“Le Mulâtre” is a rather long story that deals with the drama of a young mulatto man named Georges, a slave, the son of a beautiful Senegalese slave woman, Laïsa, and an unknown (to him) white man. Georges is transformed by his owner’s injustice from a loyal and kind person into a fiery, bloodthirsty vengeance-seeker. Three years after his white master, the wealthy planter Alfred, maliciously caused the death of Georges’s mulatto wife, he kills him in an act of delayed revenge,¹⁹ without knowing that the man, his hated ex-master, is his father. He eventually kills himself after hearing the horrifying revelation from his father during the very act of murder. (The keyword “père,” father, is cut in two, “pè-,” “-re,” while it is pronounced by the falling father’s head, decapitated by his unacknowledged son, in a sort of new revolutionary, familial guillotining.)

The tragic story is set in Saint-Domingue (prerevolutionary Haiti) in the small town of Saint-Marc (the birthplace of the author’s father), and is effectively framed by the time-honored narrative structure of a tale within the tale, as if it were a story told by an old Negro native to an unnamed, presumably white visitor (whom the black man calls “maître”; i.e., master, or boss), who then reports the encounter and the horror story, as a first-person narrator. While the frame narration occurs after the Haitian Revolution, at the time of the Republic, the embedded narrative told by the elderly black man Antoine takes us back to the prerevolutionary times of slavery in Saint-Domingue, whose inhuman colonial customs and laws the story wants to denounce. This kind of narrative, “featuring retrospect[ive] accounts by slaves or former slaves,” which according to Ed J. Piacentino would soon become one of the familiar *topoi* of nineteenth-century southern plantation literature, was inaugurated by Séjour’s story.²⁰ Whatever the historical primacy, this literary strategy, used with great skill, shows the young author’s sophisticated narrative command, as well as a natural inclination to speech and dialogue that will eventually lead him toward his vocation as a playwright. The structure also indicates another artistic inclination—the writer’s preference for distancing himself from the heated subject matter presented and for adopt-

ing the white reader's point of view (but it might also be the viewpoint of a "free man of color"),²¹ while at the same time powerfully denouncing the horrors of the *mœurs coloniales*, or "colonial customs," which were explicitly mentioned in the heading under which the story was first published. In this way, the psychological exploration into a condition of horror, typical of the gothic tale, is here joined to the exposure of the shameful man-made institution that has caused this very psychological condition.

The strong attack on slavery—"this loathsome commerce" by which "free men who have been torn from their country by ruse or by force . . . become, by violence, the property of their fellow men"²²—in this work of fiction by the American Creole expatriate is significantly focused on the violation of family ties produced by the infamous institution. The disrupting of all natural bonds of humanity can only lead to rebellion and bloodshed, and even, when a slave is the black son of a white father, to patricide.²³ The combination of unnatural customs and revenge will bring about destruction for both slave and slaveholder, and, in the case of a mulatto, within the unacknowledged family, to both the tyrant-father and his unsuspecting slave-son. The mixed-race origin of the young protagonist heightens the drama in Séjour's colonial story and makes the contrast between nature's laws (allowing the black-white coupling to be fruitful) and society's unjust ones (forbidding a natural father-son, and husband-wife, relation) even more striking to a white audience. The black man's auditor and frame narrator, and his implied audience, are first confronted with the breakdown of family units caused by slavery ("Over here we have the husband without the wife; there, the sister without the brother; farther on, the mother without the children. This makes you shudder?"),²⁴ and then, after a series of melodramatic episodes, with the extreme tragic consequences that may result, in the liminal situation of a mixed-race family, from that disruption and dehumanization, when a man can be transformed into a beast more ferocious than a tiger, and, burning with hatred and an ardent desire for revenge, can eventually be driven to murder his own unknown father and then to kill himself in despair.

The mulatto theme and its related family drama will never again be dealt with directly by Séjour, nor will there ever be any other New World setting in the foreground of his published works.²⁵ But the theme of mixed identity will be taken up by him again in other interesting forms and contexts.

[2]

DIÉGARIAS, A MIXED-IDENTITY TRAGEDY

DIÉGARIAS (1844) WAS SÉJOUR’s first play, and the first of his to be accepted and produced by the Comédie Française (then called Théâtre Français) when he was only twenty-six.¹ It was staged in this prestigious theater in the summer of 1844, was praised by Théophile Gautier, and would be Séjour’s “entrance ticket” to membership in the French Playwrights Association (*Société des auteurs dramatiques*) in 1846.² As in “Le Mulâtre,” a mysterious past, concerning the origin of the main protagonists, and involving a father-and-child relationship and racial prejudice, lurks behind the impending tragedy onstage.

This early play by Séjour, which was translated into English by Norman R. Shapiro as *The Jew of Seville* for the first time in 2002, is a verse drama and historical play in five acts, set in fifteenth-century Spain at the time of the Spanish Inquisition. It deals with a Jew, Diégarias,³ and his daughter Inès. Because of his forbidden love for a Catholic noblewoman (Bianca), Diégarias was forced to flee to Greece, where his beloved Bianca died after childbirth. After twenty years of exile, Diégarias returns to Seville, hides his original name (Jacob Eliacin), passes as a Christian, and becomes a trustworthy financial counselor to King Henry IV of Castile. This is the backstory, revealed to the audience and to the other characters on stage only in the course of the drama. Fifteen years after Diégarias’s return to Spain, at the beginning of this tragedy, we encounter Inès, an innocent eighteen-year-old girl who does not know of her father’s Jewishness and has secretly fallen in love with a Christian nobleman (Don Juan de Tello), and Diégarias, who in his function as the king’s minister protects him from a revolutionary conspiracy against him (while also trying to take revenge on an old enemy). But after his twelve years of loyal service to the king—this is the main point in the play’s plot—the Jewish identity of Diégarias is mischievously revealed.⁴ Don Juan, one of the political conspirators (and Diégarias’s hated foe, for past wrongs committed

by his father), who has seduced Inès into a sham marriage, can easily justify his refusal to marry a Jew's daughter, after a Moor (who hates and envies Diégarias)⁵ discloses her father's concealed identity to him: "I, count Don Juan, of old and noble race . . . / No, sire, I will not take to wife some base / Vile Jewess!"⁶ As one would expect, the intricate plot includes further hidden identities and deceptions.⁷ In the end Diégarias is granted dual revenge on both the king, who dismissed and banished him for his being a Jew, and Don Juan; but his daughter, still in love with the nobleman and unable to save him, poisons herself. The last words of the play emphasize the tragic consequence of the Jew's thirst for revenge: "I sought revenge . . . / (*Falling on her body*) / But I have killed my child!"⁸

Both "Le Mulâtre" and *Diégarias* denounce discrimination and show the effects of persecutions suffered by innocent people because of their birth. Both works are, as critic Lynn Weiss remarks, about "the tragic fate of children of mixed unions" (a white father, with a mixed blood, black-white son in the story; a Jewish father, with a half-Christian–half-Jewish daughter in the play); in both cases, the children originally don't know about their mixed origins and "polarized societies drive the 'mixed' offspring to suicide."⁹ Yet in the treatment of the similar dramatic theme one can notice interesting gender and ethnic/racial variations that reveal Séjour's different attitude toward these characters and the groups they portray.

The title characters of both "Le Mulâtre" and *Diégarias* refer to the victim of prejudice and "revenger," on whom our attention is focused; in both, the tragic result is the "mixed" offspring's death by suicide. But in the mulatto story the son, a male, kills his father, taking bloody revenge upon him before killing himself; and this terrible violence, this patricide, is a revolutionary act, revealing the true horror of an unjust law. In the play, on the contrary, the younger character and second victim of prejudice, after Diégarias, is his daughter—a girl who believes solely in love and in the Christian value of forgiveness, and who eventually makes violence only against herself. The revenge theme, typical of an Elizabethan drama tradition well-known by Séjour (as his later play *Richard III* will show), is put into action, instead, by the Jewish father, who first hides his true religious identity, which would keep him in a pariah status, therefore reaching a social position that would not be legally permitted to him, and then plots to get his murderous revenge without listening to his daughter's plea for mercy, thus becoming responsible for his beloved daughter's tragic end.

The Jewish man's bloody desire for revenge on the Christian world and its system of law had been a traditional feature in the representation of the Jew in Christian culture for many centuries. As in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, this thirst for revenge eventually backfires on the Jew, ending in

disaster. But the new element added to this Shylock-like figure is the previous concealment of the man's Jewishness, his *marrano* features, so similar, in American terms, to the mulatto experience of "passing," with its corollary of momentary worldly success. In his study on whites and blacks in American literature and the "dialectics of identity," Alessandro Portelli defines "passing" as "an attempt to extend social mobility to those who are excluded by it, breaking through the rigidity of the caste."¹⁰ As a matter of fact, it is only by "passing" as a Christian that the Jew Diégarias could achieve his higher social position; the loss of all his rights and privileges, as a consequence of the public disclosure of his religious identity as a Jew and of the *limpieza de sangre*, or purity of blood, statutes of Catholic Spain (which, by the way, were still valid in the country until 1865), both confirms and denounces a condition of social discrimination, powerfully represented in this play by Séjour.

Another difference from Shakespeare's character, besides the Jew's tender affection for his daughter (which plays a major role here while lacking in Shylock), is thematically related to the theme of "passing." There is a strong revolutionary drive in Diégarias's desire for revenge upon the king. Such a revolutionary element, doubly motivated in personal and universal terms, finds its first expression in the play in a moving speech made by Diégarias to his daughter, after the loss of all his rights due to the disclosure of his Jewish identity, when he explains to her that a country with such a system of law cannot be considered a real home: "Today, we spoke of country, you / And I . . . / What folly is it to discuss / Such things! Is there a fatherland [*patrie*] for those / Who have no rights?"¹¹ Later, he announces to the sovereign the coming revolution in his reign as the "rightful wrath" of the "sovereign people [...] burning with rage" and stresses that all this has been made possible by a Jew ("A Jew / Has smashed the throne for all who follow you").¹² In his last speech to the king, Diégarias, the Jew, denounces his mother country, in which there are children who are loved tenderly and others that are loathed by their "mother."¹³ Here one can hear the voice of protest against discrimination that characterized Séjour's work from the very beginning.

Apart from the rather anachronistic, and yet meaningful, "republican rhetoric"¹⁴ of the final political pronouncements against the king, in this play the verisimilitude of the dramatic situation is historically well sustained, since the obsessive image of the pseudo-Christian Jew lurking invisibly in Christian society was quite present in Spanish Catholic concerns, at the time in which the drama is set (and even more so after the 1492 Jewish expulsion from Spain, only a few years later). But for the playwright's contemporary audience there was another reason for interest. The image of a secularized outsider, with a different religious tradition, concealing his identity and dangerously creeping into their world, was an apt description of the way in which the

social-climbing figure of the Jew—the traditional European insider/outsider “other”—was being perceived by many, in nineteenth-century European society after Jewish emancipation. This figure, now dressed in modern clothes, and arousing mixed feelings of embarrassment, fear, and envy, mingled with partial sympathy in liberal minds, was embodied by *Diégarias*.

As for the young Creole writer living in France, who had started his literary career by publishing in Paris a powerful story denouncing a mulatto’s tragic plight in a colonial plantation across the ocean, there were probably other motivations at work in the choice of subject matter for his first play. By writing about a man who had to disguise himself and conceal his identity in order not to be deprived of his human rights (love) and civil rights (office), and by denouncing the tragic destiny of a mixed-identity daughter, whose fate depended on invisible biologically and socially constructed differences, Séjour was showing the revolutionary and disrupting consequences resulting from unjust laws. In this way, through the call for justice of a persecuted Jew, compelled to hide his identity in order to be treated as a citizen and an equal human being, he was indirectly dealing with the predicament of his fellow Creole brothers back home in Louisiana, whose situation was becoming increasingly precarious and discriminated in antebellum Louisiana;¹⁵ he could do it effectively by way of allusion, without exposing himself too openly.¹⁶ All this could be framed within the classical structure of a tragedy of revenge, set in a distant past, bringing disaster to all characters on stage, while making the innocent mixed-origin girl the main victim. Although the historical period and the settings were quite different, some of the main themes and ingredients were strikingly similar to “Le Mulâtre”: an unjust society marred by racial/religious discrimination, a father hiding his secret identity (for socially motivated reasons), revenge as a procrastinated revolutionary response, which brings personal disaster upon all actors in a world where borderline differences of race and religion could come to tragic ends.

POET, PLAYWRIGHT, AND DOUBLE ENDINGS IN 1859

IN 1859, FIFTEEN YEARS after his first play, Victor Séjour was well known in the French literary scene and at the height of his success as a playwright. He was already the author of ten plays, which had been staged at the Théâtre Français, Théâtre Impérial de l’Odéon, Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, Théâtre des Variétés, and Théâtre de l’Ambigu-Comique of Paris. In a new work, published the following year, one can find a list of his previous plays and of the theaters where they were staged up to 1859.¹ In the list, eight of his plays are defined as dramas (*drame*), and two as comedies (*comédie*). The first of his dramatic plays in the list is *Diégarias*, the second is *La Chute de Séjan* (The fall of Séjanus) (1849), still being performed at the Théâtre Français, temporarily renamed Théâtre de la République, five years later.² Both plays are verse dramas.

Séjour’s initial choice of versification in dramatic writing stems from the fact that he had started his career as a poet, when still a student in New Orleans,³ and that even in Paris it was the success of a poem that had helped him enter the Parisian literary world and be introduced to several important writers, such as the playwright Émile Augier and Alexandre Dumas. That poem, “Le Retour de Napoléon,” written in 1841 in celebration of the return of Napoleon’s body from the island of Saint Helena for its interment at Les Invalides, was a highly nationalistic, heroic-elegiac ode expressing his identification with imperial France and his admiration for Napoleon I. “Le Retour de Napoléon” was later “crowned” by its inclusion in *Les Cenelles: Choix de poésies indigènes* (The holly berries: a choice of indigenous poetry, 1845), the collection edited by the Creole writer Armand Lanusse, containing eighty-five poems in French by seventeen free Creoles of color of New Orleans, which is now acknowledged as the first African American poetry anthology published in the United States.⁴ In his study on black American writers in France, *From Harlem to Paris*, Michel Fabre wonders who in

America or France is aware that “the first black American literary school was created in New Orleans by [French-speaking] free people of color.”⁵ This remark was made in 1991, and, although knowledge of the phenomenon has increased since then, the importance of this cultural reality has not yet received the attention it deserves within the cultural history of the United States, if we consider the few passing lines devoted to it, even in a contemporary canonical anthology like the meritorious *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*.⁶ What is particularly missing is a reflection on the pioneering role played by this elite French-speaking group of free people of color, based in New Orleans, who were avant-garde in the experience of black American emancipation, and an analysis of the reasons which made that possible. The point is that since the early eighteenth century in French Louisiana, despite intermittent contrary laws, the practice of so-called miscegenation, that is of interracial unions, was widespread; and the number of mixed-race people had further increased after the Haitian Revolution with the arrival in the Orleans Territory of French-speaking émigrés (such as Séjour’s father) from the former French colony of Saint-Domingue. Like all persecuted minority groups that have partially succeeded, but are still from time to time the object of restrictive laws and prejudice, these “free people of color” or *gens de couleur libres* (a legal definition in antebellum Louisiana),⁷ mostly living in the French Quarter and the neighboring quarter of the city, although leading a rich cultural life and being economically rather prosperous, yet felt the insecurity of their condition in their native country and the strong attraction of their spiritual home: France. Quite a few of the poets included in the anthology of “indigenous poems,” *Les Cenelles*, such as Haitian descendant Camille Thierry (the second main contributor to the collection after Lanousse) and Victor Séjour, had left New Orleans for France in the 1830s, when Louisiana became too restrictive and “harsh” for free people of color, as “harsh” as the thorny environment in whose midst the indigenous holly berries evoked in the collection’s title (and shown in its front page illustration) had grown.

In the more liberal atmosphere of Paris, Alexandre Dumas *père* (1802–1870), a major figure in the French Romantic movement, was himself *un homme de couleur*. The author of *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (*The Three Musketeers*) (1844) was, in fact, one-fourth black, the son of a French woman and of a mixed-race Napoleonic general from Saint-Domingue, himself the illegitimate son of a French-born Saint-Domingue planter (who was a marquis) and of a plantation slave of Afro-Caribbean ancestry (from whom Alexandre’s father took his surname Dumas). Yet, despite some underlying, repressed racism made particularly manifest in caricatures,⁸ Alexandre Dumas *père* had become a leading literary figure in France. And that “dazzling



3.1. Nadar (Gaspard-Félix Tournachon), photograph of Alexandre Dumas, *père*, November 1855. Salted paper print. Wikimedia Commons.

example” showed that in France black literary merit could be recognized, so that this writer’s figure exerted a “magnetic appeal” on all black American writers, particularly the French-speaking, though not exclusively.⁹

After Séjour’s success in literary circles with his poem celebrating Napoleon I, one can imagine his satisfaction in becoming on friendly terms with Dumas, and we can understand why a decade later he dedicated one of his most important plays to this writer. Most of the poems in *Les Cenelles* (published in 1845, one year after *Les Trois Mousquetaires*) were inspired by French Romantic themes or by the classics, and dealt mainly with private emotions. On the whole, a spirit of graciousness and amiability characterized all of Armand Lanusse’s editing, as one can see from the poetic motto printed on the cover, and by the courteous dedication to the Louisianan fair sex, “Au beau sexe Louisianais.”¹⁰ In this context, Séjour’s long poem of 1841 “Le Retour de Napoléon” stood out for its heroic and grandiose spirit and its connection with real historical events.

Such were the literary beginnings of this American-born young man, destined to become the most prominent expatriate from New Orleans of his generation, a multi-identity man who, in his twenties, had already accomplished the following literary achievements: in 1837, at the age of twenty, soon after his arrival in Paris, the publication of the impressive short story “Le Mulâtre” for the French abolitionist paper *La Revue des colonies*; in

1841, at age twenty-four, the writing of the long poem “Le Retour de Napoléon,” a success that opened the doors of the Parisian literary world for him; and in 1844, at twenty-seven, the staging of his first verse drama *Diégarias* at the prestigious Théâtre Français in Paris. In the two years following these first literary steps, both the country of his origins and his country of election would express their admiration for the young man, still in his twenties, who was beginning to shine in a variety of literary genres. In 1845, through his appearance in the anthology of poetry by free Creoles of color from New Orleans, he was keeping his links with the “indigenous” world he came from, and his fellow writers across the ocean were underlining their connection with him and Paris. Meanwhile, in 1846, when he was not yet thirty years old, the French Playwrights Association welcomed him as a member, officially recognizing him at home on the Parisian stage. It was the beginning of a great career that would last for over twenty-five years.



The heroic spirit and engagement with political themes that one detects in “Le Retour de Napoléon” would characterize Séjour’s work in the following years. We can notice the presence of both elements in the first of his dramas in verse, *Diégarias*. We find them in his second one as well. *La Chute de Séjan*, a “Roman play,” set at the time of Emperor Tiberius, enacts the attempted intrigue of one of the Emperor’s officers, ambitious Séjan (Latin Sejanus), whose career and fall, in the context of a corrupt imperial city, first narrated by Tacitus, had already inspired Ben Jonson’s tragedy *Sejanus*.¹¹ The play was written one year after the revolutionary events of 1848, which in France had brought about the end of Louis Philippe’s constitutional monarchy (1830–1848), followed, after the king’s abdication, by a provisional republican government, known as the French Second Republic. In December of that year Prince Louis Napoléon Bonaparte was elected president (after a coup, he would proclaim himself president for life in 1851 and Emperor Napoleon III in 1852). *La Chute de Séjan*, which was performed at the Théâtre de la République (the new name temporarily given to the Théâtre Français), opening on August 21, 1849, and dedicated to theater critic Jules Janin,¹² has “a touch of 1848 in it, for history does not record red flags in ancient Rome,” while, as remarked by Charles Edwards O’Neill, they appear in Séjour’s Rome, in the words by which Séjan incites the plotters against the imperial tyrant: “There’ll be fear, terror, disorder everywhere! / The nobles in their palaces, the beggars in their rags, / A world in agitation, under folds of red flags”; “And in that Rome we will boldly sculpt, / To draw out the form, each with his velleity, / Of the statue virgin whose name is liberty” (act 2,

scene 3).¹³ Those red flags, reminding one of the red flags chosen as an emblem by the more radical part of the Parisian revolution of 1848, and the liberty statue in virginal shapes, actually have a distinctively modern flavor, reminiscent of the revolutionary wave that from France, under the banner of *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, had spread to many European lands in 1848, including contemporary Rome.

Although highly praised by critics, *La Chute de Séjan* ran for only nine performances (in August–September 1849).¹⁴ After it, all of Séjour's abundant dramatic production would be in prose. Yet, though no longer adopting its initial verse form and being staged in more popular theaters, most of Séjour's subsequent theatrical works would keep the same heroic spirit and poetry. His high literary ideals became even more manifest in the ambitious choice of his next play, his first five-act drama in prose, *Richard III* (1852), explicitly inspired, this time, not by Ben Jonson, but by Shakespeare himself, and dedicated to his father.¹⁵ In the first part of the dedication, Séjour expresses his great admiration for Shakespeare, but claims that he did not want to translate Shakespeare, since “to translate is to diminish. I have thought that by standing at his feet I would best make his greatness come out in all its power.”¹⁶ Shakespeare is compared, by Romantic standards, to a great force of nature, attractive like the sea, to be confronted by plunging “head down into its waves” (*tête baissée dans ses flots*), so as to test one’s strength, but, Séjour adds, with the realistic sense of one’s weakness. In dedicating his drama to his father, the playwright finally acknowledges that it is “the rectitude and the noble spirit” (*la rectitude et l’hauteur d’esprit*) of his father that he has tried to bring into his own art.

Richard III, the first drama of Séjour’s in the 1850s, matched the challenge of such high standards, being crowned as a success by both contemporary critics and audiences. This work was also his first one performed at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, which, with its 2000 seats, was among the biggest playhouses of the city, on the grand Boulevard Saint-Martin.¹⁷ It was a triumph, which lasted for nearly three months, from its opening night on September 28, 1852, until its closing in mid-December. The critics applauded “the daring attempt of this young poet who,” as written by a reviewer of *Le Théâtre*, Édouard Plouvier, in his description of the first night, “is among the most beloved of the younger literary generation.” Another critic of *Le Théâtre*, Théophile Deschamps, who had witnessed the dress rehearsal, even judged the play “one of the most splendid expressions of modern dramatic literature.” In November, after the play’s sixtieth performance, Plouvier commented that it was “rare that a truly literary drama has so brilliant a career,” and stressed the happy, and unusual, balance of action and style in the play.¹⁸ The play is also memorable in Séjour’s career for the presence of a famous actor, Pierre

Ligier, in the sinister protagonist's role and for the participation of Lia Félix, a young actress who would act in many other plays of his. She played the last surviving child of the late King Edward IV, Princess Elisabeth, whom Richard tried to have killed through an alchemist. Lia was the sister of the famous actress Rachel. As for *Richard III*, the play not only performed successfully but also sold in book form, like most of Séjour's plays, this time in a beautiful deluxe edition in thin satin paper, for two francs. The writer's fame immediately reached other countries. On December 9, *Richard III* by Victor Séjour was staged in Brussels, at the Grand Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie; and a new edition of the play, with a new, more personal dedication to the author's father, was also printed by a local publisher.¹⁹ The play was immediately translated into Italian, that same year.²⁰ This was the first translation of his work into another language; and it was the beginning of a connection to that country, which would develop in the course of his career.

By 1852 the thirty-five-year-old expatriate playwright from New Orleans had reached a position of visibility in the French literary world and was beginning to also be known outside the borders of his adopted country. By 1859, Séjour had produced five more plays in prose and a three-act comedy, *L'Argent du diable* (The devil's money) (1854), written with Adolphe Jaime fils, and performed for two weeks at the Théâtre des Variétés. This light work, "promptly staged in Brussels," was even published in Italian only one year later (translated by Luigi Enrico Tettoni, who would also translate another play of his in the following years).²¹ For fifty cents one could read his plays, such as his two recent successes set in two different Italian settings, *Les Noces vénitaines* (The Venetian wedding) (1855) and *Le Fils de la nuit* (The son of the night) (1856), both published, like most of his works, in Paris by Michel Lévy Frères.²² Both these dramas were performed, like *Richard III*, at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, where they ran for several months; both of them were soon translated into English, starting from *Le Fils de la nuit*, whose American adaptation by Charles Gayler was performed at the Broadway Theater, in New York, in 1857.²³

Le Fils de la nuit even had the honor of being dedicated to, and inspired by, Alexandre Dumas.²⁴ The play is set in sixteenth-century Naples, then under Spanish rule, and on the Mediterranean sea along its coast. The drama's title refers to Ben-Leil, its main character, a man of unknown noble origins, the son of the Duke of Scylla, who as an infant was kidnapped and secretly switched with Pietro, the illegitimate son of his nurse. This woman, named Ghébel, was the caretaker of a chapel where the noble baby had been hidden in the first months of his life because his parents, the Duke and the noblewoman Giulia Favelli, were not yet married. Ghébel (played by the actress Marie Laurent), had disloyally exchanged the babies so as to secure



3.2. Poster for the 101st performance of Victor Séjour's *Le Fils de la nuit*, Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, Paris, 1856. Performances in Paris ran for one hundred eighty-five nights. From this poster one can see how many people, and features, were involved and advertised. The theater manager, the actors, the plot, with its major episodes represented in the drawings, the famous tempest scene of the sixth tableau, the music and the ballet, the costumes, the staging, and the stage machinery are here given great visibility next to the play's author. Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

her child a better destiny: she had given her own son to the noblewoman (when she had come to take him back), while the noblewoman's son, Ben-Leil, originally named Donato, had been given away to a pirate. The Mediterranean pirates had eventually saved and adopted the child, and since his "rebirth" had happened in the middle of the night, they had named him Ben-Leil, Arabic for "son of night." All this, plus the killing of the child's father in a political uprising for liberty against Spanish power, is dramatized in the play's prologue. The following acts are set twenty years later and show the consequences of the exchange. Ben-Leil has become the pirates' daring leader, while the caretaker's son, now called Donato, leads a wealthy and corrupt life in Naples. In a series of dramatic actions and confrontations taking place on three successive days, we follow Ben-Leil's landing ashore in disguise; his falling in love with a beautiful girl; the confrontation on the sea of the two

men exchanged in infancy, with Ben-Leil's ship pursued by Donato's in a violent storm; the struggle between the two mothers, one of whom is responsible for the kidnapping of the other's child (a scene that partially anticipates a motif in *La Tireuse de cartes*); and the final agnition, with the revelation of the exchange. In the tragic ending of the play Ghébel, having put poison in the other mother's drink in order to kill her, inadvertently causes her own son's death. Like the father in *Diégarias*, she eventually cries in despair, "I have killed my child!"²⁵

The illustration in the published edition of *Le Fils de la nuit* shows a ship on a tempestuous sea. Contemporary reviewers of the performance, such as Théophile Gautier, expressed admiration for the complicated new theater machinery that created spectacular effects that even presented the protagonist's ship "on the backs of monstrous waves."²⁶ The play, praised by Gautier for being "at the same time a poem, a drama, and a ballet,"²⁷ was probably Séjour's greatest hit. It was so successful that it ran in Paris for half a year, from July 11, 1856, to January 1857. As enthusiastically reported by *Diogène* in March 1857, *Le Fils de la nuit* had 185 consecutive performances in Paris, an unprecedented figure in the journalist's opinion, and at the time of the article it was still being performed all over France, "with its material and actors," touring from Rouen to Amiens, Lyon, Bordeaux, Nantes, and all the other big cities, which all wanted to applaud "this amazing success" ("cet étourdissant succès").²⁸ A few years later, the play was still remembered in New Orleans as "one of the greatest successes of the French stage."²⁹ And in 1872, in Cincinnati, one could still read a passage of praise like this: "The finest piece of realistic stage mechanism ever produced is said to be that in Victor Séjour's drama, 'Le Fils de la nuit,' at the Gaîté, Paris. It shows the open sea, with stormy waves, occupying the whole depth of the stage. Then slowly advancing from the sides, pitching and rolling, a superb two-masted brig, which continues a stately course till the whole of its starboard side is in sight of the audience. The sails, yards, and indeed the whole of the gear, are represented with scrupulous exactitude."³⁰ In 1862, however, in Paris, a much less favorable critic, L. Félix Savard, would hold Séjour responsible for the "detestable influence that the ship of *Le Fils de la nuit* exerted on contemporary literature. All our evils come from there. The audience no longer listens, it looks; and stage directors have to continuously surpass themselves."³¹ Such was, for good or evil, Séjour's influence on French theater, in his contemporaries' perception.

Les Noces vénitiennes, a dramatic Romeo and Juliet-style story set in mid-sixteenth-century Venice, and inspired by Byron's historical tragedy *Marino Faliero*, was on stage at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin for two months in 1855, with its premiere on March 8 (one year before *Le Fils de la nuit*).³²

Its author's growing reputation abroad led to its immediate translation into Italian, that same year.³³ It was also transformed into an Italian melodrama, *Morosina o l'ultimo de' Falieri*, first performed in Naples at the Teatro S. Carlo in 1860, and then staged at the Teatro alla Scala of Milan in 1862.³⁴ That was indeed a great honor: two very prestigious opera houses, the homes of Rossini's, Donizetti's, and Verdi's works, were welcoming a musical drama inspired by Séjour.

Four years after its first performance in 1859, *Les Noces vénitiennes* was also translated (or, as the text reads, "adapted from the French") into English, with a different, more exotic, and adventurous title, *The Outlaw of the Adriatic; or, The Female Spy and the Chief of the Ten*, by a publishing house on the Strand in London.³⁵ A note in the English text specifies that a version of the play was performed at the Royal Princess's in November 1859, under yet another different title, *The Master Passion*. All these versions show the fortune of the play. They also indicate that in being "transported" into English, the text was partially altered. Because the translator's name is not mentioned, nor any explanation given about who adapted the text from the French, while the printed author's name is still Séjour, it is possible either that the translation was by Séjour himself or, more likely, that he closely supervised it.³⁶ This is an important point. A comparison of the French original of 1855 with its English adaptation in 1859 reveals that, apart from some small and sometimes intriguing variations in the names of the characters,³⁷ and apart from a difference in the number of acts (three in the English edition instead of five), which does not affect the length of the text, there is indeed a very substantial change in the ending of the play. This change completely transforms the play's denouement and its moral conclusion.

In the French version, the conflict between fatherly love and the spirit of vengeance is fundamentally won by vengeance: in this version, the chief of the Venetian Council of the Ten (in 1553), Jean Orseolo, before dying, eventually blesses his daughter Camilla (in the French original called Albone), but he expresses his eternal hatred for her future husband and curses him for being a traitor to Venice and the son of his son's murderer (in Paris the two roles were played by Pierre Ligier and Lia Félix). In the English version, however, the last scene of the play is quite different. Instead of vengeance, we find forgiveness. After being blessed by her dying father, Orseolo's daughter Camilla implores him to bless her lover too, and succeeds in getting his pardon and blessing.³⁸ In its 1859 English version, hatred is subdued (as another character comments in an aside), and the play concludes with the triumph of forgiveness. The last words of the play by Orseolo are all love, repentance and spiritual illumination:

Orseolo. No more! At this supreme moment a ray of heaven's light illumines my soul, and by it do I behold the madness of my past life! I no longer loathe the memory of the dead! I no longer hate the living! You are, both of you, my children, and with my last breath I bless you *both!*—both! both! (*The Outlaw of the Adriatic*, act 3)³⁹

My original intention in writing about *Les Noces vénitaines* and its English version *The Outlaw of the Adriatic* was simply to show how important and appreciated Séjour was in 1859, so as to be able to evaluate one of his next plays, the one that actually induced me to study him, in its context within the playwright's career. But as it happens with any research, by going deeper into my studies, and into the texts, I have made a "discovery" that is indeed enlightening. The double ending (introduced either by Séjour himself or by an anonymous translator under his supervision, for the writer's authorship is openly acknowledged in this English version) shows the existence of a moral dilemma that the writer was exploring within many of his works, beginning from his first short story about the "tragic mulatto." Vengeance for past sins and suffering, particularly within the family and in political life, is a recurrent theme in Séjour. Should his characters' feelings of hatred, justified by other people's crimes, be put aside in the name of love? Should conflicts on stage result in tragedy, or should the writer provide a somehow harmonious solution, transforming tragedy into a happy ending or melodrama? Séjour seems to raise these questions for his audience, showing all the reasons for hatred and vengeance, showing all the reasons for love and forgiveness. This is the power of drama as a literary genre, that it presents different views without, apparently, any direct intervention by the writer. But then there comes the play's ending and this is when the author is obliged to put an end to this conflict of arguments. The decision about where to end, with what voice and intent, becomes essential. It is here that the writer cannot easily hide his face.

The practice of radically changing a play's ending was not new in playwriting, as another interesting episode of that same period shows. In 1859 another writer of mixed family origins then living in the United States, Dion Boucicault (1820–1890), the Irish-born dramatist (whose father was French and his mother Irish), wrote *The Octoroon; or, Life in Louisiana* (1859),⁴⁰ which opened in New York on December 6, 1859.⁴¹ The word "octoroon," a term the play made popular, is connected to what Werner Sollors has called the "Calculus of Color,"⁴² a scientifically and biologically based obsession with racial classification, particularly strong in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century culture. The identity-defining notion synthesized in that word can

be best described, in one of its innumerable shades of color description, by quoting a central passage from Boucicault's play. The girl Zoe, the "octo-roon" (the illegitimate daughter of a white Louisiana plantation owner and of his "quadroon," i.e., one-fourth black, slave), speaks to her beloved George,⁴³ explaining the impossibility of their love in internalized racial terms:

That—that is the ineffaceable curse of Cain. Of the blood that feeds my heart, one drop in eight is black—bright red as the rest may be, that one drop poisons all the flood; those seven bright drops give me love like yours—hope like yours—ambition like yours—life hung with passions like dew-drops on the morning-flowers; but the one black drop gives me despair, for I'm an unclean thing—forbidden by the laws—I'm an Octoroon!⁴⁴

If "one drop" of black blood, or, rather, of black ancestry, makes a person "unclean," and if this sort of classification and ideology are created by society's laws and internalized by the victim, one can understand why the *Octoroon*'s author had imagined a tragic denouement for his play. The "octoroon" girl, unable to cope with her plight and with a life without love, eventually commits suicide, and all the main characters then die together on stage in a steam vessel set on fire by the play's villain. This (immediately followed, and "compensated for," by the villain's murder at the hands of an Indian)⁴⁵ is the way the play ended in its 1859 American version, whose opening at the Winter Garden Theatre in New York in December of that year took place just three days after the execution of white abolitionist John Brown.

But when the play was brought to England, opening on November 18, 1861, audiences at the Adelphi Theatre on the Strand in London protested the work's tragic ending. They felt too affectionate toward the young heroine to see her die; the reality described was too harsh for them. After some resistance, in 1861 Boucicault was obliged to make a radical alteration in the play's ending. Although no law had changed in favor of black people or Creoles in pre-Civil War Louisiana, at least on stage the one-eighth—"black" girl was able to marry her white beloved, despite their ethnic differences. The "gulf" created by the law had disappeared. White-and-black miscegenation was happily possible. The destiny of the "tragic mulatto" could thus be turned into melodrama, a sweeter and more acceptable genre. We shall have to keep in mind these requested new endings and the artistic dilemmas experienced by writers around 1860, when discussing Séjour's next plays (particularly *La Tireuse de cartes*, whose premiere took place in Paris only a few days after the opening of Boucicault's drama of miscegenation in New York: a meaningful coincidence). Those were momentous times in the public debate about race, identity, and emancipation—on both sides of the Atlantic—and sensi-

tive playwrights had to grapple with those thorny themes and offer their controversial denouements, often not unrelated to their audience expectations.

Meanwhile Séjour's career was developing steadily, with a new play of his performed in Paris each year. In 1857, the year Flaubert published *Madame Bovary* and Baudelaire *Les Fleurs du mal* (both works were immediately prosecuted for obscenity), Séjour's new drama, *André Gérard*, was staged at the Théâtre Impérial de l'Odéon. Gérard is an engraver, and the work is presented in the dedication as a "most moral" play supporting the value of labor against idleness. Though arriving after the beginning of the play, Emperor Napoleon III and Empress Eugénie attended the eighth soirée and expressed "their complete satisfaction" to the director of the theater "in very flattering terms."⁴⁶ Their presence shows the playwright's growing public reputation. The play (whose title role was played by the famous actor Frédéric Lemaître), was dedicated to Achille Denis, literary critic and general secretary of the Opéra-Comique; with noble words, the author mentioned Shakespeare and Victor Hugo, "these sources of grandeur and truth," as his two masters, to be admired from below.⁴⁷ In that "magical" year for French literature, writers were expressing their devotion to the art of writing.⁴⁸ Performances at the Odéon lasted over one month, in April–May, with contrasting reviews, but Séjour's growing fortune, and the rapidity of cultural exchanges across national borders, are testified to by the play's immediate translation into Italian that same year.⁴⁹

In March 1858, less than one year later, *Le Martyre du cœur* (The martyrdom of the heart), a new play by Séjour, co-authored with Jules Brésil, was staged at the Ambigu-Comique, another theater on the Boulevard Saint-Martin, recently renovated.⁵⁰ This melodrama, set in Paris in the early nineteenth century, tells the complicated love story and marriage of an honest worker (Pierre Laborie, once again an engraver) with the daughter of a nobleman who had gone to the Antilles from France to escape the Revolution. The cast includes a character that deserves special attention. In fact, this is the only play by Séjour "with a major black role; Placide, a Jamaican black, who speaks French with an English accent, is the alert and faithful retainer, to whom the dying émigré head of a family had entrusted the full administration of his Jamaican property. . . . Placide is the most balanced, sensible personage in the whole play. His lines are clever and humorous, and the English accent must have made the audience listen closely and laugh sympathetically."⁵¹ That such an honest, intelligent, and ironic agent and commentator of the events should be a Jamaican black seems to be the sign of a "racial message" that the New Orleans-born author was trying to send at a time when the condition of blacks in America was increasingly explosive and the center of public concern. Significantly, however, Séjour's black man is from



3.3. Illustration from the cover page of Victor Séjour's *Le Martyre du cœur*. Théâtre Contemporaine Illustré. Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1858. Drawing by H. Breval, engraved by Auguste Belin. The figure standing with crossed arms in the background is Placide, a Jamaican black man who plays a most positive role in the play. Cliché Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München.

Jamaica. As in his first story, "Le Mulâtre," the writer seems to be more at ease in placing his racial message in a West Indies setting rather than in his native New Orleans—in this case the French setting of the play increases the dislocation even further. It is as if he felt it necessary to face the painful issue on more neutral ground, by going back to the world of the previous generation, his father's origins in colonial Saint-Domingue, in order to connect himself to those sources and at the same time create some distance.

Séjour's success and high reputation in 1858 is confirmed in a satirical monthly, *Journal amusant*, of October 1858, in a humorous article called "Le Jardin des racines françaises" (The garden of French roots [and French Racines]) by Alexandre Flan.⁵² In this witty review, the journalist invites his readers to enter the garden of French literary roots, "the Eden of literature and the arts, full of flowers, of fruits . . . and stars,—the stars of the Légion d'honneur."⁵³ After listing all those "stars" in an alphabetical order from A to Z and giving a definition for each one in rhymed couplets, the journalist remarks: "And yet, what roots have we omitted in that quick run."⁵⁴ He

therefore decides to add a further shorter list of omitted stars, that is artistic “roots” that have not yet entered the “Garden of Eden” of the Légion d’honneur. And here, where names no longer appear in alphabetical order, in a second position after Sainte-Beuve one can read Séjour’s, and among those that follow such figures as Jaime fils, Cham the caricaturist, Lamartine and Flaubert! Each omitted artist is granted a definition connected with his reputation and name, and this is how our playwright is defined: “Séjour (Victor),—victorious.” Less than two years later, this “victory” would be formally acknowledged, and he, a Creole writer from New Orleans, would officially enter that French Garden of Eden.

In 1859, the climax of Séjour’s career, the playwright put on stage three very different works. The year started for him with the production of *Les Grands vassaux* (The great vassals), which opened at the Théâtre Impérial de l’Odéon in February.⁵⁵ This historical play, in the cloak-and-dagger style, was set in France in the late fifteenth century. It tried to cover three different historical periods in the fight of King Louis XI against his rebellious vassals, but received mixed reviews, including the insinuation that Séjour had made the king’s character too positive simply to suit Pierre Ligier, the great actor who was playing that part. When the play was printed, Séjour added a short introduction to defend himself, claiming that despite any possible error of his there was, on the contrary, “an ardent search for truth, a serious preoccupation with art,” and that he had tried to create a drama of synthesis (*drame synthétique*), whose dramatic interest would result “from an epochal whole seen through the thought and action of one man.”⁵⁶ This was his noble ideal, but the staging was muddled, and the play ran for less than one month. No other play by Séjour would be produced at the Odéon.

However, this was only the beginning of a year of great productivity and intense public involvement for the playwright.

[II]

IN THE AGE OF EMANCIPATIONS:
THE MORTARA CASE AND
A WRITER'S CONSCIENCE

[4]

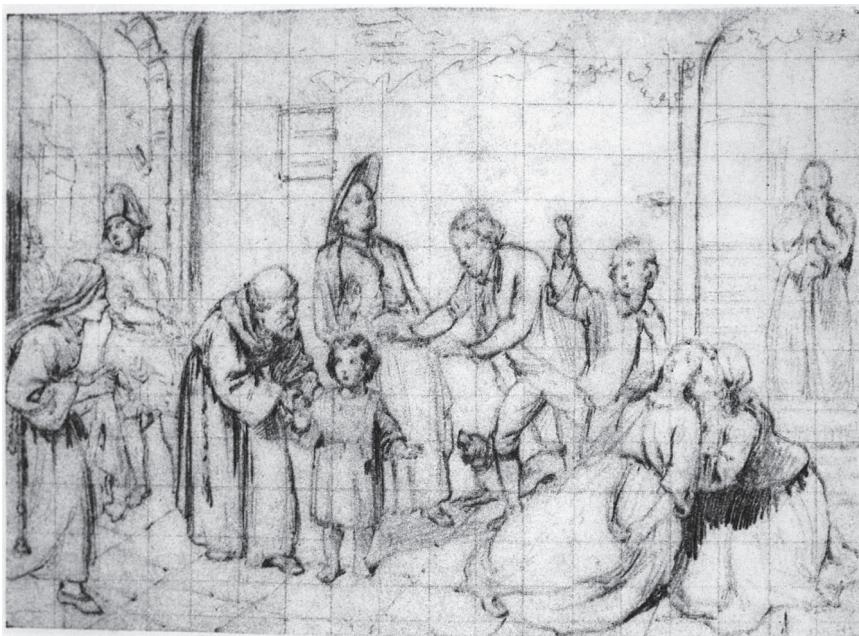
LA TIREUSE DE CARTES: THE MORTARA CASE AND ARTISTIC PASSING

IN 1858–1859 SÉJOUR WAS at the height of his success with both critics and audiences (a fortune that would soon be sealed in August 1860 by his receiving the French Légion d'honneur, under the category of “Belles Lettres”).¹ It was then that Séjour, like all public opinion, became familiar with an event that had instigated an international scandal: the kidnapping of a Jewish child by the Inquisition. The abduction in 1858 of a Jewish boy who had been secretly baptized had taken place in the Papal States, center of the Catholic world—before the unification of Italy. Inspired by the case, Séjour was moved to write *La Tireuse de cartes* (1859), a play in prose written in French and published in 1860. Translated into English by Norman R. Shapiro as *The Fortune-Teller* in 2002 (with an introduction by M. Lynn Weiss),² the play sheds new light, from the perspective of an American multilingual literature, on those climactic years around the middle of the nineteenth century, so fertile in literary masterpieces and so close to the wound of the American Civil War, where the long-repressed issue of slavery would explode and come to the forefront of public attention. In 1859, two years before the start of the Civil War, Séjour spoke out in support of the kidnapped child’s family, which was fighting to have the child returned. In taking a public stand, Séjour was in a discreet and metaphorical way also carrying on a battle in support of his Creole and African American mixed-blood brothers back home in the United States as well, in what I would call a procedure of artistic passing.³ The partial identification with the Jewish cause by an American Creole, Catholic writer in Paris is one of the issues that we shall explore in the analysis of Séjour’s play.

The scandal that inspired *La Tireuse de cartes* is less known than the Dreyfus affair in France, but it too galvanized liberal public opinion nearly four decades earlier. It became internationally known, on both sides of the Atlantic, as the Mortara case (or, the Mortara affair; in Italian, “il caso Mortara”).⁴

On June 24, 1858, Edgardo Mortara, a six-year-old Jewish child living with his family in Bologna, was *legally* abducted from his home and from his desperate family by the guards of Pope Pius IX (r. 1846–1878), upon an order of the local Inquisitor (Father Pier Gaetano Feletti). What justified the abduction from the papal authority's point of view was a piece of news that had reached the Bologna Inquisition—that a few years earlier, when he was less than two years old, Edgardo had been secretly baptized by the family's maid (Anna Morisi, then a girl in her teens and the only witness of the assumed fact), without the child's parents ever knowing about it. The Code of Canon Law, then the law of the state, did not allow a "Catholic" child—no matter how he or she had become Catholic—to remain in a non-Catholic family. Therefore, the child had to be removed from the family and brought up in Christian religious institutions, in total separation from his original family. The Mortara boy was immediately brought to the House of Catechumens in Rome, where new converts, or people to be converted, were instructed on their new religion. Bologna was then part of the Papal States, which extended in the central regions of Italy from Bologna and Ferrara in the north to Rome and its Latium countryside in the south. Italy was not yet a unified nation, but was in the middle of its Risorgimento (Resurgence), its decades-long struggle for unity and independence, which would triumph first in 1861, with the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy and of King Victor Emmanuel II (Vittorio Emanuele II, up to then King of Piedmont-Sardinia) as the first King of Italy (by a parliament in Turin, old capital of Piedmont-Sardinia, in which there were representatives from all parts of Italy, except for Venice [until 1866] and Rome [until 1870]). The final triumph came in 1870, with the conquest of Rome by the Italian troops. The new nation's capital would soon be moved to the former papal city.

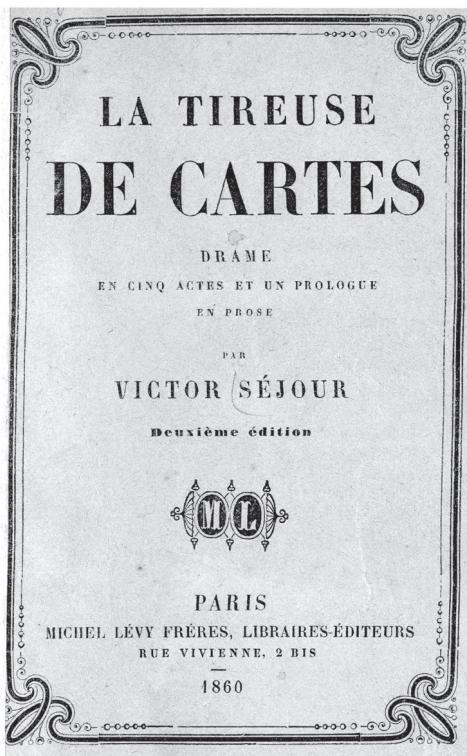
Abductions of secretly baptized Jewish children had been happening for centuries in the Papal States.⁵ Yet this time a series of factors did not allow the event to pass unnoticed. First of all, there was the family's reaction, which was strong and determined in trying to have the child back. In particular, the child's father devoted the following months going from authority to authority, and from place to place, in search of support for his cause. A second factor was the culture and spirit of the age. By 1858, the notion of freedom of religion as one of the basic rights of the individual had become an essential part of political culture, not only in America but for the liberal public in Europe as well. A child's kidnapping for religious reasons created a scandal. Besides, in Italy the fight for liberal values was part of the ongoing political fight for independence. The kidnapping of a Jewish child by the Pope's guards, and the Pope's firm refusal to give the child back to his family, demonstrated the violence of an absolute, tyrannical state that did not believe in citizens'



4.1. Moritz Daniel Oppenheim, preparatory sketch for his painting *Der Raub des Mortara-Kindes* (The kidnapping of the Mortara child), ca. 1862. Reproduced in Moritz Oppenheim's memoirs, *Erinnerungen*. Edited by Alfred Oppenheim. Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Verlags-Anstalt, 1924, p. 40. Photo: Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt.

equality and liberal values, at a time when the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, which was leading the Italian wars of independence, had already granted religious freedom to its Protestant and Jewish minorities in 1848. That same year the cause of Jewish emancipation had been strongly advocated by the Turin-born politician and writer Massimo d'Azeglio in his influential pamphlet "Dell'emancipazione civile degli Israeliti" (On the civil emancipation of the Israelites).⁶

When the kidnapping took place in 1858, the news of the liberticidal incident soon became a national and international scandal, arousing public demonstrations and covered by the press daily for months, in both Europe and America. In December 1858, for example, there were more than twenty articles published on the affair in the *New York Times*.⁷ Some of the most important political leaders and heads of state of the time—from Emperor Napoleon III in France to the Prime Minister of Piedmont-Sardinia, Count



4.2. Victor Séjour, *La Tireuse de cartes*, cover of the play's second edition. Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1860. Cliché Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München.

Camillo Benso di Cavour—were involved in diplomatic initiatives for the restoration of what the majority of liberal public opinion considered to be the natural rights of the child and his family. Even in the United States, President James Buchanan faced Jewish American requests for expressing “moral censorship” of the Pope over the Jewish child’s abduction.⁸

The remarkable attention that the Mortara affair aroused is demonstrated in legal and political documents of the time and in the contemporary press, reporting the public debates and protests in various countries. This interest is also confirmed by the series of literary and nonliterary texts immediately inspired by the affair in France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, and the United States by 1861;⁹ while the touching painting of the kidnapping by the German Jewish painter Moritz David Oppenheim in 1862 testifies to the persistent memory across national borders.¹⁰ *La Tireuse de cartes*, the play by Victor Séjour, staged in France in 1859, was the first among the plays written on the occasion (earlier poetic reactions by Jewish American women writers are documented in the appendixes).¹¹

It is very interesting to see how Séjour, a member of another persecuted minority, reacted to the case and transformed his personal response into an artistic work and public event of great resonance. The Emperor Napoleon III himself attended the Paris premiere in December 1859. It seems that Napoleon's private secretary and *chef de cabinet* (chief of staff), Jean-François Constant Mocquard (1791–1864, in that post from 1848 to 1864), collaborated in writing the text (although this is not acknowledged by Séjour in the printed version). Mocquard's participation, says Charles Edwards O'Neill, "was an ill kept secret," and it was even rumored by the French contemporary press that "the idea had been his to start with."¹² This adds "to the political implications of the play."¹³ It shows the indignation aroused by the kidnapping of Edgardo even in a Catholic country like France. It also suggests the political involvement of the French government in such an affair. Although France was the Pope's ally (its troops were protecting the Pontifical State at that time), it is by now well known and documented that the French Ambassador to the Holy See in Rome, the Duke Antoine de Gramont, took several initiatives, including a written note of complaint and a meeting with the Vatican Secretary of State. The Ambassador even had an outspoken meeting with the Pontiff himself, in an attempt at solving the case in a liberal way.¹⁴ In 1858–1859 French public opinion was outraged; even the French Catholic hierarchy did not support the Pope (a French priest, the abbé Delacouture, published a book against the abduction, and most Catholic newspapers did not favor the Pope's refusal to return the child to his family). French authorities could not be indifferent, for a variety of political reasons. Quite the contrary, the presence of Napoleon III and Empress Eugénie on opening night on December 22, 1859, which was known in advance, was interpreted as a sign that the play was promoted by the French court itself. And that "heightened the political significance of the play—and drew the curious theater-goers in greater numbers."¹⁵ According to *Le Monde illustré*, on that first night "public curiosity reached such proportions that it would make M. Marc Fournier [the Porte-Saint-Martin's director] wish he had for a theatre that night the Champ-de-Mars or at least the Palais de l'Industrie."¹⁶ The play, which another contemporary critic, Paul de Saint-Victor, immediately hailed as "the most beautiful success that M. Victor Séjour has achieved,"¹⁷ was a great hit, which attracted large audiences and ran in Paris for over three months until the beginning of April 1860, with an estimated attendance of 100,000 theater-goers. No subsequent play of his would last so long on stage. No other play of his would create such controversy.

A CATHOLIC PLAYWRIGHT AND HIS PLEA
TO THE POPE

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE still unsolved *cause célèbre* and *La Tireuse de cartes* is documented not only by the reports of the government-appointed Examining Commission for censorship of Paris theaters, which was under the responsibility of the Minister of State of the Household of the Emperor,¹ but also explicitly declared in the powerful preface Séjour himself wrote for the play in its published edition of 1860.² The publication of an introduction along with the play was an exception in his vast production of works, only anticipated by the much shorter introduction added, for different reasons, as we saw, to the printed version of his previous play, *Les Grands vassaux*. That exception indicates the controversial context in which the text appeared. In fact, the three-page preface is explained by the writer as a response to two harsh attacks he had received in the press after the performance, in articles (published in *L'Ami de la religion* and *La Gazette de France*) where his work had been defined, he reports, as “diabolical,” or, at best, “insignificant.”³ Séjour’s passionate prefatory explanation, signed with his initials (“V. S.”), shows the playwright’s strong civil commitment and active participation in the debate about the kidnapping, which was still quite heated in France, as elsewhere in the western world, over one year after the beginning of the case.

The interest of French liberals in the revolutionary events in Italy is well testified by Alexandre Dumas, *père*, who, after first meeting Garibaldi in Turin in 1859, in 1860 joined him in Sicily in support of his landing there with his thousand Red Shirts to free the island from foreign rule. At the end of that year, the same in which Séjour’s play inspired by the Mortara affair came out in print, Dumas also published *Mémoires de Garibaldi* (1860), a semi-fictional “autobiography” about the charismatic “Hero of Two Worlds,” “translated” from Garibaldi’s original manuscript, as the subtitle reads.⁴ One year earlier, a first version of Garibaldi’s memoirs, *The Life of General*



5.1. “General Giuseppe Garibaldi.” *Harper’s Weekly*. June 9, 1860, p. 1. Full front page illustration. In the summer of 1860, Garibaldi’s conquest of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (comprising Sicily, Naples, and most of Southern Italy) paved the way to the unification of the Italian peninsula under King Victor Emmanuel in 1861. Several illustrations related to the event were published in this issue of *Harper’s Weekly*.

Garibaldi: Written by Himself (1859), had come out in New York, in a translation by Garibaldi’s friend Theodore Dwight, author of *Roman Republic of 1849* (1851), who had met Garibaldi in 1850–1851, when the Italian general lived in the United States after the bloody end of the Roman Republic.⁵ “American newspapers followed the Italian war closely,” as documented extensively by Dennis Berthold’s study *American Risorgimento* (2009) and by Daniele Fiorentino (2013), and the “cult of Garibaldi” was widespread on both sides of the Atlantic, as the proliferation of his memoirs in various languages shows.⁶

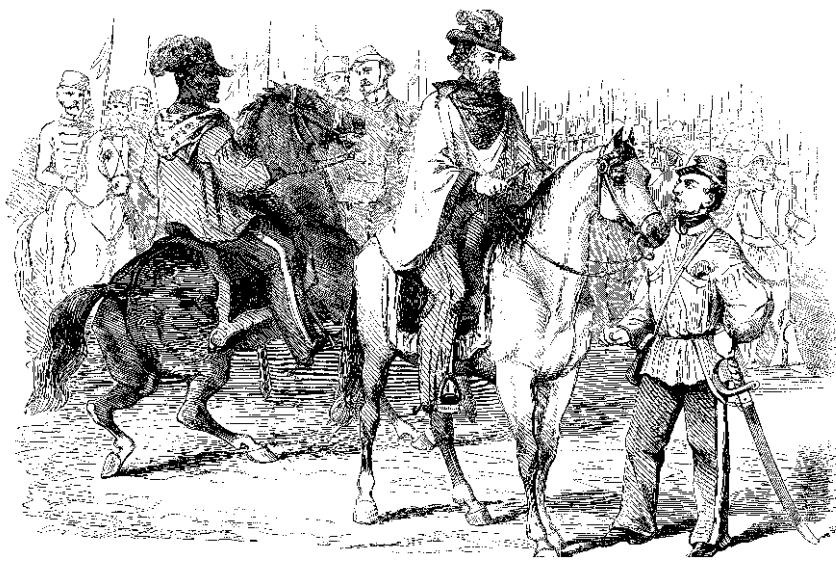
It is no coincidence that Dumas’s book was published in Paris by the same publishing house as most of Séjour’s plays, Michel Lévy Frères (who had also just published Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*): a discovery that increases our interest in the role of these publishers important in Séjour’s fortune. Dumas, who was greatly admired by Séjour and also came from a mixed race background, devoted half of his book based on Garibaldi’s manuscripts (all its second part) to “The Fight for the Roman Republic,” that is, to Mazzini and Garibaldi’s attempt, in 1848–1849, to establish a republic in Rome to replace

the Pope's temporal power. The last chapter of this historical memoir, entitled "End of a Great Dream," describes the defeat of this revolutionary episode in July 1849. It also mentions the death in battle of a young black man from South America (Montevideo, Uruguay), Andrés Aguiar (also spelt Andreas Aguyar, or Andrea Aghiar),⁷ a faithful palfrenier-lieutenant, whose elegant figure riding proudly on a black horse next to his friend Garibaldi on a white horse can be admired in a large painting, "Garibaldi at the Siege of Rome, 1849" by the British artist George Housman Thomas (1824–1868), first exhibited with great success at the Royal Academy of London in 1854; Thomas, who was present at the defense of Rome in 1849 and had published his sketches of Garibaldi and his soldiers, drawn from life, in the *Illustrated London News*, was also, significantly, an illustrator for the English edition of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of 1853.⁸ Liberal intellectuals in France, Britain, and elsewhere in Europe and across the Atlantic⁹ were following with great interest the Italian fight for political independence, with its corollary of freedom from religious oppression.¹⁰ Contemporary Italian events were a source of inspiration for literature, particularly in writers sensitive to political and historical themes. Noble ideals in favor of oppressed people were even more acutely felt by artists who had crossed various frontiers and experienced the troubles of a mixed identity.

The reference to the Mortara affair, which was only implicit in *La Tireuse de cartes* (where names of characters and settings are fictional), is made thoroughly explicit by Séjour in his introduction to his play, published one year after its first performance. "In writing *La Tireuse de cartes*, did I desire to plead the Mortara family's cause? Clearly, I did,"¹¹ the playwright declares:

One has a right to speak out loudly in defense of the desecrated home: founded on the child, that great and touching phenomenon of life; maintained by the father, that most august of authorities; blessed by the mother, God's most glorious emanation.

Is it possible that the Pope—holy man, sacred man, blessed man that he is—might himself be in the forefront of a cruelly inhumane action? Is the cross that he bears not the symbol of brotherhood; the throne that he occupies, not the refuge from injustice? How can one protect petty and banal persecution behind this supreme embodiment of divine right? How can one debase that sanctity by dragging it into the lists, amid protests of moral rectitude, in a flurry of public conscience voiced quivering with conviction? . . . Do you not feel that, here, in the middle of the nineteenth century, such a stance is tactless, to say the very least? Do you not feel that the flag you are waving might be shamed in defeat and never glorious again in victory?¹²



5.2. George Housman Thomas. "Garibaldi and His Negro Servant." *Illustrated London News*, July 21, 1849, p. 36. Engraving. This sketch was the basis for the later painting by George Housman Thomas, *Garibaldi at the Siege of Rome*, 1849, exhibited at the Royal Academy of London in 1854. Garibaldi's "Negro servant" was his black lieutenant from South America Andrés Aguiar, who died in the defense of the Roman Republic on June 30, 1849. The soldier standing on the right is Garibaldi's captain Nino Bixio, another fighter for Italian independence and strong opponent of slavery. Cliché © Illustrated London News Ltd/Mary Evans.

These were the questions and the issues at stake in the Mortara case for Séjour: humanity, brotherhood, and justice. These were the values he advocated, and that motivated him to write, in this public declaration. A series of other passionate questions is finally addressed directly to the Pope himself, showing the shock that the case was producing among liberal Catholics in France and elsewhere, and the negative effect it was having on the image of the papacy. Asking the Pope whether it was not "tactless, to say the very least," to commit a kidnapping and "be the avant-garde of cruelty" ("être l'avant-garde d'une cruauté"), "here, in the middle of the nineteenth century," Séjour, a Catholic, was implying that the theft of the child ran counter not only to the culture and values that had by then triumphed in Europe, but also against the Catholic teaching of fraternity, which could have been a meeting ground for Catholic tradition and modernity. It was in the name of

high moral values, which one believed were shared by the majority of human beings at that time, that the protest and the plea were elevated to the highest authority of the Catholic world, whose behavior seemed to go against all basic principles of morality and humanity. The conflict was between an illiberal past and the liberal present of Europe after the French Revolution. The battle was, as stated in the very conclusion of Séjour's explanatory note, in words revealing the writer's underlying American, or French-American, soul, "be-twixt the temptation of despotism, and the attractive force of freedom."¹³ By asking the Pope whether he did not realize that "the flag" he was "waving might be shamed in defeat and never glorious again in victory" (a statement expressed in the open form of a question, desperately soliciting a positive answer), he was warning the supreme Catholic authority with filial solicitude, while anticipating the historical consequence of that action—a serious blow to the moral image of the Church of Rome and, from a political viewpoint, the loss of temporal power that would soon take place.

The passion with which Séjour fights the battle in favor of the Mortara family's rights and, as he says, the "sacred tradition of the family," about which, he feels, "humanity revolves" (the family is for him "society cast small, just as humanity is the State cast large"),¹⁴ is evidence of how strongly opposed to the Vatican's action many Catholics were themselves. The issue at stake in this painful case was the value of family. And this was certainly true for Séjour, who, by virtue of his experience as a Creole and African American, was particularly sensitive to family disruptions resulting from racist ideology.

Séjour's passionate defense of the "sacred" tradition of the family evokes similar words that only a few years earlier had been written by William Wells Brown (1814–1884). The son of a white plantation owner and of a black slave woman, the runaway slave and abolitionist leader Brown is the author of what is considered to be the first novel in English by a black writer of the United States, *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (1853). In the first chapter of this "brilliantly constructed work of fiction" (M. Giulia Fabi), Brown stated that the "marriage relation, the oldest and most *sacred* institution given to man by his Creator, is unknown and unrecognized in the slave laws of the United States," and that marriage "is, indeed, the first and most important institution of human existence—the foundation of all civilization and culture—the root of church and state. It is the most intimate covenant of heart formed among mankind; and for many persons the only relation in which they feel the true sentiments of humanity."¹⁵ Both *Clotel* and *La Tireuse de cartes* were published in Europe by mulatto Americans who had left (either temporarily or forever) their mother country (*Clotel* was published in London,¹⁶ *La Tireuse de cartes* in Paris).¹⁷ Both texts show a concern for what

they consider humanity's most "sacred" institutions, marriage and family. Being deprived of them meant being deprived of the most basic, and even holy, human rights.¹⁸ Both writers focus our attention on the contrast between the oppressors' official beliefs and their actual behavior. Brown, in fact, uses the quintessential words of Jefferson's Declaration of Independence as an epigraph for his novel: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, and that among these are LIFE, LIBERTY, and the PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.—*Declaration of American Independence*"¹⁹ Placed as a historical reminder at the start of a novel that fictionalizes Jefferson's relationship (spoken about even then) with a slave mistress and their black children's fate, these noble words underline the contrast between the ideals and the reality of the United States. Séjour, instead, addresses the Catholic Church, imploring the Pope to change his actions in the name of Christian values. An analogous denunciation of the shamefully contradictory behavior of Christian slaveholders and of religious institutions defending the institution of slavery runs through Brown's *Clootl*,²⁰ though of course Brown was referring to members of Protestant churches, the descendants of those Pilgrim Fathers who had laid the religious and ideological foundation of the new nation, while Séjour is addressing the Church of Rome, in the person of the Pope.

Séjour, like most of the French spectators of his play, was a Catholic. One of the aims of his preface to *La Tireuse de cartes* was to defend himself against the attacks he had been subject to, as a Catholic, for his play, while at the same time confirming and justifying his criticism of the Pope's "cruelly inhuman action." This self-defense is synthesized in a single, very direct question-and-answer exchange introduced at the beginning of his preface: "Did I seek to produce a diatribe against the Pope or the Clergy, against Christianity, which is my faith, or Catholicism, which is my practice? Clearly, I did not."²¹ It is interesting that this question-and-answer exchange, directly addressing the serious criticism he had received as a Catholic from some Catholic and national press, and concluding with a strong negative answer, immediately follows the question-and-answer exchange, concluding with an affirmative statement, where he had made his support of the Mortara family's cause explicit. The parallel structure of the two exchanges having opposite answers graphically represents the two horns of the issue that the play will dramatize: the problem will be how to reconcile two sacred commitments—one's defense of the sacred value of the family with one's loyalty to the Church as an institution. The sentence that immediately follows his self-defense as a Catholic is ushered in by a meaningful conjunction of opposition ("But"), which introduces his moral justification and the universal ground of human

values that all humanity should share: “*But I am a man*; one of those human beings who feel that humanity revolves about the sacred tradition of the family, and who place the father under the hand of God.”²²

After his firmly negative response against the charge of attacking the Church, Séjour does not develop the controversial point any further in his preface. Yet, though the words devoted to his self-defense against that charge are few, all the spirit of his prefatory note to *La Tireuse de cartes* is that of a person within the Church (“A pope is father to the faithful, as a father is pope to his children. I beg you to reflect. Intolerance is a bad counselor; worse still, a deadly one”),²³ a Catholic who is addressing the Pope himself with concern in his plea for human rights and is deeply offended and worried by what he feels to be an unbearable conflict within his Christian culture, between himself as a man, a man of feelings (*un homme de sentiment*), who listens to the revelations of his heart and speaks “out loudly in defense of the desecrated family,” and the spectacle of religious persecution and intolerance offered by the Italian land of Inquisition.²⁴ And the problem of how to reconcile the just fight for civil rights with one’s loyalty to the Pope is the core of the play: the conflict will be dramatized in the confrontation between the “two mothers” of the contested child, the Jewish and the Catholic one, and will play a major role in the dramatic construction and its denouement.

[6]

PLOT AND CONFLICTS ON STAGE IN *LA TIREUSE DE CARTES*

THE MORTARA AFFAIR—*L'AFFAIRE MORTARA*, as it was called in France—and the issues it generated are clearly recognizable in *La Tireuse de cartes*, although Séjour altered details of both geography and chronology. Interestingly, he also made the victim a girl rather than a boy. The extended prologue, nineteen short scenes that open the play, is set in an Italian-Jewish family's eighteenth-century home and allows the audience, little by little, to understand that the first act of the tragedy, the gesture from which the whole drama originates, has already taken place. We are in an Italian town in the province of Genoa called Bisagno,¹ an invented variation of Bologna where the historical event took place, and the year is 1728, over one century earlier than the actual incident. Marta,² the Catholic nurse working in the home of the Jewish merchant family, has already secretly baptized the two-year-old Jewish girl Noémi, thinking she was on the verge of death. After the child's "miraculous" recovery ("It was only then that I realized what it meant. . . . Now that she was a Christian, she had to be raised by Christians"),³ Marta has snatched the child from her Jewish home and taken her to the Convent of the Annunciation, where they have renamed her Paola and immediately given her in great secrecy to a Christian lady for adoption. All of this occurred while the child's parents were away on family business, and now Marta has to tell them what she has done. Marta, who is also a mother (the play's first line is pronounced by her child Ottavio, who wonders why he will not be able to see his beloved "little sister" Noémi again) and who loves Noémi/Paola like a mother as well, summarizes her split heart with these words: "And if the heart of a mother tells me that I have sinned, the heart of a good Christian tells me that I'm forgiven" (Prologue, scene 3).⁴ This sentence, placed at the start, epitomizes the main dilemma of the play and anticipates its dramatic solution, while the child's sweet complaint which opens

PRIX : 50 CENTIMES

LIBRAIRIE DE MICHEL LÉVY FRÈRES
RUE VIVIENNE, 2 bis

PRIX : 50 CENTIMES



LA TIREUSE DE CARTES

DRAME EN CINQ ACTES ET UN PROLOGUE, EN PROSE

PAR

M. VICTOR SÉJOUR

REPRÉSENTÉ, POUR LA PREMIÈRE FOIS, A PARIS, SUR LE THÉÂTRE DE LA PORTE-SAINT-MARTIN, LE 22 DÉCEMBRE 1859.

PERSONNAGES DU PROLOGUE

RUTCHIONI	MM. VANNOY.	MARTHE	Mmes CORNÉLIE.
GÉDÉON BEN-MEIR	CHARLY.	LA PINSONNETTE	DARTY.
UN MÉDECIN	E. CAPON.	OTTAVIO, garçon de 5 ans	ESTHER.
GÉMÉA	Mme MARIE-LAURENT.		

La scène se passe à Bologne, en 1725.

PERSONNAGES DE LA PIÈCE

RUTCHIONI	MM. VANNOY.	TROISIÈME MÉDECIN	M. E. CAPON.
OTTAVIO SALVIATI, comte Doriani.	LÉRAY.	GÉMÉA	Mme MARIE-LAURENT.
FRIGOLINI	BOUSQUET.	PAULA	LIA-FÉLIX.
FURMAGOUSTE	MERCIER.	BIANCA	SUZANNE-LAGIER.
CASTARA	CALISTE.	LA PINSONNETTE	DARTY.
LUPPO *	JOSSE.	CATARINA	LAGRANGE.
PREMIER MÉDECIN	BORSAT.	THÉRÈSE	MORIN.
DEUXIÈME MÉDECIN	ALEXIS-LOUIS.	UNE JEUNE FILLE	CAMILLE.

FEMMES, HOMMES, MOINES, PEUPLE.

La scène se passe à Gênes, en 1745.

* une sorte d'idiot, baragouinant un patois italien quelconque. Ce type est de l'invention de M. JOSSE.

— Tous droits réservés —

L'Ami de la religion et la Gazette de France, avec le même éclat et la même violence de style, sinon avec la même fermeté de logique, ont, tour à tour, attaqué *la Tireuse de cartes*. Pour l'un, c'est une œuvre diabolique; pour l'autre, une chose infime. Tous deux s'entendent pour douter de mon salut.

Je désire m'expliquer. On me permettra de ne parler qu'en mon nom et d'accuser ma pensée le plus nettement que je le pourrai.

Ai-je voulu, en écrivant *la Tireuse de cartes*, faire un plai-

doyer en faveur de la famille Mortara? évidemment oui; ai-je cherché une sorte de pamphlet contre le pape ou le clergé, contre le christianisme, qui est ma foi, ou contre le catholicisme, qui est mon culte? évidemment non. Mais je suis homme; je suis de ceux qui font pivoter l'humanité sur la base sacrée de la famille, qui placent le père sous la main de Dieu.

On a le droit de parler haut quand on défend le foyer outragé: appuyé sur l'enfant, cette touchante et grande chose

6.1. First page of Victor Séjour's *La Tireuse de cartes*. Théâtre Contemporaine Illustré. Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1860. The engraving in the upper part of the page, drawn by Auguste Belin, shows the fortune-teller surrounded by people, in one of the opening scenes of the first act. In the background, one can see the bridge and the hill, defining the setting in the stage directions of the act. Underneath, after the list of the characters and performers, there is the beginning of Séjour's important preface to the play. Cliché Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Italy.

the prologue introduces the human theme of family love and disruption that makes that dilemma so torturous and difficult to solve.

In the play's five acts, the sequence of scenes takes us to seventeen years later⁵ and shows the complex situation that has developed as a consequence of the kidnapping. We are still in Italy, no longer in Bisagno but in the nearby city of Genoa, in 1745. At the opening of act 1, the stage directions outline a setting close to the Carignano bridge in Genoa, towered above by a church on a hill, surrounded by gardens and vineyards.⁶ Noémi/Paola, the kidnapped child, has grown into a lovely, good-hearted and beautiful nineteen-year-old young lady unaware of her real origin and identity. Her new name is Paola Lomellini. The woman who raised her (and whom she believes to be her mother), who loves her dearly, is a Christian noblewoman, with the symbolic name of Bianca ("White").⁷ They live in a palace on the hill, and Paola is promised in marriage to a nice young man, Ottavio, who happens to be the nurse's son, whose father has made a fortune. Noémi/Paola's real mother, Géméa, by now a widow, is still in search of her lost daughter, whom she has devoted her life to finding. She has become a wandering fortune-teller, in order to dig into the secret hearts of people in the hope of finding out where her daughter is, and she has just moved to a small house next to the bridge. It is to her, the Jewish mother concealed as a fortune-teller, that the play's title refers.

La Tireuse de cartes is a *problem play*, the new type of drama that developed in the nineteenth century, which dealt with controversial issues by putting on stage conflicting viewpoints through debate among characters. One of the earliest examples is *La Dame aux camélias* (The lady of the camelias), by Alexandre Dumas fils, concerning the subject of prostitution. Since this play was first staged in Paris in 1852 and Séjour's in 1859, *La Tireuse de cartes* should be included among the early examples of this kind of drama (which later developed as part of the movement of Realism and became very popular at the end of the nineteenth century with the influential works of northern European playwrights such as Henrik Ibsen, Johan August Strindberg, and George Bernard Shaw). The conflicts around which *La Tireuse de cartes* revolves concern the themes of contended motherhood, double identity, divided loyalties, and religious struggles. The opposing versions are effectively given voice in a sequence of scenes, where there is a continuous shifting of focus, from nurse to parents, from one mother to the other, and from them to the contested daughter. At the center of the drama are, of course, the two women who love their "daughter" with all their motherly hearts—the real, biological one who has brought the child into the world and who has been deprived of the joy of raising her, and the adoptive one, who has sheltered her and brought her up. (The drama is further complicated by the

subplot involving a minor character, a foundling who was abandoned by his unknown mother. This reverse motif runs as a counterpoint in the play.)

The second main theme develops around the kidnapped child's discovery of her real origins, which leads her to a condition of dual identity, well expressed in the duality of her names, immediately introduced in the first dialogue of the play (see Prologue, scene 1).⁸ While "Noémi" is a Hebrew and Jewish name, her new one, "Paola," is a common Italian name of Latin origin, with strong Catholic connotations. Both names have a symbolic significance, in the context of the religious confrontation. Both names hint at experiences of double identities and conversions, though toward different religions. Concerning the child's original name, it is worth keeping in mind the biblical figure of Noémi (also spelled Naomi), in the Book of Ruth. Because of a famine, this mother-figure moves with her husband Elimèlech and their two sons from Bethlehem to the land of Moab, where her husband dies; her two sons marry two women of Moab, but after ten years they also die. Noémi decides to go back to Bethlehem, so she invites her daughters-in-law to return to their mothers and marry again, but Ruth, one of the two, insists she will not abandon Noémi and will go with her wherever she goes ("Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God," Ruth 1:16). When mother and daughter-in-law arrive in Bethlehem and the news of Noémi's return spreads, Noémi tells the other women in town that they must no longer call her by her old name (which means "sweet," "pleasant"), but by the new name of Mara ("bitter"), because of the bitterness which has filled her life (Ruth 1:20). Ruth will then marry Boaz and give birth to Oved, King David's grandfather (Ruth 2:17–22), the line from which Jesus is descended, according to the Gospels. The biblical episode in which Noémi appears is rich in references to the themes of Séjour's play, and we can well appreciate the care with which Séjour chose this Hebrew name, which to a cultivated ear already announces the motif of the changing of one's name and of a daughter's conversion to her adopted mother's new religion, with further crossings of religious borders implied in the distance, since Jesus is Ruth's descendent.

As for the kidnapped child's second name in Séjour's play, Paola ("Paula" in the French original),⁹ the child's new name echoes with Christian meaning,¹⁰ hinting at Paul of Tarsus, himself a Jew converted to the new faith on the road to Damascus, and a central figure in the early spread of Jesus' message to the world. Paul of Tarsus too changed his name from the original Saul. The renaming of a person is the nominal sign of a conversion. Yet, in Noémi/Paola's case—and this is the starting point of the whole drama—the conversion did not come from the young person's will, but was imposed upon her while she was yet unaware, in an act of violence against her natural right to her own identity.

The identity problem, a central motif in the play, is brought to the audience's attention in the play's opening scene, in the exchange between mother/nurse and child concerning Noémi/Paola's double naming. The mixed-identity issue is closely connected to the family theme, which runs through the whole play in various forms. The connection between these two fundamental motifs is developed, in fact, not only in the play's main plot, but also reinforced and made more and more explicit in the rich and well-knit web of subplots, thanks to a series of minor, lower-class characters suffering from similar or reversed family problems (thus, e.g., the mother Géméa, looking for her kidnapped child, is contrasted to both Caterina, whose lost daughter has just been found, and to the foundling Ruccioni, a motherless son who despises all mothers for abandoning their children, until he meets Géméa desperately in search of her child).¹¹

It is Ruccioni, who, in a dialogue with Géméa, expresses a Catholic person's understanding of the crime he has committed by abetting the kidnapping and defines the condition of a babe snatched from his mother's arms and given to another as being even worse than his own, that of "a bastard!"—for a "free and proud child" (*un enfant libre et fier*) has thus actually become "A nobody" (*moins que rien!*).¹²

This harsh statement, which exemplifies the pro-Mortara family campaign carried on by Séjour in the play, takes us back to the main characters and plot. It is particularly the child's plight that becomes essential in the course of the play. The condition of mixed identity explodes within young Noémi/Paola's conscience after her encounter with Géméa the "fortune-teller" (her real mother!) and the revelation of her real birth. In the dramatic construction of the play, this moment of revelation, which takes place in the third act, right in the middle of the play, is slowly prepared by other moments of revelation occurring in the two previous acts. In the first act, the fortuneteller reveals her real identity to the girl's fiancée Ottavio (her Catholic nurse's son). In the second act she reveals herself to Bianca, the Catholic foster mother, whom Noémi/Paola believes to be her mother by birth. The real mother's revelation to her daughter develops in a series of scenes of the third act, scenes 5 to 8, which show the child's emotions moving from disbelief to shock and despair, and final docile acceptance of her new fate. The act opens, in a perfectly conceived counter-scene, with the girl's search for her "mother" Bianca who has not come back home; it ends in the act's last scene, scene 9, with the girl leaving her foster mother's home together with her real mother, Géméa.

This climactic passage is, in my opinion, the only moment of dramatic weakness of the play. As soon as Noémi/Paola learns her birth mother is Jewish ("A . . . A Jewess!" cries her fiancée),¹³ she immediately abandons her

adoptive home and joins her mother, without, incredibly, any protest by anybody or any legal clarification. This behavior, perhaps justified by the laws of the time, is not adequately explained in the context of the play,¹⁴ probably also for reasons of censorship: in fact, the Examining Commission of the Minister of State in charge of censorship of Paris theaters had asked the author to “effect modifications” on the text, and to “concentrate the dominant interest of the play on the tenderness, the rivalry of the two mothers,” rather than on the “religious antagonism.”¹⁵ Yet this dramatic weakness, taking the third act to its abrupt end, is abundantly compensated for by the two following acts, where all the conflicts within the character—her being “torn between love for two mothers . . . The one that nature gave her, and the other . . .” (act 3, scene 6),¹⁶ and her dilemma as a divided daughter with two contending mothers (“Ah If only I could keep them both by my side. . . . Each one, my mother! Me, a daughter to each! . . .”) (act 4, scene 6)—¹⁷ are strongly represented.

What further complicates the inner conflicts of family love is the religious conflict, the Jewish/Christian dilemma, which is a consequence of the Jewish child’s secret baptism, kidnapping, and secret adoption by a Christian. This conflict, which is made manifest from the very beginning, is also powerfully dramatized throughout the play and discussed with eloquence in its last three acts, both in the “two mothers” speeches and in their daughter’s, in a dramatic crescendo of scenes. The Jewish mother’s point of view, her right to keep and nurture her child and to raise it in her own religious tradition, and her denunciation of a long history of oppression suffered by Jews are represented effectively and with sympathy. See, in one of the great scenes of confrontation between the two mothers in act 4, Géméa’s plea addressed to her daughter:

Géméa: Would you live amongst those who condemned your race ever to wander the face of the earth? Look at this people, scattered over the globe It is our race! Mine and yours! . . . Borne off on the tide, on the waves of its own blood! Beset by fire, beset by the sword. . . . Night’s flames glow to betray it. . . . Not an hour goes by but that gibbets rise up and men die, hanged. . . . Not a day, but that old men, and women, and children blend their desperate cries as they burn at the stake! . . . The world knows, and it laughs. . . . (*Paola listens, more and more intently, obviously moved.*) But even as the leaves fall, the tree stands fast and lives! . . . Men scorn, and despise, and curse them. . . . They are herded together like packs of beasts. . . . The very air they breathe has its price, and even life itself!

Paola: Oh! . . . But why . . .

Géméa (continuing): Everything has been stripped from them. . . . Pillaged, ransacked. . . . Even the hope of a land of their own. . . . Everything, but their God!

Bianca (to Paola): No! . . . You must not listen! . . . You will be damned!¹⁸

That sympathy and understanding of Jewish suffering, appreciated by the Jewish French press of the time,¹⁹ is precisely what annoyed some contemporary Catholic critics and obliged the author to defend himself in the prefatory note. But the Christian viewpoint, with its claim of salvation and rebirth given by baptism, is also present. When the girl chooses to stay with her real mother, it is her foster mother's brief and only comment—"You have renounced your God!"—that drives the girl to despair, as she thinks her soul will be damned, "damned forever."²⁰ The whole spectrum of anti-Jewish prejudice is articulated in various remarks of the non-Jewish characters; from this point of view, the play is a good repertoire of all the traditional clichés of judeophobia.²¹ In this regard, one detail is significant. When Paola learns that Géméa, whom she still does not know to be her mother, is a Jewess, her first reaction is to be "horrified."²² This is the lesson that the Christianized child has received about a person being a Jew—a "teaching of contempt." "Elle aussi nous méprise!" ("She also despises us!") is the Jewish mother's aside.²³ Only then, when Paola sees the Jewish woman cry, does her sense of pity for her suffering prevail.

The interfaith and family conflicts develop effectively, not only because the different ideological positions are expressed in the dialogue, but also because all the characters are able to evolve and express a variety of thoughts and feelings in reacting to the sequence of ever-changing dramatic situations, a feature that contributes much to the artistic achievement of the play. Up to the end, in fact, it is difficult to know how the intricate contraposition of rights will be solved.

MULATTA FIGURES IN FRENCH AND AMERICAN
LITERATURE, 1834–1853: GENDER, RACE,
AND IDENTITY

BEFORE DISCUSSING THE PLAY'S denouement, it is important to reflect on the gender of the main characters in *La Tireuse de cartes*, an aspect that is not of minor relevance. One of the factual differences in the fictional treatment of the historical Mortara case by Séjour was the “change of sex” of the kidnapped child: while two-year-old (at the time of his secret baptism) Edgardo was a boy, in the play two-year-old (at the time of her secret baptism) Noémi/Paola is a girl. Another gender transformation concerns the main parent figure: while in the real case it was the father, Momolo, who actually led the fight against Pope Pius IX to get the child back, in Séjour's play the main parental figure is the mother (her husband dies early in the play).

These changes have important motivations and respond to precise aims that Séjour wanted to achieve. They can also be better understood if we consider the text within the writer's production and in the literary context of the time. In his previous works of the 1830s–1840s, Séjour had already explored the mulatto and mixed-identity theme both in his fiction and in his dramatic writing, with “Le Mulâtre” and *Diégarias*. In both of these early works, the main motivation of the title character was desire for revenge against a “racial” injustice. In both cases, the result was tragic for the mixed-identity offspring (a boy in the former case, where the victim and the revenger are the same; a girl, the victim of her father's revenge, in the latter). In 1855, Séjour had once again worked on the mortal conflict between love and revenge in *Les Noces vénitiennes*, a play with an Italian setting, where the destructive power of revenge had prevailed, as in his previous works, at the expense of a victimized daughter's love and happiness. One year later, in 1856, *Le Fils de la nuit* had dramatized to great public acclaim the conflict between two mothers “sharing” a child (in a way a preparation for *La Tireuse de cartes*) and the destructive power of a mother's love when accompanied by deception and class jealousy. In this play, showing a noblewoman's nurse

who, to give her own child a better future, switches her baby with a child of the noblewoman and will eventually cause the death by poison of her own son as an adult, one can see the playwright's growing interest in the mother figure and in the tragedy that ill-placed love for one's child can generate. In 1859, in the same year as *La Tireuse de cartes*, Séjour's previous "Italian" play, *Les Noces vénitaines*, had been adapted into English and published in London as *The Outlaw of the Adriatic; or, The Female Spy and the Chief of the Ten*. We have already remarked on the radical transformation of the conclusion in the second version of the play, when the parental curse was transformed into forgiveness. After years of exploration of the theme of family mystery and revenge, it is as if both the author and his audience needed to give voice to the opposite reaction, forgiveness, or at least to explore the possibility of forgiveness. This exploration was made more "natural" by the presence of a female figure in the role of the child victim. Here is where the literary context becomes particularly helpful, as this trend in Séjour's work can also be found in works by other writers of that period, dealing with mulatto figures.

Alain Locke, the anthropologist and theorist of the Harlem Renaissance who, according to Werner Sollors, "may have been the first modern critic to stress this fundamentally critical potential of the Mulatto figure,"¹ noted, in his essay "American Literary Tradition and the Negro" (1926):

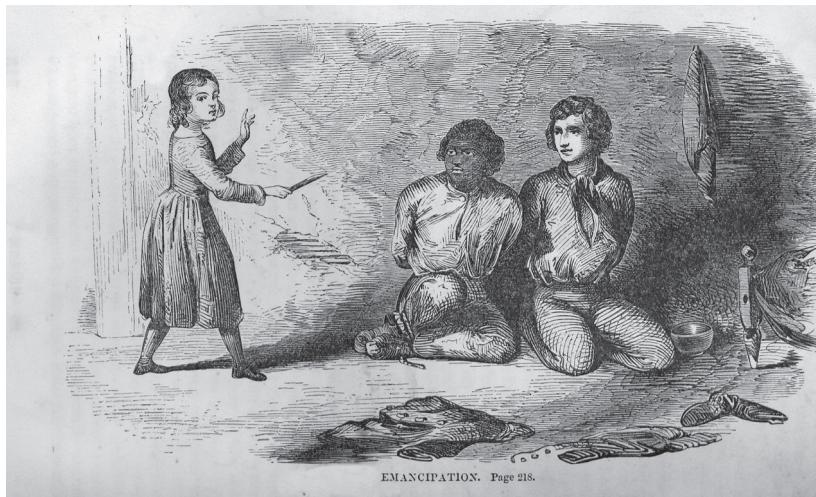
It is a very significant fact that between 1845 and 1855 there should have appeared nearly a score of plays and novels on the subject of the quadroon girl and her tragic mystery, culminating in William Wells Brown's bold exposé *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*.²

William Wells Brown's *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*, singled out by Locke for its courageous disclosure of a national scandal, is the novel by the black American abolitionist, published in London in 1853, already discussed in chapter 5 for its advocacy of the "sacred" family institution of marriage that was violated by American racist laws and practices, and for its lexical and ideological closeness with Séjour's defense of the Mortara family's cause, as expressed in the playwright's introduction to *La Tireuse de cartes*. In *Clotel*, the "President's daughter" Clotel, an all-but-white negro woman, eventually commits suicide by jumping into the Potomac River in Washington when she sees she cannot escape from the slave catchers pursuing her (an illustration in the original edition focuses the reader's attention on this tragic outcome), in a chapter significantly titled "Death is Freedom"—suicide is the last form of resistance in a country where freedom is not granted as a right to all human beings. And death is an existential and narrative solution also for Ellen and Jane, the two all-but-white daughters of Clotel's younger sister

Althesa (another President's daughter, "as white as most white women in a southern climate"), whose conventional ending cannot be but tragic, when faced with the revelation that they were born slaves: Ellen is found "in her chamber, a corpse. She had taken poison," and poor Jane dies "of a broken heart."³

At this time, death by despair is the most recurrent denouement in the destiny of fictional quadroon and octoroon female characters, as it will also be in Boucicault's successful play *The Octoroon*, on the New York stage by the end of the decade. However, in William Wells Brown's novel a different fate befalls Clotel's daughter Mary, another President's granddaughter, the "quadroon" girl whose "large dark eye had the melting mezzotinto, which remains the last vestige of African ancestry." This girl, who "in the so-called Free States" is despised even by blacks for being what they call a "white nigger," neither black nor white, ends up in France, where her love for another fugitive from American slavery is "sanctified" (in the author's conception) by marriage.⁴

Viewing Europe as a possible space of escape and freedom for an "irregular" couple is also an issue in Nathaniel Hawthorne's near-contemporary novel *The Scarlet Letter* (1850). This is another significant fictional case in which family sanctity is challenged, and here too it is Europe, in this case England, that is suggested by adulteress Hester to the father of her child as a place where they might overcome the cruel plight of love outlawed and start a new life.⁵ Likewise, in one of the earliest examples of abolitionist fiction dealing with the theme of the "tragic mulatto," Richard Hildreth's *The Slave; or Memoirs of Archie Moore* (1836), particularly in its expanded 1852 edition, renamed *The White Slave; or, Memoirs of a Fugitive*, this writer from New England could only envision, for both his "white slave" biracial narrator Archie and his beloved slightly darker mulatto wife Cassy, an escape toward freedom to "Old" England: "When we touched the British soil we felt safe. Thank God, there is a land that impartially shelters fugitives alike from European and from American tyranny—Hungarian exiles and American slaves!"⁶ An illustration in the first part of this 1852 American edition shows two young American slaves, a black one and a white one, crouching close by in chains, and a little white girl who is approaching them to free the enslaved young men with a knife: the caption underneath summarizes the situation with a keyword, "Emancipation."⁷ Thus, at the beginning of the 1850s, both white and black American writers seemed to feel that Europe, or at least France and England, were indeed morally freer than the "Free States" of America. And in his fictionalized "critical national allegory"⁸ about the inter-racial relationship, a black American writer like William Wells Brown could only imagine two possible ways out of slavery for female characters: either



7.1. "Emancipation." Illustration added to the expanded edition of Richard Hildreth's antislavery novel *The White Slave; or, Memoirs of a Fugitive*. Boston: Tappan & Whittemore, 1852. The novel was first published anonymously, with the title *The Slave; or, Memoirs of Archy Moore*, in 1836. The caption of the illustration uses the keyword of the age, emancipation, to define the action of the "blue-eyed little girl," who helps the two imprisoned young men, the black slave and the white one, to cut their bonds and escape.

suicide at home or, as a momentarily positive solution (that Brown himself was experiencing when writing his fiction), freedom abroad.⁹

This alternative, leaving at least one chance of survival in freedom, was in a way a step forward when compared to the literary scene offered one decade earlier in the short story "The Quadroons" (1842, 1846) by Lydia Maria Child (1802–1880), the abolitionist writer of New York who was already a pioneer of American miscegenation literature with her short story "Joanna" (1834).¹⁰ In Child's story of 1842, both mulatto women, mother and daughter, eventually die, either of heartbreak (the mother, Rosalie) or by suicide, after going mad (the beautiful and "tenderly beloved" daughter, Xarifa).¹¹ The whole tragedy starts within the family, because of their white paterfamilias dual family situation—theirs being the irregular mixed one that Georgia law did not allow. This dual family situation, with its love conflicts falling both upon the rejected mother's and her child's shoulders, bears interesting comparison to Séjour's drama.

This brief excursus on contemporary texts by American abolitionist writers dealing with the tragic plight of mixed-race women cannot be concluded

without mentioning again *Marie: ou, L'esclavage aux États-Unis; tableau de mœurs américaines* (1835, first translated into English in 1845), the novel by French magistrate, reformer, and writer Gustave de Beaumont (1802–1866), written after his long journey in the United States with his close friend Alexis de Tocqueville.¹² In Beaumont's depiction of an interracial family, drama is mainly focused on the predicament of the children of the mixed family. In this early example of miscegenation literature, it is revealing to see the differently gendered reactions of the two children, a young woman and a young man, to the same, socially discriminating, hybrid condition. In a world ruled by the separation of races, Marie passively accepts discrimination, which she considers to be her "fate on earth," and thus rejects her French, white suitor's love, because, she says, her "blood contains a stain which renders me unworthy of esteem or affection. Yes! My birth condemned me to the contempt of man."¹³ Her brother Georges, on the other hand, cries out violently at his white father, who defends the American treatment of black slaves ("his anger became stronger than his filial piety"), angrily denounces the white masters' "calculated cruelty," and even forecasts to his father that those human beings, considered an inferior race ("Inferior race! You say!"), will not suffer forever; they will rebel and take their vengeance; "in that brutish head"—he says, using the white slaveholders' language—"there is a compartment that contains a powerful faculty, that of revenge—an implacable vengeance, horrible but intelligent."¹⁴

In 1837, only two years after the publication of *Marie*, young Victor Séjour, who had recently arrived in Paris from New Orleans,¹⁵ published his short story "Le Mulâtre," in which "revenge," no longer a mere threat, would be realized in all its fullness. In this colonial tale significantly set in prerevolutionary Haiti, the author's understanding of the act of rebellion (and warning about this threat to his nonblack readers) would be, however, counterbalanced by the mulatto's despair and by his final suicide: an act of violence against oneself that shows his (and the author's) horror and underlines the tragic condition of "unhappy Georges" as a victim.¹⁶ The headline above the title of Séjour's story in its original magazine edition in *La Revue des colonies*, "Mœurs coloniales" (Colonial customs),¹⁷ seems to suggest an undisguised thematic connection with Beaumont's novel of two years earlier, whose subtitle contained the phrase "Tableau de mœurs américaines" (A portrait of American customs).

[8]

THE GENDER ISSUE IN THE PLAY

BY CONTEXTUALIZING SÉJOUR'S WRITING in the American and French literature of the time, we are now better prepared to evaluate its relation to the playwright's contemporary literary culture; we can appreciate more deeply its underlying cultural references and ideological concerns, and the motivation for some of the writer's fictional and dramatic choices.

Thus, coming back specifically to *La Tireuse de cartes*, it is not surprising to see in all its implications why Séjour decided to transform the kidnapped child from male to female in his adaptation of the real case into a play, even though he clearly referred to, and pleaded for, the actual case. In the literary tradition of writing about mulatto figures, culminating, in Alain Locke's words, in Brown's "bold exposé" of 1853—a tradition that Séjour undoubtedly knew and to which he had contributed from France—it was the female figure, both as a child and as a mother, that seemed more apt to arouse feelings of sympathy and compassion as a defenseless victim of men's injustice. Such was the lesson coming from the previous literary models dealing with mixed-identity female figures, whose impossible love stories caused by racial or social discrimination could either be lived in passive resignation or lead to despair, madness, and suicide (unless one could escape abroad, as in more recent literary instances). As for the mother figure, an unavoidable theme of African American and abolitionist literature was the devastating sorrow of mulatto or black mothers being deprived of their children, which was effectively sung, for instance, by the well-known (even at that time) contemporary African American writer Frances E. W. Harper in her poem "The Slave Mother" (1854), whose last two stanzas read:

They tear him from her circling arms.
Her last and fond embrace.

Oh! Never more may her sad eyes
Gaze on his mournful face.

No marvel, then, these bitter shrieks
Disturb the listening air:
She is a mother, and her heart
Is breaking in despair.¹

Parallel experiences like these, which figure in all autobiographical narratives by early African American writers and landmark fictional works of the time, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's influential *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852)² and William Wells Brown's *Clotel*, must have been in Séjour's mind and evoked profound echoes of sympathy when writing, only a short time after this poem, about a mother whose child had been snatched from her arms, as in *La Tireuse de cartes*.

If this was the general literary tradition and cultural context of Séjour's work, we must consider the writer's own artistic development in relation to this subject matter. Up to then, the condition of mixed identity had been faced by Séjour mostly in family situations where it was the father-and-child relation that prevailed.³ But his recent success, *Le Fils de la nuit*, had already signaled a change of focus toward the mother-and-child relation. In *La Tireuse de cartes*, it is the child's father that soon disappears from the dramatic action



8.1. "Eliza Comes to Tell Uncle Tom That He Is Sold, and That She Is Running Away to Save Her Child." Full-page illustration by Hammatt Billings for Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1852.

(he makes a quick appearance only in the prologue, but he is already dead when the first act begins), and it is actually the mother who has the task of finding her lost daughter and planning her revenge on the kidnappers. It is the mother, the title figure, who appears in the guise of a fortune-teller; and the original French title immediately qualifies her as a female (she is "*La Tireuse de cartes*"). In Séjour's production, it was the first time that a female character had this "honor." Interestingly enough, in 1859, the same year that *La Tireuse de cartes* was first staged, the English version of the playwright's *Noces Vénitiennes* included, in the second part of its title, an explicit reference to a female presence ("or, the Female Spy and the Chief of the Ten"). This explicit gender designation was hidden in its original French title, and the change might be linked to the alteration in the play's ending, as we saw, from revenge to forgiveness. Revenge, in other words, is for men; forgiveness is, or should be, for women.

In *La Tireuse de cartes* the main drama takes place among female figures. All the focus of the action is on the mother's search for her lost child, and then, once the re-encounter takes place, on the delicate natural mother-daughter relationship, on the fight between the "two mothers" for their contended daughter, and on their daughter's psychic crisis in the course of this conflict of affections. Even the main revenge theme, traditionally dramatized through male figures (see "Le Mulâtre," *Diégarias*, and *Noces Vénitiennes*), in this play has to be carried out by a female in the absence of the child's father, although, as we shall see, with a different outcome. What is the consequence of this gender characterization in dealing with the feeling of vengeance? In what way will the crisis of double-identity and double-descent be handled by the young girl living through it? And why did the play's author make the choice of focusing on the "weaker" sex, in dramatizing a real story that was so present to his Parisian audiences? This is what we shall discuss in the following pages, dealing with the last two acts of the play.

[9]

TORN BETWEEN BELONGINGS

THE LAST TWO ACTS of *La Tireuse de cartes* are set in a beautiful villa in the Italian city of Genoa looking onto the sea,¹ from whose large windows, once their heavy drapes are removed, one can admire the superb view of the whole Ligurian gulf. Villa Negroni is the gift that the Jewish mother Géméa has prepared for her refound daughter, which she gives her as a surprise gift on her first birthday together, when we find them again at the beginning of act 4.² It is in this superb setting, surrounded by love and devotion, that the girl's, and her two mothers', conflicting drama develops up to its denouement. At first, the girl seems to adapt to her new situation and to respond with affection to her real mother's love and generous attentions. But when she sees the view from the terrace, she recognizes the villa as a place of her childhood, where she came on another birthday when she was seven years old (five years after her kidnapping), and that memory is associated with the melody of a Christmas song, *The Fishermen's Carol*, coming, as one reads in the English translation, from a "beautiful gondola, all decked out against a blue sky!" (what a synthesis of foreign dreams of Italy, a Venetian gondola in Genoa!).³ The music of that Christmas song that her foster parents had sent her by water as a surprise gift on her birthday evokes deep echoes within her: "That wonderful sweet melody that I can never forget. . . . That comes back to me with my every memory."⁴ Géméa knows that this past, from which she, the natural mother, was excluded, these memories "I can never share," with all their associated Christian culture, are what stands between her and her daughter.⁵

The following scenes of the act show the mothers'—the Jewish and the Christian—harsh confrontation,⁶ first alone with strong arguments one against the other, and then in front of their daughter, who is asked the hardest task: to choose between the two! In scene 9, at first the poor girl, who would like to be able to love them both, seems desperately lost. Then, when her natural mother implores her to remain a Jewess, in the name of all the

woes the Jews have endured from their oppressors, a new “self” seems to be revealed to her,⁷ and the scale seems to turn in that mother’s favor, whom she asks on her knees to love her as a daughter. But when she feels unforgiven and cursed by her “other” mother for that choice, she suddenly reacts against both of them for obliging her to choose between her God (the Christian one) and her mother (the one from which she was born, Géméa). She accuses them of actually not loving her, but themselves, and rejects her “heartless mothers,” both of them, both “pressed against my heart.”⁸ She finally tells them to leave her alone while she is dying (which she is not), and swoons. This is the end of act 4.

We are still in the villa when act 5 begins, no longer during the day but on a moonlit evening, and three doctors are in the garden, conferring about the girl’s health: for some days she has suffered delirium; tomorrow it may become complete dementia. In scene 5, the girl’s condition is described indirectly through other characters’ reports, as madness and folly: she laughs at her mother’s weeping; she goes around dressed in white, like a bride, as if ready for her wedding; she leans her head forward listening and talks alone about her soul which has become a bird that sings prettily; then she goes running off “like a gazelle,” crying that her soul is flying away and that she must catch it. She finally reappears onstage in scene 6, attracted by the sound of church bells in the distance, which she takes to be the “voices of heaven! . . . Floating in the air, like my soul.” She is followed by her poor, desperate mother Géméa (one character describes her “Like a ghost clinging to the trail of a shadow!”). When she sits motionless or goes around without recognizing those who love her, all characters onstage (her two mothers, her fiancé Ottavio, the three doctors) and the audience with them can see how desperate the girl’s suffering and psychic condition have become.⁹ The whole scene, like the one preceding it, is strongly reminiscent of Ophelia’s madness in *Hamlet*.

In the last scene of the play (act 5, scene 7), all of the men, including the three doctors who have vainly fought against the poor daughter’s momentary madness, are silent and no longer mentioned, and only the two mothers and their daughter remain on stage. Even the girl’s betrothed, whose pain at her folly was vocalized in previous scenes, is no longer given any role or voice in the drama’s denouement.¹⁰ This is because, unlike Ophelia in Shakespeare’s tragedy, Noémi/Paola’s drama has little to do with her beloved (who actually plays a minor role), and the dramatist wants to focus all our attention on the clash of opposing loves and identities. The girl’s crisis and momentary folly, effectively represented, is, in fact, caused by her inability to cope with her two mothers’ oppressive love, as well as by her own divided heart and identity. Her frailty as a girl thus becomes an essential dramatic ingredient,

justifying the character's "natural" disposition to be overcome by the tempest of her emotion, so that the audience can understand her plight and sympathize with it. Her gendered, "natural" frailty is a necessary element, allowing the character first to swoon (see act 4), as in much of nineteenth-century literature females are expected to do when strongly affected, and then to go momentarily out of her mind (see act 5), not because of a planned strategy of denunciation and investigation (as might be Hamlet's case), but out of an overflowing of emotions, conflicting filial devotion, and problems of double identity. Her folly is closer to Ophelia's, a prototype of the innocent girl as victim, who also is unable to align her past with her present, in her lover's conflicting identities. In Noémi/Paola's case, the conflict of identities takes place within herself; it is she who discovers the existence of a different self in her past and cannot find a way out of the emotional, cross-cultural conflict within her. Even so, notwithstanding the different motivation for the crisis, in *La Tireuse de cartes* the young heroine's madness is undoubtedly reminiscent of Ophelia's: her leaving the scene at the end of scene 6, dressed in pure white, with a flower in her hand, is an external sign of that textual reference.

Shakespeare's model is also present in the treatment of the revenge theme, which plays an important role in the play, both in the main plot (where revenge is frequently evoked by the title character, Géméa, in her search for her kidnapped daughter) and in the subplot (where the daughter's fiancée, Ottavio, who happens to be the nurse's son, should revenge himself on Géméa for his mother's death of heartbreak after the kidnapping, in a reverse variation of the same theme). Yet, as the French subtitle (specifying its genre as "drame") suggests, *La Tireuse de cartes* is not a tragedy, but a dramatic play, and neither blood, nor revenge, nor suicide will taint its conclusion. It is this conclusion that deserves special attention for its strong ideological implications.

In the last scene (act 5, scene 7), only the daughter and her two mothers are on stage, confronting one another, in a gendered selection of characters that summarizes the emotional heart of the conflict (and already hints at its possible ending, of peaceful composition, through love and tears). It is actually the Jewish mother and her Christianized daughter who occupy most of the scene, with the Christian mother entering toward the end with just one comment. The confrontation concerns, to summarize the values at stake: on the one hand the value of family, shaken and disrupted by the kidnapping (who is the real mother, to whom the kidnapped child should feel more akin?), and on the other hand the two religions, the ancestral Jewish one acquired by birth and the new Christian one received by adoption and deceit. This clash of issues is reported from the girl's point of view. Then there is the two moth-

ers' situation. What is each one of them ready to do, for the physical and mental recovery of their shared daughter, for her salvation? The biblical episode of the two mothers in the judgment of Solomon, who vie for the possession of a son, is the unmentioned reference behind these two mother figures, who at first, particularly in acts 3 and 4, seem to behave like the lying mother in Solomon's story and make their daughter ill and almost crazy with their conflict over her "possession." Then, one after the other they behave in the opposite way and are ready, like the real mother of the biblical episode, to renounce their motherly satisfaction out of love for the child.

It is from an act of self-sacrifice and love on the Jewish mother's part that the dramatic solution eventually develops. In fact, it is she who realizes that her child's folly has nothing to do with her body, as her Catholic mother had previously suggested, but is wholly connected to her soul. Therefore the cure cannot be going to the country, as the girl's foster mother had offered,¹¹ but going back into the past, which has shaped her soul. This is not the Jewish past, which Noémi/Paola cannot personally remember because of her youthful kidnapping, but the past of her Christian upbringing. Thus the reconciliation with the girl's *Christian* soul is brought about thanks to her *Jewish* mother, who is ready to sacrifice herself and her religion for her love of her daughter. Wanting nothing other than her daughter's health and well-being, she helps her daughter overcome her psychological paralysis by making her remember all the people who loved her in her new life (her new mother, her fiancé), and the Christian songs and prayers of her childhood. In this process of reacquired recollection, apart from the already encountered "Fishererman's Christmas Carol" that Géméa lovingly reminds her daughter of in this last scene, it is the melody and the words of a Christian evening prayer, ecstatically heard from the organ of the nearby church with a choir of women's voices, that allows the girl's soul to come back to her body, to use a similar image in the text,¹² and brings her spiritual recovery ("The prayer of my childhood . . . The same. . . . Yes, I remember! . . . How it frees my mind and refreshes my soul!").¹³ The sound of religious memory as cultural experience restores the girl's mind from her crisis. And her mother by birth, who encourages her to pray *this* prayer, is next to her in this recovery.

In this way, the tangled controversy over family values and religious confrontations dramatized in the play moves toward its solution. The right of the Jewish mother to be recognized as such and have her child back is made to triumph in the end (seventeen years later, when the girl is close to getting married). What eventually prevails in the interfaith conflict, on the other hand, is the religion acquired by the girl in her Christian upbringing. This double conclusion is underlined in the play's last page by the two mothers' words, functioning as a sort of two-voice chorus, commenting, each in its separate

and yet converging way, on the girl's mental recovery and salvation. The Christian mother's line (her last in the play), addressed to the real mother, acknowledges the other woman's maternal right, thus ending the dispute for possession; "O fortunate mother! Embrace your child. . . . A miracle has given her back to you!"¹⁴ The Jewish mother's line immediately following, expressed while placing her hand on her daughter's hand in a gesture of benediction, is "Pray, my child . . . Pray,"¹⁵ an invitation to keep praying that, as the audience knows, refers to the Christian prayer, which has just "freed" the girl's mind and "refreshed" her tortured soul. Thus, in the contest between the two women both of them have generously given up something essential, yet both have won something too: in short, one could say, a bit crudely, that the Jewish mother has won her child's body, the Christian one her soul.

The solution is a happy one for the young mixed-identity girl and, importantly, for her creator, Séjour. The girl, no longer "torn from the altar" of her acquired Christian faith, which has saved her soul (in compliance with her second mother's teaching), is finally reconciled to life by the vision of the *converging* efforts of the two former enemies, both of whom she can now finally consider "[m]y mothers," both of them God's "daughters" and "Sisters in devotion and sacrifice." This is what Noémi/Paola says in her penultimate line in the play, which shows her on her knees, hands joined, in a typical Christian gesture of devotion (although here the Christian element is only implicit; the dramatist is trying to treat his disputed subject with a light hand, and to show this gesture of prayer as if religious unity had prevailed), while she is praying to the "God of mercy and loving kindness" that has saved her.¹⁶ In a previous scene (act 4, scene 6), she was confronted by the torturing "dilemma" of her two mothers' "double love" (*double amour*). She wanted to "keep them both" by her side, each of them as a mother. She had desperately cried: "God above stands between them!"¹⁷ It was that standing "between," not to join but to separate, and the need to choose in her own "in-betweenness," that had brought her toward madness and death. Now, instead, she can ask God to "bless them" both and to "draw them together":

Paola: The hatred of centuries draws them apart. Burning passions sear their souls. But their hearts rise to Thee in a single act of love Good mothers have been, beyond all measure. . . . Devoted, beyond all others. . . . Let Thy hand reach out and bestow upon them Thy blessing . . . Oh my God, I pray you draw them together!¹⁸

The stage directions explain that there is a moment of silence at the end of the daughter's prayer. Suspense is created by the playwright, who, after the caesura of that silence, wants the play's last gesture and sentence to be magnanimously performed by Géméa, the Jewish mother. She has just urged

her daughter to pray a Christian prayer. She now holds out her hand to Bi-anca, the Christian foster mother and utters the last words of the play: “I forgive you, signora . . .” (act 5, scene 7).¹⁹ The curtain falls. Universal love and Jewish forgiveness, long expected and requested, allow the souls of the persecutors to feel cleansed of their sin, and that’s how the play happily ends.

In this way Séjour satisfies both his ideological personal needs and those of his society. He stands strongly in favor of the parents’ natural right to their children, as claimed in his prefatory note, and thus indirectly puts in the forefront the issue that was grieving African American households in his mother country, where children were routinely separated from their parents in different sales, as shown by Harper’s poem and all the African American literature of the time. In *La Tireuse de cartes*, it is the foundling, Ruccioni, who sums up, in a sort of final moral comment on the baptism and child-snatching: “Ah, signora! How wrong we all were to do as we did back then! . . . All of us . . . Each and every one.”²⁰ Séjour shows the dramatic consequences of these unnatural actions in the lives of both adults and children, and puts onstage the offspring’s divided heart. He effectively shows the moral conflict at the core of the confrontation and is explicit in giving dramatic voice to the Jews’ rights, to their long Christian-caused suffering, their being despised, the persecutions, oppression, and discrimination they have passed through over the centuries. Yet, at the same time, he makes the Christian cause eventually prevail in the heart of the kidnapped child. Séjour is undoubtedly seeking a “balanced” conclusion between family and religious “rights,” but in the matter of *interfaith conflict* he ends his play “on a note of Christian triumphalism,” as remarked by Stephen Whitfield,²¹ thus confirming his belief in his own religious faith, while at the same time taking a stand in favor of the broken family’s rights. This “harmonious” conclusion of the conflicts would probably fit the views and interests of French Emperor Napoleon III, who, by attending the première, was expressing his concern for the real case and his political approval of its dramatization and fictional solution.

The child coming back to her original family, but with a Christian soul, is a happy ending for the Catholic Creole author and for the French Catholic and liberal society in which he was living. It reconciles all of his (and their) ideological selves, and transforms a dramatic conflict and contraposition, which would otherwise have been an unsolvable tragedy, into a *melodrama*. In Séjour’s earlier texts, “Le Mulâtre” and *Diégarias*, the transgression of the racial or religious barriers had brought about tragedy to the mixed-descent offspring, be it a male rejected by his father, or a female loved by hers (in *Le Fils de la nuit*, a similar “punishment” had befallen the nurse’s son, after the “malignant” crossing of social barriers plotted by his mother).²² Here, instead, the writer shows that the crisis can eventually be overcome through a

compromise springing out of love—supposedly a more female impulse, which is why it seemed necessary to have only women on stage as the main characters. Crossing the border, and overcoming division through negotiation, was a gentlewomen's agreement that Séjour offered as a way out and denouement, in the tangled situation inspired by a real case.

REVENGE VS. FORGIVENESS IN SHAKESPEARE
AND SÉJOUR

THE CHOICE BETWEEN *REVENGE*, on the victim's part, or *forgiveness* is one of the main issues at stake in *La Tireuse de cartes*, repeatedly debated in this play, as in all of Séjour's works we have analyzed. *forgiveness* is the answer suggested by *La Tireuse de cartes*, the only way by which to achieve peace of mind after the tempest of feelings. "I forgive you, signora!"—the play's last line pronounced by the Jewish mother is the perfect seal for its ending, emphatically underlined by the silence preceding it and well summarizing the essence of its ideological "message."

It is worth comparing the theme "revenge vs. forgiveness," and its denouement here with the way in which the same theme was dealt with in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, the most famous and influential play in non-Jewish culture having a Jew as a main character. It is particularly in the climactic scene at the Venetian Court of Justice (act 4, scene 1) that the confrontation between the two texts becomes most revealing.

Before entering the scene in expectation of "justice" from the court, Shylock, the Jewish moneylender and usurer, is described by the Duke of Venice to the members of the court and to merchant Antonio, who is Shylock's counterpart in the trial: "A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch / Uncapable of pity, void and empty / From any dram of mercy" (act 4, scene 1, lines 4–6).¹ Lack of "mercy" and of "pity" characterizes Shylock in his judges' eyes. "Stones" are not supposed to have feelings, and absence of "humanity" actually synthesizes, according to those gentlemen, the essence of a human portrait which is not simply a portrayal of a single individual. Shylock's identity, in fact, is always associated by other characters with his being a Jew. Especially when he is not present, but not only then, other characters rarely call him by his individual name. They usually refer to him as "the Jew" or, when addressed directly, as "Jew," thus involving in their judgment all of his "race." When the Duke wants to start the trial and call Shylock to the court,

he orders those around him: “Go one, and call the Jew into the Court” (act 4, scene 1, line 14). On the contrary, in the first line of the same act and scene, just a few lines before, he had asked about Shylock’s opponent in the trial in this personally identified and direct way: “What, is Antonio here?” (act 4, scene 1, line 1). It is true that, when Shylock stands in front of the court, the Duke addresses him by his name, while beginning the trial. But he does so only to contrast him to the world and to himself (“Shylock, the world thinks, and I think so too” (act 4, scene 1, line 17); and his speech, denouncing his “malice” and “cruelty,” asking for his “mercy and remorse,” and pleading for his being “touch’d with human gentleness and love” concludes with this firm, collectively defining challenge: “we all expect a gentle answer, Jew” (act 4, scene 1, lines 17–34).

The only time in this scene when Shylock is defined as a “man” occurs after his answer to the Duke conveying hate and loathing, when he is addressed by Bassano (Antonio’s friend, the merchant for whom Antonio asked Shylock for the money and made the bond) as “thou, unfeeling man” (act 4, scene 1, line 63)—not a more favorable judgment indeed. This lack of “feeling” is obviously extended to all Jews, as clearly stated by Antonio a few lines later, when he invites his friends in the court to carry out the verdict and not to insist on trying to convince “the Jew,” since there is nothing in nature harder than to “seek to soften” that which is most hard, “his Jewish heart”:

You may as well do anything most hard,
As seek to soften that—than which what’s harder?—
His Jewish heart . . . (*The Merchant of Venice*, act 4, scene 1, lines 78–80)

Stubbornness, cruelty, thirst for Christian blood, hardness of heart, insensibility, “envy,” lack of “pity,” no “commiseration,” no touch of that “human gentleness and love” nobly asked by the Duke, but, on the contrary, an obstinate demand for justice and for bloody revenge, when requiring the enforcement of the strange and cruel deal made with the gentle merchant Antonio (a pound of his “fair flesh, to be cut off and taken,” if the merchant does not return the amount due; see act 1, scene 3, line 151)—these are the elements of Shakespeare’s portrait of the Jew.

In *The Stranger in Shakespeare* Leslie A. Fiedler traces the mythical origins of Shylock’s figure in the “archetype of the menacing Jewish father with the knife,” associated with the biblical figure of Abraham, the patriarch with whom the Jewish covenant was first sealed. “It is an image which has haunted Europe for nearly two millennia,” says Fiedler, from his twentieth-century post-shoah point of view: “the original Jew, bearded and ancient, raising aloft the threatening blade” against his son Isaac, whom he has first, for the covenant’s sake, circumcised, and then tied to the altar, ready for the sacrifice.²

The form in which this “archetype possessed the mind of Europe for almost a thousand years, beginning, it would seem, around A.D. 500, and reaching the peak of its popularity between 1200 and 1400” is, in Fiedler’s words, “the original anti-Semitic child-murder story—born of the confluence in the popular mind of much half-remembered scriptural stuff: the sacrifice of Isaac, the massacre of Hebrew infants by the Pharaoh, the death of the Egyptian first-born, the slaughter of the innocents, the execution of Christ at the high priest’s instigation.”³

In his reconstruction of the historical development of this myth, Fiedler connects Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* to a famous text of late mediaeval times, Chaucer’s *The Prioress’s Tale*, from *The Canterbury Tales*, the story about a seven-year-old gentile boy, supposedly murdered by the Jews for singing a hymn in praise of the Virgin. Both in Shakespeare’s play and in Chaucer’s story, one can find “the symbolic equations: Jew equals murderer; Christian equals ‘welle of mercy.’”⁴ What partially differentiates the two texts separated by two centuries of history, in Fiedler’s opinion, is their treatment of the female figure. One needs to recall that in Christian culture the New Testament is traditionally seen, to use Fiedler’s words, as a “new covenant, in which patriarchal rigour is replaced by maternal mercy,”⁵ and the symbol of that “new” spirit of mercy is Mary, Jesus’ mother, shown as a sweet, suffering victim who never cries for revenge. In Chaucer’s tale, the Virgin performs a miracle allowing the murdered child to sing even after his death (so that his corpse will eventually be found, while his Jewish murderers’ bodies will be torn apart alive and then hanged, in a spirit that one might not easily define as mercy and forgiveness). Mary, however, is presented with no recognized trace of her Jewish identity. Thus, in *The Prioress’s Tale* there is no need to imagine any “blessed apostasy”; the opposition between Christianity and the Jewish world is clear-cut. Borders cannot be crossed.

In Shakespeare’s play, the supposed contest between Old and New Testament principles, interpreted from a Christian viewpoint, plays a major ideological role in the dramatic construction too, with its apex in the courtroom scene.⁶ But the Jewish-Christian relationship is not so clearly delineated as in Chaucer; it is complicated first of all by the complexity of Shylock’s character and his appeal to universal human values (see, e.g., his famous self-defense in act 3, scene 1, lines 63–78, “I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?” etc.). In the more liberal times in which Séjour lived, since the first half of the nineteenth century, actors had started exploring and emphasizing that human complexity and its tragic features in their performances (see the actor Edmund Kean’s revolutionary interpretations of Shylock on the English stage in the years 1814–1833, and Hazlitt’s and Leigh Hunt’s enthusiasm and critical

support of that reading, described by John Gross in his book on Shylock's legend and legacy).⁷ A liberal writer like Séjour could not but reflect this "mellowing of attitudes towards Shylock inseparable from the growth of liberalism"⁸ in his treatment of the Jewish mother figure in his play.

Shakespeare's dramatization of the Jewish-Christian relationship in *The Merchant of Venice* also involves the figure of the Jew's daughter, Jessica, the "gentle Jew," inheritor of her father's wealth and legacy, whose apostasy and betrayal of her (cruel) father have obvious symbolic implications. According to Fiedler, this conversion, or crossing of religious borders, absent in Chaucer's tale, satisfied a new need that had grown with audiences by the time Shakespeare was writing, what the critic calls "a longing . . . for a representation of the female principle in Jewish form more human than the Blessed Virgin . . . : a good Jewish daughter of a bad Jewish father, in short." This "Jewish angel of mercy brought down from heaven" which "has flourished ever since in English and American literature"⁹ (see, for instance, the Rebecca of Scott's *Ivanhoe*, or the Ruth of Melville's long poem *Clarel*), a presence living on the borderline of religions and tempted by intermarriage, is a cultural construct to bear in mind when considering the conclusion of Séjour's play and its relation to Shakespeare's.

In *La Tireuse de cartes*, all the drama and main moral choices develop among women. While Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* is a "motherless play,"¹⁰ by contrast Séjour's play can be defined as a fatherless one (Géméea's husband, Gédéon Ben-Meïr, makes a brief appearance in the Prologue, scenes 17 and 19, and dies by the time act 1 begins; as for the child's foster father, he is held prisoner by pirates and not on stage in the course of the whole play).¹¹ The shift from a motherless play to a fatherless one corresponds to the different ideological and artistic choices made by the two playwrights, in compliance also with the taste and views of their times, and the changing role of women in the nineteenth century.

An important theme that Shakespeare's and Séjour's plays share is the Jewish daughters' betrayal of their origins, their conversion to Christianity. These conversions, however, take place under different circumstances. In Shakespeare, the girl converts by her own choice, in Séjour she is converted because of external events implying a certain violence, and even scandal in public opinion (see the minor characters' comments), whose consequences are then internalized by the younger victim. This major difference is once again the result of the different cultural climates in which the plays were written.

In addition, what essentially differs from a cross-cultural point of view is the way in which the child's only surviving parent solves the choice between revenge and forgiving. The discussion about these alternatives plays a fundamental role in both texts. If we consider this debate from the viewpoint of

the main characters' genders, the contrast between "patriarchal rigour" (in Shylock) and "maternal mercy" (in Géméa) is evident.

It is worth noticing that even in Shakespeare's play the plea for "mercy," opposing Shylock's "rigour" and thirst for revenge, though indeed modulated in various forms by all characters,¹² found its apotheosis in a woman's speech. This is clever Portia's famous speech in act 4, scene 1, when she enters the courtroom in a doctor of law's clothes and in this manly disguise, which gives her power of attention, can plead in favor of the supposedly more feminine and Christian value of mercy. Mercy and remorse had already been invoked by the Duke of Venice in his initial address to Shylock, concluded by the already mentioned statement, "We all expect a gentle answer, Jew" (act 4, scene 1, line 34); in that noble plea for humanity, the juxtaposition of "gentle" (so close to "gentile") and "Jew" already signaled an implicit opposition, contradicting what the characters expected. But it is Portia who makes the stronger plea for mercy, a key word in her speech, and rescues Antonio from his troubles. She begins with a strong, authoritative request, "Then must the Jew be merciful" (act 4, scene 1, line 182), which then, in answer to Shylock's inquiry for understanding, develops in her famous speech ("The quality of mercy is not strained," etc., lines 184–205), all based on the opposition between mercy (Christian mercy) and justice (the heartless Jew's demand). The contradiction in values culminates in a consideration, which, as in her own previous statement and in the Duke's, is once again addressed to Shylock not as a single individual, but as part of a collective (Jewish) category:

Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That in the course of justice none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy. (*The Merchant of Venice*, act 4, scene 1, lines 197–202)

By shrewdly using the two opposite notes of mercy and justice (Christian mercy, offered and refused by the Jew, and Venetian justice he demands), Portia helps Antonio the merchant escape from the legal trap into which he had imprudently fallen, while ensnaring Shylock the Jew instead. In the name of Christian mercy and Venetian law, in fact, Shylock, an "alien" who has dared to "seek the life" of a "citizen," will have all his property confiscated and will only be granted some of it back by converting to Christianity (the alternative option is death), before disappearing from the play in its last act, as if, Leslie A. Fiedler remarks, "dying to Shakespeare forever when he ceases to be 'the Jew.'"¹³

Thus, in Shakespeare's only play dealing with a Jewish character, the Christian (and feminine) claim for mercy in Portia's eloquent words is opposed

to the Jewish (and male) thirst for revenge disguised by a legal justification. Yet, at a deeper level of understanding, as subtly remarked by Susannah Heschel, Shylock's forced and punitive conversion, enacted at the end of act 4 (without our being allowed to witness the character's rebirth as a Christian in the next act, because of his disappearance from the play), comes to him "as the climax of a scene of protracted, verbal sadism on the part of Portia, who clearly knows the trap she is setting as she presents her prosecution"; and "the logic of the play's plot does not simply recapitulate the Christian defamation of Judaism, but calls our attention to the hypocrisy of Christian declamations," since through Portia's "hairsplitting legalism" it is not mercy, but actually Christian vengeance that triumphs over Shylock the Jew and defeats him.¹⁴ The irony of this subtext should not be overlooked.

This is the complex, centuries-long tradition in which Séjour was working, the one he absorbed, and which he partially changed, by transforming the traditional evil Jewish father into a loving Jewish mother, who, despite her desire for justice and revenge, and though without converting herself (a feature that some criticized at the time),¹⁵ eventually accepts both her daughter's conversion and the Christian plea for mercy and forgiveness. "We expect a gentle answer, Jew," the Duke's demand to Shylock in the courtroom scene, is the unexpressed request obliquely coming from Séjour's text all through the play, and likely shared by most of Séjour's audiences. And the answer given by the title character of the play, the "fortune-teller," to her daughter's kidnapper is eventually the painfully granted "gentle answer" that Shylock had refused: "I forgive you, signora!" In this scenario, Séjour was redefining the terms of engagement between the Jewish and Christian worlds, expressing the "Shylockian paradigm," one could say, in a way more consistent with his own liberal worldview. Thus in mid-nineteenth-century France, Shakespeare's bitter comedy, with all its prejudices, was turned not into the tragedy that lurked behind the performance, but into sweeter melodrama. It was a denouement by which Séjour was trying to satisfy all parts in the contemporary conflict, by protecting the natural family's rights without disclaiming and offending the acquired Catholic religious ones. It was a delicate and difficult balance, but one that could please the majority's taste in the theater house.

CENSORSHIP, HISTORY, AND THE
DRAMA'S DENOUEMENT

THE MORAL ISSUE OF forgiveness constitutes the last note in *La Tireuse de cartes*. The drama's general denouement, with the kidnapped girl returned to her real mother but remaining a Catholic, can be read as a matter-of-fact comment on an anthropologic reality—that we are a mixture of nature and culture. While our birth is a *natural* fact, our religion, albeit usually inherited by birth, is a *cultural* construct that has to be built up in the course of our upbringing. Therefore one should not be surprised when an adopted child, especially if taken very young and cherished with love, believes in her new parents' values and faith, which may be different from those of her natural ones.

In *La Tireuse de cartes*, a play written and produced only a year and half after Edgardo Mortara's abduction, at a time when public opinion was still in turmoil over the affair, when the outcome of that great scandal could not be foreseen, the solution given by Séjour to the young person's divided loyalties anticipates, at least in part, the actual development of the historical case. Notwithstanding the international outrage created by Edgardo's kidnapping, Pius IX refused, up to the end, to give the child back to his family. The boy grew up in Rome under the Pope's personal protection and supervision, and was never allowed any connection with his parents and family of origin. Edgardo eventually became a priest. On a personal level, the reality was much more dramatic than in the romantic writer's melodrama. After twenty years of total separation, Edgardo did eventually meet his mother again in 1878, and little by little he partially recovered his family bonds, despite sorrow over his lost relationship with his father.¹ Not surprisingly, after such a long, forced separation and intense religious "cure," the depth of his Christian religious absorption never faded from his tortured soul. Raised to become a priest, in total isolation not only from his family but from any secular institution and environment, he grew up convinced that his plight had a providential

meaning. He even felt guilty for all the “suffering” his case had caused the Pope, his adoptive father. In an autobiographical memoir of 1878, he recollected both the Pope’s affection and his own responsibility for the Pope’s suffering with these words: Pius IX “always lavished the most paternal demonstrations of affection on me, gave me wise and useful training and, tenderly blessing me, often repeated that I had cost him much pain and many tears.”² In 1867, the Pope himself sent him a note expressing the same concept: “You are very dear to me, my little son, for I acquired you for Jesus Christ at a high price. So it is, I paid dearly for your ransom.”³ The burden of the historical experience in which Edgardo had been a protagonist lay heavy on Edgardo’s shoulders. His new loyalty was a cause of bitter pain for his family, though, after their useless struggle to get him back, all that grief and disruption was eventually overcome, at least in part, by the natural bond of family affection (for more about this, see chapter 16 in this book).

However, when one compares the real events with Séjour’s play, one sees that, although the family drama was given its due space, one of the most important issues at stake in the true historical event was actually missing in *La Tireuse de cartes*: the demand for civil rights for ethnic and religious minorities, what is historically called Emancipation. Here is where the playwright’s different loyalties came into conflict. From this point of view, it is interesting to compare Séjour’s preface to *La Tireuse de cartes*, a strong statement of intentions, with the play itself, especially its denouement.

In his preface to the printed version, Séjour speaks “out loudly in defense of the desecrated home” (*le foyer outragé*) and stands explicitly on the side of “the Mortara family’s cause.” It is, in fact, to plead this family’s cause that his play has been written, he openly admits. And in order to avoid any ambiguity whatever about the real topic and motivation for his play, even at the risk of appearing to go “against Christianity,”⁴ he spells out his argument in the long prefatory note. He condemns the abduction of a child from his parents as “a cruelly inhumane action” (*une cruauté*), going so far as to address himself directly to the Pope, declaring in a dramatic tone: “You steal a child from his father, and I tell you: ‘That is frightful!’ You wrench him from the arms of his mother, and I tell you: ‘that is villainous!’ ”⁵ His long, eloquent plea to the Pope not only touches emotional and human chords, but little by little becomes more and more political, with references to “society” and the “State,” and direct invitations to reflect upon the dangers of intolerance: “I beg you to reflect. Intolerance is a bad counselor; worse still, a deadly one.”⁶ He even dares to announce that history has shown that intolerant countries are soon defeated.⁷ And in very critical terms he goes so far as to define Italy and Spain as the two “lands of the Inquisition,” which are struggling against their past and trying to emerge from an almost fatal condition of crisis:

Yesterday Italy lay dying; perhaps Spain will lie dead tomorrow. Both are struggling against the fatality of their past. Their laws bespeak chaos; their authority bespeaks confusion. The world looks upon them and cannot understand. In the end, in a final, profound effort to refashion themselves, what will these two lands of the Inquisition become; these two lands that seek their own conscience in the conscience of others, and that waver now in the throes of Europe's twofold upheaval, betwixt the temptation of despotism and the attractive force of freedom?⁸

These are the final, disquieting words of Séjour's preface. Such a conclusion, which sounds like a denunciation of a legacy of intolerance associated with the power system of the Church and its Inquisition, is a sophisticated analysis of the contemporary situation, a clear political statement, and indeed a warning. The political conditions in these "lands of the Inquisition" might develop in two opposite directions, as this open ending explicitly says: either toward despotism (the "temptation" of an authoritarian order, seen as a necessary answer against "chaos" and "confusion") or toward rebellion against despotism—that is, toward the "attractive force of freedom"⁹ (how dangerous for the Pope's absolute temporal power). The question format in which these concerns and warnings are formulated, and which indeed characterizes the last three paragraphs of the preface (all three ending with a series of troubled questions),¹⁰ is a sign of a pressing interrogation coming from within the Catholic world itself, requesting a morally acceptable answer from the spiritual authority of the Pope, whose political behavior was then under scrutiny and widely rejected internationally.

The kind of passionate arguments that were being debated in the international press as a consequence of the kidnapping in Bologna, and the moral and political extension of the controversy, are well exemplified by this intense preface. Here the indignant protest at a crime against "humanity" appears within a larger scenario of worries and concerns that the case was signaling to liberal public opinion (i.e., the "world" that "cannot understand") that kept growing in number and sensibility in those culturally and politically charged years, in what one can call the mid-nineteenth-century Age of Emancipations on both sides of the Atlantic.

Yet the acute historical sensibility and awareness of the contemporary political situation, as manifested by the preface, is only partially reflected in the play itself. This is first of all due to the writer's choice of backdating the historical setting of the story. The play's action, in fact, does not take place in contemporary times but in the early eighteenth century, at a time when those larger political issues were only beginning to appear in public debate. Because of this and the lack of any contextual historical reference even to

that earlier historical period, the dramatic action is reduced to its domestic conflict and loses the passion of its larger political and civil context (which will be, on the contrary, powerfully stressed in the Italian play by Riccardo Castelvecchio, *La famiglia ebrea*, also inspired by the Mortara case, and published in Milan one year later). This backdating of the scene obviously resulted from the desire to create distance from the actual facts, so as to dramatize them through indirection, in a sort of silent pact with the audience, which knew very well what the whole drama was really about, as appears in all the reviews of the time. The artistic consequence, however, is that Séjour's presentation of the case as shown on stage is addressed more to the audience's hearts than to its full rational understanding; the play is stripped of its essential larger context of moral and political values.

That is one of the causes of the play's ambiguously appeasing and controversial denouement. From an ideological point of view, it must be admitted that, even in the preface, while the writer speaks up boldly in defense of the family's natural rights and undoubtedly exalts the values of "tolerance" and "freedom," he only indirectly hints at the issue of equal civil rights and avoids openly bringing up freedom of religion, which could not be granted by a despotic fatherly power as a concession, but should have been defined as a right by a state's law. As for the play, no mention is ever made of any institutional authority higher than that of the convent where the little girl is hurriedly brought and hidden after her secret baptism (which is also the institution through which, in total secrecy, the child is given in adoption to the aristocratic Catholic lady who becomes her new "mother"). The Catholic Code of Canon Law, authorizing the baptism of a child "in danger of dying" even against its non-Catholic parents' wishes, and its theological and legal corollary of forced Christian upbringing, upon which the abduction was historically justified by the Church,¹¹ is only briefly and implicitly referred to in the prologue of the play. Marta the nurse, who is responsible for the secret baptism, tells a friend about her act and her running to the convent for the child to be "reborn, ready to live a life in Christ," with herself as a godmother. She says, "It was only then that I realized what it meant. . . . Now that she was a Christian, she had to be raised by Christians!" (Prologue, scene 8).¹² The assumption is that the audience knew what the Catholic rules were, and it was only by showing their disrupting consequences that the playwright partially put them into question.

A contemporary source can help us contextualize its production on stage and understand the likely main reason of this vagueness of references. Revealing information appears in the files of the government-appointed consultative Examining Commission for censorship of Paris theaters, to which the play was submitted, like all other plays, under Emperor Napoleon III. A

law of July 30, 1850, had restored the earlier policy of theatrical censorship: “two copies of each play were to be presented to the Ministry of the Interior at least fifteen days before the intended first performance. The Examining Commission would report their conclusion to higher administrators who could bring them to the attention of the Minister himself.”¹³ The role of the Examining Commission was “to foresee trouble-causing elements” in the plays, “and here was a play wrought in the heat of controversy.”¹⁴ Charles Edwards O’Neill, who searched the Commission’s files for his study of theatrical censorship in mid-nineteenth-century France, reports that *La Tireuse de cartes* was apparently “given exceptional treatment, for, strangely, although a text of every other Séjour play of the Second Empire can be found in the censorship files, *La Tireuse* is not there.”¹⁵ O’Neill suggests that the “special treatment” was due to the political implications of the text, and to the rumored co-authorship of an important member of the Emperor’s staff, Jean-François Constant Mocquard. What is sure is that the official reports on *La Tireuse de cartes* in the files show the high degree of awareness of, and concern for, the play’s subject. According to the Examining Commission’s first report of late November 1859 (just one month before its premiere), the play’s subject was “evidently inspired by a recent event,” the Mortara case, “whose repercussions are at the present moment being felt anew.”¹⁶ In this respect the Commission raised a “pre-judgment question,” which they did not think “they were qualified to resolve. It is a question whether, on the one hand, one wishes to permit the theater to become henceforth an arena open to religious antagonism, even when that antagonism is not produced except for purely dramatic interest.” The second point of the question was “whether, on the other hand,” it was “proper” to stage a subject inspired by such a controversial case, “in the present political situation on the international and religious scene” (a historical contextualization that should be stressed). The answer to these “pre-judgment” questions was evidently positive (the alleged implication of the Emperor’s secretary in the production of the play was obviously a sufficient guarantee), but the degree of intervention of the Examining Commission in revising the script for its approval can be seen by this description based on the Commission’s report:

Invited by the Minister “to effect modifications . . . of a nature to diminish the dangers and obstacles,” the Examining Commission went to work, but they did not expect “to arrive at a completely satisfactory result.” They toned down elements that “highlighted religious antagonism.” They eliminated lines that seemed blasphemous. They removed a parish priest, and omitted mention of his church and sermon; in the kidnapping there would not even be a superior of a monastery, because he too would be a priest. “We did accept a *superioress*,

because she does not have the sacred character [of ordination]; besides she does not appear, but is spoken of only in the exposition of the action.”

“As much as possible,” the censors explained, “we tried to concentrate the dominant interest of the play on the tenderness, the rivalry of the two mothers.” The Minister responsible gave his approval for performance because he “saw nothing in it that could prevent it” from being played. Outside observers, however, seeing the reflection on Pius IX, were surprised, because a play that could have given offense to the Austrian Emperor was blocked at about the same time.¹⁷

While other plays by Séjour were approved with only minor modifications, this report suggests that Séjour’s text was originally more direct in showing the involvement of the Church in the kidnapping and in giving voice to the “religious antagonism” of the case. However, in the Examining Commission’s report no mention is made of any modification requested by the Commission concerning the play’s ending. In the play, the appeasing solution to the actual conflict animating public opinion was probably determined by the author himself. Indeed, the religious denouement, with the Christian conversion of the kidnapped girl miraculously confirmed (although only in “soft,” deductive forms in the final version of *La Tireuse de cartes*)¹⁸ and with the final act of forgiveness of her once desperate Jewish mother, is what especially reveals the writer’s ideology and viewpoint.

The ending shows that the author felt the need to counterbalance the filial return home (that is, the vindication of the violated human right) with an homage to his own Christian religion, that religion that might otherwise have been considered the loser in the contemporary struggle. If the affirmation of the inviolable sacredness of the family, that is, the natural right that mattered most to the playwright and his spectators, could be accompanied by the child’s conversion to Christianity and the acceptance of that result by her Jewish mother, all positive aims had been achieved. This conclusion did not satisfy the critic of *La Gazette de France* (one of the two papers mentioned in Séjour’s introduction to *La Tireuse de cartes*), J.-M. Tiengou, who complained about the Jewish mother’s non-conversion to Christianity.¹⁹ Yet even a sympathetic critic like Jules Janin felt, for different reasons, that there was a problem in a finale that was necessarily based on fantasy: “But fantasy,” he wrote on the first page of the *Journal des débats*, one of the French papers in the forefront of the battle against the kidnapping in Bologna, “lacks the power to untie Gordian knots.”²⁰ And there was indeed a Gordian knot, for a Catholic liberal like Séjour, in the drama he had put on stage.

Notwithstanding all the outrage against an act of intolerance abolishing natural rights and all the sympathy for the oppressed Jewish family uttered

in Séjour's preface to *La Tireuse de cartes* (a family whose Jewishness, though, is *never* mentioned in that introductory text, as it is in the name of *universal human rights* that Séjour speaks up), on the whole it seems that in the cultural conflict dramatized in this mid-nineteenth-century play we are still not too far ideologically from the way of thinking and the feelings given voice, almost one century earlier, by the first internationally known black American poet, Phillis Wheatley. In her poem "On Being Brought from Africa to America," published in London in 1773, Wheatley expresses gratitude for having been brought away from her "*Pagan* land," so that her "benighted" soul could be illuminated by knowledge, and she, "black as *Cain*," could be "refin'd" through conversion:

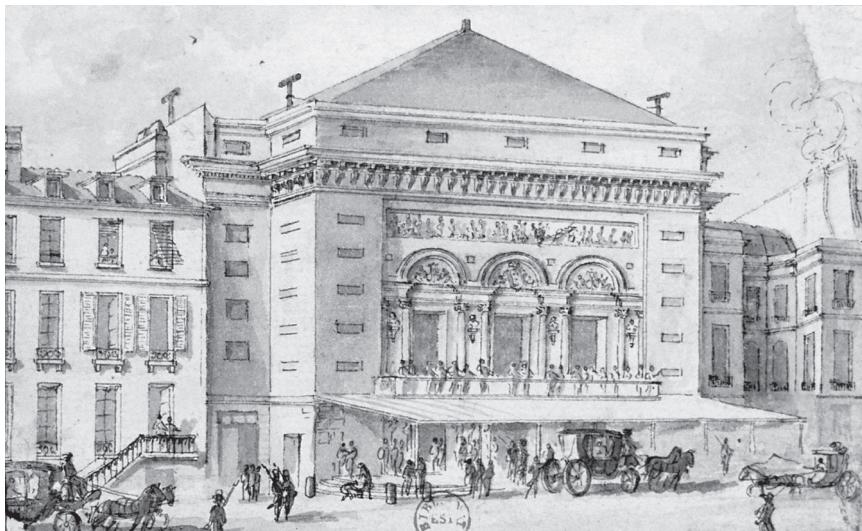
'Twas mercy brought me from my *Pagan* land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God, that there's a *Saviour* too;
...
Remember, *Christians, Negroes*, black as *Cain*,
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.²¹

The motif of "refinement" through conversion is not thematized as explicitly in Séjour's mid-nineteenth-century work (that claim would have sounded offensive to a mostly Christian but liberal, and partially Jewish, Parisian audience),²² yet the argument lurks more or less implicitly underneath various passages of the play; and what finally triumphs in the melodramatic ending, together with the restoration of the natural family order, is a *psychological* version of the salvation motif achieved through religious conversion. This—and no further—is how far Victor Séjour could go in defense of a persecuted minority that was not his own.

CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCES AND REVIEWS
IN FRANCE AND ITALY

LA TIREUSE DE CARTES opened at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin in Paris on Thursday December 22, 1859. Only two days later, on December 24, a first journalistic piece about that premiere came out in *Le Siècle*; since the performance had taken place in the evening, indeed that was, technically, the first possible day for the publication of a review. This short piece of four paragraphs is important for many reasons: for the popularity and influence of the paper, for the position it was given (it was on the front page), for what it said about the play and its first performance, and for the way that review was immediately quoted and commented on in French Catholic papers in the following days. *Le Siècle* was at that time the most widely read French newspaper,¹ and the rapidity with which its theatrical review came out demonstrates its efficiency in reporting the news of the day. Furthermore, the review's publication on its front page, in a section on the upper part of the daily titled "France," shows that the piece of news did not simply concern theater life. In fact, the news was first of all political.

The news was that the French Emperor Napoleon III and the Empress had attended the premiere of Séjour's play *La Tireuse de cartes*, a drama, the journalist openly stated, in which "one had the happy idea of transporting onto the theater the hideous attack committed by the Holy See toward the Mortara boy."² The member of the editorial staff of *Le Siècle* writing the article was Émile de la Bédollière, a writer, translator—among his translations, the French version of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1853—and historian who had just published *Histoire de la guerre d'Italie*, on the Italian historical events of 1859; in 1858 he had been in the forefront of the battle against the abduction of Edgardo Mortara.³ There can be no doubt about the evaluation given by Émile de la Bédollière on both the historical event ("l'odieux attentat") and the idea ("l'heureuse idée") of writing a play inspired by it. And, due to the central position given to the article, there is



12.1. "Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin." Indian ink and wash drawing, ca. 1850. Several plays by Victor Séjour, including *La Tireuse de cartes*, were performed at this theater on Boulevard Saint-Martin, Paris. Wikimedia Commons.

also no doubt that the ideological and political judgment was shared by the most influential French paper of the time.

In reporting the content of a play defined as "remarkable," the critic underlines the original touch of its denouement, as it is through prayer, he says, that a young girl is able to achieve her natural mother's "reconciliation" with her adoptive one and "mutual tolerance" between Christianity and Judaism. Within this framework, he then particularly stresses the fact that "in the play performed at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, Christianity recognizes the authority of maternal power, and," he then adds, introducing a direct (ironic and bitter) reference to the current scandal, "although the action takes place in the seventeenth century, it seems that the *non possumus* [traditional Latin religious phrase, meaning "we cannot," used by the Church of Rome, and particularly by Pope Pius IX, when claiming that they could take no other action] on such a matter was not yet known, the child is returned to her mother, while in the nineteenth century, we are still waiting for the cardinals' government to return his beloved son to the Jew of Bologna."⁴

This strong statement contradicts the opinion of those who, even today, try to justify certain negative phenomena as due to the culture and spirit of the time, since, as it is quite clear from the passage above, the Pope's *non possumus*, the denial of the return of the child to his Jewish parents, and his

kidnapping by the Church because of a secret baptism performed on him as a baby without his family's consent, was considered unacceptable, and totally "out of time," by the liberal opinion of the day. What was at stake, as a matter of fact, was a dramatic conflict between a growing liberal culture and a reactionary regime whose behavior was only defended by the so-called ultramontanist movement, asserting the supremacy of papal authority over secular and local spiritual hierarchies.⁵ Besides, in the critic's view, the French Emperor's presence at the premiere and his joining in the general applause for the play had a moral and political implication, reaffirming the universal values of nature and humanity, which were shared by the whole audience and by the highest political power ("L'empereur," the Emperor himself), while they were under obstinate attack by reactionary forces "beyond the mountains": "The Emperor and the whole audience, by joining their applause showed how the feelings of nature, so nobly expressed, keep their strength in our society, that the partisans of ultramontanism slander with such obstinacy."⁶

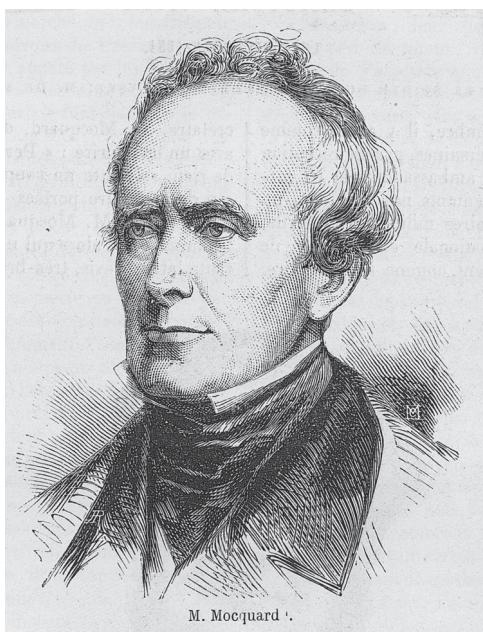
The political implications of the play and of its successful performance were further stressed in the final paragraph of the piece, where the issue of authorship was introduced. Yes, the play was by Monsieur Victor Séjour, but "in the corridors one said that he had a collaborator, a man of great wit, and who, because of his important official position, had not wanted to receive the bravos deserved by a work, which was not only beautiful from the viewpoint of art, but even excellent from the viewpoint of intention and timeliness."⁷ The name of the supposed important "collaborator" was not yet revealed (it would come out as an explicit rumor in the papers of the following days), but the approval of the political implications, and even intentions, concerning the event, which was more than cultural, was clear and strongly exposed.

The reactions by the French Catholic press would soon follow. It is very interesting to compare the attitude of two major Catholic papers of the time, *L'Univers* and *L'Ami de la religion*. Apparently, their approach is similar, since in both cases the report is based on the article published in *Le Siècle* (further evidence of the important political role of that paper in the public discourse of the time). Yet there are also differences, showing the variety of attitudes within the official Catholic world. *L'Univers* was the only French Catholic paper that, under the guidance of its "ultramontanist" editor Louis Veuillot, had supported the Mortara boy's abduction. It was officially the organ of the Catholic Union, whose name, "Union Catholique," was still inscribed in the paper's subtitle, although since 1850 its illiberal positions had actually helped bring about the end of Catholic political unity in France; soon, on January 30, 1860, because of its campaign in support of the temporal power of the Pope and against Napoleon III's policy concerning the Papal States, its publication was suspended for years (it was revived in 1867, but sup-



12.2. "Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin.—*La Tireuse de cartes*, act I." Engraving published in *Le Monde illustré*, December 31, 1859, p. 428. In the background, one can recognize the urban setting of the Italian city of Genoa, with its greenery and ancient bridge, and behind it the imposing structure of a church (mentioned in the stage directions of the French edition), which plays an important institutional role in the events dramatized. Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département Arts du spectacle, Paris.

pressed again in 1874).⁸ On December 28, 1859, in the Feuilleton section of the paper, after a general introduction humorously attacking the journalists and theater critics of the rival paper ("the managers of *Le Siècle* who are called the modern Athenians") and after a long review of a comedy by Eugène Scribe and Émile de Najac, an article by Venet reports the "success, of an exceptional character," of the first production of *La Tireuse de cartes* on December 22, which the paper learned about from *Le Siècle* and other French and Belgian papers.⁹ This drama, comments *L'Univers*, "has been inspired by a question, which was successfully used to their advantage by the enemies of the Church last year, the so-called question of young Mortara." The reviewer then raises the issue of the team-authorship, reporting the rumor, which had only been hinted at by *Le Siècle* but already made manifest by the *Figaro*, that, beside Victor Séjour, "the author in evidence," there seemed to be a very important public figure: "it seems that the principal author, hiding



12.3. Portrait of Jean-François Mocquard, ca. 1851. Engraving published in *Histoire populaire contemporaine de la France*. Vol. 2. Paris: Hachette, 1865, p. 260. Mocquard, who was the private secretary and chief of staff (*chef de cabinet*) of Napoleon III, Emperor of France, was rumored to be Victor Séjour's collaborator in two of his plays, *La Tireuse de cartes* and *Les Massacres de Syrie*. Author's collection.

in the shadows out of modesty, is Monsieur Mocquart [*sic*], secretary of the Emperor.”¹⁰ The remark on Mocquard’s “modesty” is, in the style of that controversial paper, ironic, as is the tone of several other remarks that follow, concerning the critics appreciating the play, its success, and “intention.”

One day later, on December 29, 1859, a “Chronique” by M. Garcin published in *L’Ami de la religion*¹¹ reported the news of the opening of *La Tireuse de cartes*, not only, as in *L’Univers*, by referring to the article in *Le Siècle*, but even by quoting the whole source, which, according to *L’Ami de la religion*, had been “loudly” reproduced by papers at home and abroad. Interestingly enough, while the whole article from *Le Siècle* is quoted word for word in all its four paragraphs, in the concluding sentence the citation gets very imprecise: while in the original of *Le Siècle* (quoted above) it was written that the play was “not only beautiful as a work of art, but even excellent from the viewpoint of intention and timeliness,” the word-by-word citation in *L’Ami de la religion* states that the play was “not only beautiful as a work of art, but it was even a good deed.”¹² This rewording of the conclusion is surprising, considering that the rest of the article is cited with fidelity and in its entirety. The reason might be simply due to an error, perhaps caused by a misunderstanding in an oral dictation of the text, since “intention” and “action,” in their French equivalent too, might be phonetically garbled in a ver-

bal transmission. Otherwise, if the change were mischievous, one should think that, in transforming a timely “intention” into a “deed” or an “action,” one meant to stress the serious threat of the play (this idea was obviously in the journalist’s mind, either consciously or unconsciously). In any case, after the long passage quoted from *Le Siècle*, in the two short paragraphs of commentary that follow, the political relevance of the event is drily underlined once again, even here, by revealing the name of the rumored “important collaborator” (“M. Mocquart, *chef du cabinet* of the Emperor”), and by a further shorter piece quoted from *Le Siècle* of the next day: “Let us add that, because of the position of the author who has kept his anonymity, this drama almost achieves the importance of a pamphlet published at Dentu.”¹³ In fact, the Parisian publisher Dentu had just published a very important pamphlet (*Le Pape et le Congrès*), paving the way for a revolutionary solution of the Italian question at the expense of the Pope’s temporal power, which had created strong reactions in Catholic papers. It was also Dentu that in 1858 had printed two works devoted to the Mortara case (and would publish at least one more in 1860), always in defense of the family’s rights.¹⁴ By mentioning Dentu, *Le Siècle* was placing *La Tireuse de cartes* next to *Le Pape et le Congrès* and other activist political pamphlets, and was informing its readers that this new theatrical initiative would also seek to agitate and influence the political scene. The Catholic press was acknowledging this danger and stressing the amazing historical role of a “play of the boulevards” (*pièce de boulevards*).¹⁵

It was perhaps this insistence on the political implications of the play achieving “almost the importance of a pamphlet,” that prompted Victor Séjour to explain his intentions in writing the play and to make his “writing for justice” in favor of the Mortara family explicit, in the introduction opening the printed version of his work in 1860.¹⁶



This series of articles demonstrates the heated context in which the performance of *La Tireuse de cartes* took place. We shall now dig further into the press of the time, and discuss some of the earliest and most exhaustive reviews concerning the play and its premiere, which appeared in other widely read Parisian dailies and periodicals.

Three days after the premiere, on December 25, the *Figaro* (then a biweekly)¹⁷ had a piece by Georges Davidson (signing with his initials G. D.), who reported on the moving performance “full of emotions and tears” (*remplie d’émotions et de larmes*) given that Thursday in an overcrowded theater, “full as far as the aisles” (*devant une salle comble jusqu’aux couloirs*).¹⁸ After acknowledging the enormous success of the performance, the first point

raised by the reviewer concerns the topical interest of the play's subject matter. Although the setting of the play is in the eighteenth century, he remarks, one can immediately understand from its initial exposition that, despite that back-dating "imposed by certain necessities" (a vague reference to censorship and political concerns), "the events are yesterday's, today's, and are still waiting for a denouement. This play is more than a drama, it is a plea in favor of the inalienable rights of the family." The rest of the article leads to the same conclusion. After sketching the plot, underlining the emotions aroused in the hearts of the audience by the natural mother's words when she finds her daughter again after many years of separation ("I have not seen her grow up"), and mentioning the "immense proportions" of the play's success in the fourth act, staging the two mothers' conflict over the daughter, Davidson comes back to the topical relevance of the situation onstage: "It is here," he says, "that the play, getting right into the heart of current events, discusses *the immense question which is still pending* in front of passionate and solicitous Europe" (my italics).¹⁹

Not only is the connection with current events made manifest by the journalist and obviously perceived by the play's audience (without even the need of mentioning the kidnapped child's name, since the case was so well-known at the time), but there is no possible doubt about the moral and political judgment these references convey. The *immensity* of the success is linked to the *immensity* of the question it raises, as the repetition of the same qualifying adjective suggests. "It is a great, really great success," the reviewer eventually sums up. He then proceeds to evaluate the actors: among them, there were Madame Marie Laurent, "splendid in the role of the Jewess" (the same actress had played a "barbaric" mother's role in Séjour's *Le Fils de la nuit*),²⁰ and Mademoiselle Lia Félix,²¹ playing the innocent daughter's part, slightly criticized for a certain affectation, but significantly described as "very intelligent, it is in her blood"²² (prejudice can take positive shapes too; this was, in fact, an indirect reference to her being a Jewess . . . ; she was a younger sister of the very famous Jewish tragic actress Rachel,²³ former queen of the French stage, who had died at age thirty-seven only one year earlier).

However, the greatest coup de theater, leading the discussion once more toward its political sphere, comes at the end of the piece, when Davidson mentions the author of the play, Monsieur Victor Séjour, but then wittily adds:

We have mentioned only Monsieur Victor Séjour, yet the applause was actually for two,—and we know M. Séjour [to be] too much of a gentleman (*galante homme*) not to give his collaborator the share of bravos he deserves. Everyone in the audience was whispering the name of the great personage whose high position constrains him to anonymity. *Figaro* is not discrete; it is its greatest quality, so it will say this name: it is that of M. Mocquart.²⁴

M. Mocquart (or Mocguard, as his name is spelled on his grave and elsewhere)²⁵ was, as we know, the Emperor's private secretary and *chef de cabinet*. His "secret" co-authorship, or collaboration, was a rumor that kept appearing in other contemporary reviews, which shows the political relevance publicly attributed to Séjour's play, further reinforced by the presence of the Emperor and his wife at the premiere. The *Figaro* review stops abruptly after disclosing the secret agent behind the veil of political anonymity. It is as if we had reached the end of a detective story; the mystery is solved, the political implication is revealed, and nothing needs to be added.

On the same Christmas Day as the *Figaro* article appeared, *La Presse*, one of the French newspapers that had taken liberal positions in *l'Affaire Mortara*, published a long review of *La Tireuse de cartes*, beginning in its feuilleton section at the bottom of its first page and continuing on to the second.²⁶ It was written by Paul de Saint-Victor, who in 1855 had succeeded Théophile Gautier as drama critic of the paper. At the start of his piece, Paul de Saint-Victor acknowledges the great success of the play: "it is the most beautiful success that M. Victor Séjour has achieved in the theater." He underlines



12.4. Portrait of Marie Laurent by Paul Nadar [Paul Tournachon]. Silver print on card., ca. 1865–1875. The famous stage actress Marie Laurent played the title role in Séjour's *La Tireuse de cartes*. In this photograph, by the son of the well-known caricaturist and photographer Nadar, she looks dressed in this role, as the kidnapped daughter's Jewish mother, disguised as a fortune-teller. Cliché © Rue des Archives/Tips Images.

"the picturesque scenes so skillfully contrasted," the "vigor" typical of Séjour's writing, the "emotion" of the two mothers' rivalry ("all is concentrated on the antagonism of the two mothers contending for a daughter, of two religions claiming a soul"), the dramatic "crescendo of the situation," and finally the play's denouement, which has, comments the critic, "the sweetness of rest following violence. [. . .] / Thus ends in a canticle a drama full of the most real and severe emotions."²⁷

Within this favorable presentation, however, a slight element of criticism is introduced. It concerns the daughter figure, Noémi/Paula, about whom the critic objects: "One would rather have the voice of her blood to speak more in her." Yet what immediately follows, introduced by "But try to imagine . . . , " is a very interesting justification of the playwright's choice given by the critic, who finds cause for the girl's reactions in the different historical setting of the play. In this long digression, Paul de Saint-Victor—himself an aristocrat who in accordance with his democratic principles had ceased to use his title *comte* before his name—draws a moving picture of the conditions of oppression and persecution historically suffered by Jews in Christian countries (here with specific reference to Italy), and expresses all his sympathy for their plight, while at the same time implying that this infernal life was a thing of the past that had radically progressed in the nineteenth-century:

But try to imagine the terror of a young girl brought up in the courtly and devoted aristocracy of eighteenth-century Italy, and learning all of a sudden that she is not an aristocrat, that she is not a Christian, and that she has to leave the sweet world where she has lived, for the despised and damned caste of the Ghetto. Remind yourselves of the frightening barriers of terrors and prejudices, which separated Israel from the world of the living at that time, and you will forgive the fright of the girl, following her mother into that *città [sic] dolente*.—Between the Jews and the Christians there were abysses of contempt, mountains of pride, and the cries of anathema, and the bugaboo of excommunications, and the stakes of the Inquisition and the braziers of Hell. . . .—even more than that. *Trucidatur Salvator inter nos*, as is said in the somber formula which in ancient jurisprudence denied the Jews the right of oath.—A young Italian girl, just out of convent, would not be able to gaily make this "dangerous jump."²⁸

By claiming that these prejudices and persecutions were things of the past, the liberal critic was taking sides in the heated dispute aroused by the Mortara case that had prompted the writing of the play and was implicitly saying to his readers that events like these were remnants of a dark past, and unacceptable in the spirit of present day.



12.5. Lia Félix as Joan of Arc in Charles Gounod's musical version of Jules Barbier's play *Jeanne d'Arc*, first performed in Paris at the Théâtre de la Gaîté in 1873. Woodburytype by Lemercier, cliché by D. H. Mayer. The photograph was published on the front page of *Paris-Theatre*, July 27–August 3, 1876, on the occasion of the work's revival at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin. Lia Félix, sister of the renowned tragic actress Rachel, played the role of the kidnapped daughter in Séjour's *La Tireuse de cartes*. Photo: Author's collection.

In the paragraphs concluding his piece for *La Presse*, Paul de Saint-Victor extends his enthusiasm for the play to the actors who have all interpreted it “with admirable zeal.” The actress who is mentioned first and given more attention is Mademoiselle Lia Félix, whose interpretation of the daughter figure, particularly admired for her ability to give voice to the pathos and tragedy of her condition, evokes from the critic the name of her famous sister, Rachel, the great tragedienne of the French stage: “At that point, the name of Rachel came up spontaneously among the crowd. The resemblance was astonishing; she struck all memories. It was the accent, the attitude, the gesture, the inspiration, of her sister.”²⁹



One day after Paul de Saint-Victor’s article in *La Presse*, on December 26, 1859, the *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires* published on its first page, in its feuilleton section, a review of *La Tireuse de cartes* by Jules Janin, the influential theater critic of the journal since 1830, which started with an

explicit reference to the political implication of the performance. Janin writes in fact that this new drama was “almost an event. It concerns very recent passions, it is the brutal echo of a deplorable violence; it will reawaken many sorrows.”³⁰ It was evidently not necessary to specify what “passions,” “violence,” and “sorrows” the critic was referring to. The *Journal des débats* was a liberal paper, which had been very active in protesting against Edgardo’s kidnapping when the case broke out in the French press in October–November 1858 (the paper’s first piece on the case, by Prévost-Paradol, was actually published on September 29, 1858; more articles, by Louis Alloury, came out on October 8, 12, 16, 18, 22, 23, 25).³¹ It was in this journal that a well-known member of the French Catholic Church, and French translator of Alessandro Manzoni’s *Défense de la morale catholique* (Paris: Gaume, 1836), the abbot André Vincent Delacouture, had published, “in the interest of religion,” his three letters of protest against the kidnapping and against the French Catholic newspaper *L’Univers* that had defended it. These letters had been published there on October 18, 20, and 29, 1858, and had been followed by the publication of a whole booklet, *Le Droit canon et le droit naturel dans l’affaire Mortara* (1858), developing an idea already expressed in the first of his letters to the *Journal des débats*. He argued: “what is not susceptible of any doubt or dispute is that the rights of nature are inviolable and that religion can never violate them.”³² The readers of the *Journal des débats* were well informed and ideologically oriented. In the first paragraph of his review, after the strong statement quoted above, Janin also refers to the presence of the Emperor and Empress, conferring “a degree of authority” to the *événement*. By connecting the vivid memory of the case with Napoleon III’s presence on the play’s opening night, the critic was suggesting the political connotation of the event and the relevance of the entire cultural affair.

In chapter 11, we have already quoted the comment made by Janin on the play’s denouement, whose fantasy-derived solution was unable to solve the “terrible Gordian knots” involved in the situation on stage. At the end of his review the writer mentions the two main women actresses, Madame Laurent, at the same time “enraged and tender,” and Mademoiselle Lia Félix and her “touching grace” (nor does he forget to make a quick reference to her sister Rachel, on whom he will soon write a whole book). But he eventually comes back to the play’s subject, whose “interest” and “pity” will guarantee the play’s durable success.



In addition to these articles that appeared in the most important political and religious papers of the time (which, by the way, shows the importance

given to theater reviews even in those papers, in the lively, dynamic cultural atmosphere of mid-nineteenth-century Paris), it is worth mentioning the first article on *La Tireuse de cartes* published by a weekly specialized in drama, *Le Monde dramatique*, in the paper's section titled "Premières Représenta-tions" (First performances), on Thursday December 29, 1859. Ernest Gebauer, the theater critic, starts his review by mentioning the double authorship Séjour-Mocquart and the public rumor concerning the latter's collaboration as politically connected to the presence of the Emperor and Empress at the premiere (a presence that "would have opened the eyes of the less clear-sighted and informed the less informed"). However, he then declares firmly that his opinion of the play is not influenced by the important position of this "collaborator"; on the contrary, "if we say that *La Tireuse de cartes* justifies the success it has achieved, it is because we think that truly."³³ The rest of the piece, besides giving details about the plot (including its inspiration coming from the "story of young Mortara") and the excellent quality of the actors, contains both a general, positive appreciation of Victor Séjour as a playwright and a very positive evaluation of this new drama, "certainly one of the best he has produced." Ernest Gebauer was not easily pleased, as we can judge, in this same review, from his very critical remarks on French contemporary drama and on the successful works of Monsieur Dennery, a very popular drama playwright of the time (one year later, he would write a harsh attack on Richard Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, first performed at the Paris Opéra in March 1861 and condemned by the critic of *Le Monde dramatique* as a colossal bore).³⁴ In this highly critical context, Gebauer's favorable review of Séjour's writing must have had an influence on France's intellectual public opinion. One month later, on February 2, 1860, in the "Chronique des Théâtres" section of the same journal, a much shorter piece by the paper's editor-in-chief Théophile Deschamps and Emile Béchot would confirm the news of the continuing success of *La Tireuse de cartes* and predict its long-lasting life on stage ("as it is right to say that no drama has ever been more moving"), while at the same time acknowledging most of the merit to the "influence exercised by the elevated style of Monsieur Mocquart."³⁵ The debate on the divided authorial merits of the play thus continued.

Concerning the remarkable attendance for *La Tireuse de cartes* in 1859–1860, further information can be found in new short pieces published in *La Presse* and the *Figaro*, updating their readers on the theatrical triumph. Only one week after the premiere, *La Presse* of December 30, 1859, reported to its readers an exceptional case of economic success in the drama industry: "At the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, the returns of *La Tireuse de cartes*, a fact which has no precedent at our times, reach the highest figure one can achieve at the theater. Mmes Laurent, Lia Félix and Lagier form an admirable trio,

which shares with the author the applause of the crowd.”³⁶ Half a month later, on January 15, 1860, the *Figaro* gave the precise figures of that triumph: “Without any rope-ladder, without any vessel, without the simplest ballet, without Fechter, without Laferrière, *La Tireuse de cartes* has collected about 100,000 francs in twenty performances.”³⁷ The play had triumphed “without” all the spectacular ingredients that had become so popular in the French theater of the time and “without” being performed by famous contemporary actors such as Charles Fechter and Adolphe Laferrière;³⁸ the emotions onstage, the style, the appeal “pulled from the headlines,” as one can infer from the current reviews, were sufficient reasons to draw the interest and appreciation of the sophisticated Parisian public.

The *Figaro* of January 15, 1860, with its coverage of cultural events and entertainment gossip listed one after the other in its section “A Travers les Théâtres” (Across the theaters) edited by Georges Davidson, devoted more short notes to Victor Séjour’s works, a further sign of his presence on the theatrical scene. In one of these, still concerning *La Tireuse de cartes* and its performance, two “very timid” rebukes were addressed to two of its actresses: particularly interesting was the one concerning Madame Laurent, “magnificent for tenderness and fury in her role as a Jewess,” but “timidly” criticized for an excess of masculine gestures, that sometimes gave the impression she was playing Shakespeare’s Shylock (a significant connection, revealing the association of the two theatrical characters suggested by the contemporary critic).³⁹ Two other brief notes about Victor Séjour in the same paper, on the same day, confirm this period as the high point of his career. One note reported that Séjour’s *Compère Guillary* would “pass ahead of the play by MM. Théodore Barrière and Henry de Kook.”⁴⁰ In another short piece of news, the present fortune of this playwright, having several plays of his on stage in Paris almost at the same time, was acknowledged and compared to the success of the highly popular contemporary playwright Adolphe d’Ennery (or Dennery):⁴¹ “Monsieur Victor Séjour threatens to become a tough competitor for Monsieur d’Ennery. He is played at the Porte-Saint-Martin, he will read at the Ambigu, and he might well, one of these mornings, at around eleven, be once again at the Gaîté, since Monsieur Armant has just accepted a drama of his.”⁴² As a matter of fact, if we look at the list of all plays by Séjour and at the dates of their openings in Paris we can see that in previous years there had been on stage at the best only one play of his a year (more precisely, two in the 1840s, and six in the 1850s until 1858); in contrast, the year 1859 saw the openings of three plays of his (*Les Grands vassaux*, at the Odéon, on February 16; *La Tireuse de cartes*, at the Porte-Saint-Martin, on December 22; and *Le Paletot brun*, still at the Porte-Saint-Martin, on

December 28); and the same happened in 1860, when there were three new plays by Séjour on stage in Parisian theaters.

La Tireuse de cartes was his greatest hit from 1859 to 1860, beginning with the overcrowded premiere, which had been made special by the presence of the Emperor.⁴³ Public interest did not abate, requiring performances to go on for over three months, until April 1860. The run was much longer than was expected at the start of the season; *La Presse* of February 7, 1860, reported a change that had to be made in the schedule of the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, where in February another play by another playwright was due to be performed, still with Mme Laurent as the main star. Because of the great success of *La Tireuse de cartes*, the theater administration had had to postpone the play by the other author to the next season.⁴⁴ One day later, *La Presse* once again stressed the persistent enthusiasm aroused by *La Tireuse de cartes* and the play's extraordinary, "unprecedented success": "C'est un succès sans égal."⁴⁵

Yet the situation was not the same everywhere in France. On March 18, 1860, Georges Davidson of the *Figaro* reported that *La Tireuse de cartes* had just been banned in Lyons: "The director of the theater where the play should have been performed is in dismay; he relied on returns that would be even stronger since *L'Univers* of the place had thoroughly panned the very interesting work of Monsieur Victor Séjour and Monsieur Mocquart."⁴⁶ While the reactionary French Catholic forces fighting against liberalism such as *L'Univers* had not been able to ban the play in Paris, they could have greater success in the provinces. As for the Parisian *Figaro*, there is no doubt on which side the paper stood.



The dismay of the theater director in Lyons at the ban on Séjour's play can only give us a limited idea of the public interest aroused by *La Tireuse de cartes*, not only in France, but in other European countries as well. The huge political and human scandal of the Mortara child's kidnapping had aroused the international appeal of the play and led to its immediate translation into several languages. In 1860, the same year as its French publication, *La Tireuse de cartes* had already been translated into Italian, German, and Dutch, and published in Milan, Leipzig, and The Hague. One year later, in 1861, after being translated into Portuguese, it was published and performed in Lisbon.⁴⁷

The case of the German translation (one copy of which is now available at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich) is particularly revealing in showing the connection with the international case. This is already hinted at

in the play's subtitle, where the play's prologue, mentioned on the cover, is given a title which was not present in the original: *Der Kindesraub* (The kidnapping). In addition, C. Homburg, the translator, added his own preface. And this vibrant two-page text, entitled rather proudly "Ein Wort zur seiner Zeit" (A word to one's time), leaves no doubts about the translator's motivations in making the play known to German readers. Writing in Paris in early March 1860 (as one learns from the preface date), Homburg exalts the play for being a "drama based on the Mortara child's kidnapping" and "a universal expression of the morality of our century," and for its protest, he writes repeatedly, against a violation of the laws of nature and humanity.⁴⁸ And from his Parisian observation point, he reports to his readers in Germany and to us today about a phenomenon that had been taking place daily for months at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin box office, where every night hundreds of people would go away from the box office very sad (*trostlos*) at not being able to get tickets, and would come back the following night, so as not to miss the play.

While triumphing in Paris, being staged in Strasbourg, suffering bans in other parts of France,⁴⁹ and being translated into many languages abroad, *La Tireuse de cartes* had an interesting adventure just across the Alps, in Turin, capital of Piedmont-Sardinia, the kingdom in northern Italy that had made a secret alliance with France in 1858. That pact, the so-called treaty of Plombières of July 12, 1858, was signed by Cavour and Napoleon III only one month after Edgardo Mortara's kidnapping. Considering that the agreement included actions limiting the temporal power of the Pope, the coincidence with the public scandal aroused by the Mortara case is indeed significant, and shows how influential the case probably was in that revolutionary context. In fact, as reported by Timothy Verhoeven in *Transatlantic Anti-Catholicism*, according to one of the most authoritative Catholic scholars of Pius IX's pontificate, Roger Aubert, "the pope's refusal to return Edgardo Mortara played a key role in convincing the French emperor to support the cause of Italian unification."⁵⁰ This influential opinion by one of the greatest specialists on the history of the Church in the nineteenth century, a serious historian and theologian from within the Catholic world and institutions, is also reported by David I. Kertzer in *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*: "In the view of Roger Aubert, it was the Mortara affair that drove the Emperor over the brink, turning him against the pontifical state. Not only did it confirm his own belief in the anachronism of papal rule, but it weakened the French public's enthusiasm for the temporal power of the Pope, giving him a free hand to act."⁵¹ The Emperor's attendance at the premiere of Séjour's play, and the rumored collaboration of Mocquard, the Emperor's

private secretary, repeatedly mentioned by the press with implicit political innuendos, backs up Aubert's conclusion, which should be given serious consideration by scholars of the Italian Risorgimento.⁵²

As a consequence of the treaty of Plombières, and with French support in 1859, from April 26 to July 12, Piedmont-Sardinia had just fought the Second Italian War of Independence against Austria, whose imperial power included the Kingdom of Lombardy and Veneto in northern Italy. After leaving Paris in the charge of his wife, the Empress Eugenia, Napoleon III had traveled to Italy, via Marseilles, arriving in Genoa aboard his flagship on May 12, 1859. Two days later, in Alessandria, he would take command of the French forces and start the war operations in Italy against Austria, side by side with the King of Piedmont-Sardinia. Contemporary prints and reports celebrate the French Emperor's triumphant arrival in the harbor of Genoa and show dozens of ships, boats, and flags and thousands of people along the Mole and the streets welcoming his arrival "to the land he comes to free."⁵³ In this context, one can understand why Genoa was chosen as a setting for *La Tireuse de cartes*, in place of Bologna, the true site of the Mortara affair. The choice was an homage to the Emperor and to the Italian seaside city that had witnessed that glorious landing, a reminder of the historical enterprise, hinting at the contemporary context of the dramatic story on stage. Italy was then at a crucial turning point in its process of independence and unification.

An article of February 9, 1860, by M. Garcin in the Catholic paper *L'Ami de la religion* reported about the performance of *La Tireuse de cartes* in Turin, by quoting verbatim a report from Turin of *La Presse*, followed by Garcin's comment.⁵⁴ According to this amazing report, the play had entered Italy with "four simultaneous productions" in Turin taking place in four different sites and was "announced at the same time on the four posters of Scribe, of d'Angennes, of Carignano and of Gerbino."⁵⁵ The incredible number of contemporaneous performances shows the extraordinary public interest and expectation (though I speculate that the *Presse* French journalist, who was a witness to only one of these performances, might have mistaken the posters on the four different theatrical sites for different contemporary productions). But something strange happened at the Carignano Theater, and the reporter who attended the performance in Italian cannot explain to himself the reasons for the audience's unexpected reaction:

I don't know what it depends on, but the audience did not grasp the analyses of sentiments contained in this play at all, and, in the fourth act, the two mothers' almost theological dispute caused the exit of one third of the audience in the middle of disapproving buzz; and when the young girl almost curtly



rejects both of them, without choosing, there was such an uproar, that I thought the play would not continue. The actors, who were not bad, had to hold on and use all their skills to conclude.⁵⁶

One has to stifle laughter imagining the scene, undoubtedly grotesque, and sensing the reporter's dismay and disbelief. In *La Presse* the report, signed by J. Mahias, is without any further comment. In *L'Ami de la religion*, instead, the puzzled report is followed with a dismissive comment by M. Garcin, concerning the Italians, and indirectly the French liberal forces and the Emperor himself that were on their side in their struggle for independence: "The Italians"—Garcin remarks bitterly—"do not deserve at all the efforts one makes for them. They should have applauded with all their strength, at least for gratitude."⁵⁷ This pointed judgment by the journalist of *L'Ami de la religion* writing in the French Catholic paper was filled with criticism, malice, and a feeling of smug satisfaction. It was largely this criticism, according to Séjour himself, that prompted him to write his clarifying introduction to *La Tireuse de cartes*. But what really *did* happen at the Carignano Theater? Why did the dispute between the "two mothers," and their daughter's pathetic reaction—the scenes that had been most admired in France—arouse the most violent disapproval of the Turin audience, at least according to the French correspondent? After all, one might expect people in Turin to be especially eager to see this work, in light of its publicity and its production in perhaps as many as four different theaters. Why was the audience so disappointed?

In mentioning the Turin episode very briefly, Charles Edwards O'Neill synthesizes the words of our source, writing that "certain passages of the play drew jeers that showed disapproval of the playwright rather than of the pope."⁵⁸ In giving this interpretation of the facts the critic was probably

Opposite:

12.6. "La guerre d'Italie (1859)" (Italy's war, 1859). Engraving, drawn by G. Fath and engraved by Auguste Trichon. *Histoire populaire contemporaine de la France*. Vol. 3. Paris: Hachette, 1865, p. 349. The lower and central part of the illustration offers an ideal vision of the Second Italian War of Independence and its noble motivations. Italy is represented allegorically as a young beauty imprisoned in a cave, who is going to be liberated by another beautiful young girl (France), coming to her rescue carrying the flag of liberty (here written in Italian, *Libertà*). The upper part of the engraving, by contrast, shows the painful price to be paid to achieve that goal—the tragic reality of the war, with its dead and wounded soldiers. The headline "Quatrième—periode" refers to what is defined in the book as the "Fourth Period" in Napoleon III's imperial age, mainly characterized by his engagement in the Italian war of 1859–1861. Illustration: Author's collection.

influenced by the journalist's comment in *L'Ami de la religion*. As a matter of fact, in the passage quoted above no detail shows that the disapproval of the playwright was accompanied by an appreciation of the Pope's behavior. On the contrary, there is an alternative, and in my opinion more convincing, explanation. Given the historical situation, the dissatisfaction with the play in Turin was more likely due to the opposite reasons! It was rather due to the play's lack of a forthright statement in favor of the kidnapped child's mother, and to the discovery that at the crucial moment of the confrontation between the two positions, the playwright was presenting the opposing views in a balanced form, without taking a clear stand.

The great expectation for the performance shows that the audience was moved by the Mortara affair that inspired the play and was sensitive to the political and human issues at stake in the case. In January 1860, the affair was still unresolved. Turin was the capital of a state where in 1848, slightly more than ten years earlier, for the first time in Italy the Jewish and Protestant minorities had been granted their civil rights and Emancipation. Ten years later, on the occasion of the case, the Piedmontese Prime Minister Cavour had intervened, calling for the return of the child to his family, against the abuses of the Vatican's absolute power. The performance of the play in Turin, in Italian, so shortly after the opening in France, shows the extreme political interest in this work across the Alps (the Italian version, by a well-known drama translator of the time, Luigi Enrico Tettoni, came out in print in Milan early that same year).⁵⁹ The sharp criticism about this work expressed by part of the Catholic press in France, and the French Emperor's supposed support, had probably aroused heightened expectations in the Italian liberal elite. Let us try to imagine the situation at the performance. After the climactic moment of recognition (*agnition*) in the play's third act, when the Christian adoptive mother feels compelled to reveal to her child that her real mother is the Jewish fortune-teller, part of the audience was perhaps anticipating that the girl might immediately embrace her real mother, despite the seventeen years of forced separation, and that the play would take a strong position against the kidnapping. Thus they were probably annoyed by the refined, French-styled, overly intellectual "theological dispute" between the two mothers, since, at that heated historical moment, they wanted instead clear support for the liberal cause. The same can be said about the Turin audience's reported dissatisfaction with the fictional daughter's reaction, whose inability to choose, received with such an "uproar," could displease those who would have preferred her to listen at once to the voice of nature (a note of criticism about this had been expressed also in France, albeit timidly, by Paul de Saint-Victor, in his review).⁶⁰

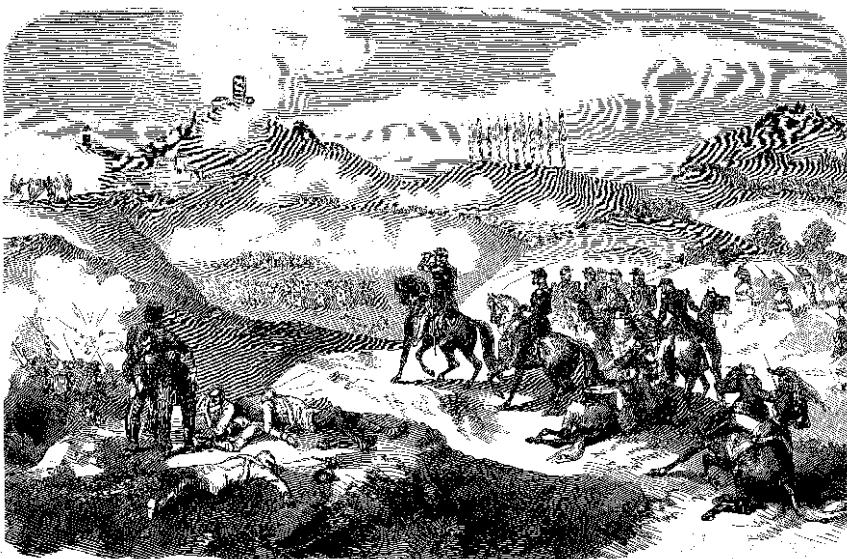
This interpretation seems to be confirmed by other reports concerning performances of *La Tireuse de cartes* produced in Italian, not only in Turin (where an important local daily, *L'opinione*, praised the “music of peace, reconciliation, and love” in the production at the Carignano),⁶¹ but also in Bologna, the original site of the historical event. Here the *Monitore di Bologna* conferred on the play the “merit of re-evoking and supporting a cause that moved the whole world.” The performance coincided, by the way, with the conclusion of the trial against Bologna’s Inquisitor Padre Pier Gaetano Feletti, first responsible for Edgardo Mortara’s separation from his family, who had been arrested after the liberation of Bologna by Italian troops, and whose trial lasted from January 2 to April 16, 1860.⁶² *La Tireuse de cartes* in its Italian version even reached Rome, still under the Pope’s temporal power, where the play’s performances at Teatro Quirino were occasions for antipapal protests, so that after a few days the local authorities obliged the theater to remove the play from their program.⁶³

All this induces us to broaden our viewpoint further and consider the larger historical scene in more detail, so as to fully contextualize the time in which the play was written and the events inspiring it took place. When reading the French reviews of *La Tireuse de cartes*, one is struck by the fact that, even in the political sections of the French papers, the news that dominated the scene in 1859–1860 came from Italy. It was the daily reports about the “Italian war,” the “Italian question,” and the “Pontifical question,” that occupied the papers’ front pages. It is this larger historical, transnational context, concerning not only old Europe in turmoil but also involving antebellum America, that we shall now explore more thoroughly. When linked to its broader context, the literary text will be better appreciated, and its historical role, and the writer’s achievement, more fully understood.

AN AGE OF TRANSATLANTIC EMANCIPATIONS

THE MORE ONE LEARNS about these mid-nineteenth-century events and reflects upon them, the more one steps outside the national box¹ and sees the connections linking what was happening on the public stage of various countries at the time, and the more one realizes how central the issue of Emancipation was internationally, variously modulated, across national boundaries and geographic frontiers. This was really the great Age of Emancipations on both sides of the Atlantic, in continents where news spread with unprecedented rapidity facilitated by new means of communication.

In this context of great international turmoil and of “exceptional public interest in foreign affairs,”² the events of the ongoing Italian revolution in the late 1850s were followed with great attention by the reading public. The Italian Risorgimento had reached a most critical moment in the fall and winter of 1859–1860; that is, the time immediately after the Second Italian War of Independence, when *La Tireuse de cartes* was written and staged. After the bloody battle of Solferino, in northern Italy, June 29, 1859, which saw the participation of almost 300,000 soldiers under the personal command of their three monarchs—Napoleon III Emperor of France and Vittorio Emanuele II King of Piedmont-Sardinia on the one side, and a young Franz-Joseph Emperor of Austria on the other side—there was the Armistice of Villafranca in July 1859.³ One day after the armistice, on July 12, 1859 Cavour, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia (1852–1859) and political creator of the alliance with the French Emperor for the independence of Italy, had clamorously resigned from his post in protest against the armistice, which the French Emperor had signed with Austria, in a “coup de théâtre,”⁴ without consulting his ally, and which had then been necessarily, though reluctantly, accepted by his ally the King of Piedmont-Sardinia (and future King of Italy) Vittorio Emanuele II.



13.1. "Emperor Napoleon III at the Battle of Solferino, June 24, 1859." Engraving from *Histoire populaire contemporaine de la France*. Vol. 3. Paris: Hachette, 1865, p. 45. Author's collection.

Cavour was a key figure in the Italian Risorgimento. His first momentous diplomatic success had taken place at the Congress of Paris of 1856, the peace conference ending the Crimean War (1853–1856), when he had enabled the tiny Piedmont-Sardinia he represented to win a seat among the great powers of Europe and had succeeded in raising the Italian question to public attention for the first time on such an important international scene.⁵ Despite the victory at Solferino, the Second Italian War of Independence had ended with only partial success for allies Piedmont-Sardinia and France. After the peace treaty of Villafranca, most of the territories of Lombardy in northern Italy, with its capital Milan, had been transferred, via France, from Austria to the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, but Venice and all the Venetian territories had remained under Austrian rule. Besides, according to the final treaty of Zurich in November 1859, the states in central Italy, the former Duchy of Parma, Duchy of Modena, Grand Duchy of Tuscany, and Papal Legations, were to be given back to their previous rulers, the old political powers that had been expelled by revolution after the beginning of the war—this was something neither Piedmont-Sardinia nor the patriot-leaders of those liberated states could accept. So the revolutionary governments had

formed an independent league, the United Provinces of Central Italy, wishing to join Piedmont-Sardinia to form a new Kingdom of Italy (or, as Mazzini and others wished, an Italian Republic). With Cavour's support, they had been provisionally annexed to the Kingdom, but the annexation process still required official international recognition. Finally, there was the controversial question of the Pope's temporal power in Rome and other regions of central Italy that remained unresolved. And in that fluid and turbulent situation, at that precise time at the end of December, Cavour was still officially out of his post. This was the complex situation in Italy in the crucial times that formed the historical context and foreground of Séjour's play. If one is unaware of this historical situation, one might not fully appreciate the relevant political implications involved in the staging of *La Tireuse de cartes*.

Reading the French press of late 1859–early 1860, one realizes that the political conflicts engulfing Italy were at the very center of the political concerns of those days. Let us consider, for example, the most widely read French paper of the time, *Le Siècle*, of December 23, 1859, one day after the premiere of *La Tireuse de cartes*. After the strictly financial and commercial news covering the left side of its first page, all the rest of the page, in its political section, reported more news from Italy than from any other part of the world, including France. The first political piece on that page was an article under the general heading “France,” announcing that M. de Cavour would represent the Sardinian States at the Congress to be held in Paris in 1860.⁶ Significantly, the reporter is Émile de la Bédollière, the same journalist who on the following day would publish, on the first page of *Le Siècle*, the review of *La Tireuse de cartes* that we mentioned when surveying the contemporary reactions to the play, which shows how all these writings were ideologically and politically related. Émile de la Bédollière, a liberal, rejoices in the news that Cavour will represent “the Italian independence and the progress of Italy,” and that, with his usual energy and eloquence, he will take “the defence of Italy,” notwithstanding the “repugnance” of the Secretary of State of the Pope, Cardinal Antonelli. The news concerning Cavour was big news indeed, since a few months earlier, he had resigned from his post as Prime Minister, and it was actually on December 22, 1859 (by coincidence, just the day of the opening of *La Tireuse de cartes*), that Vittorio Emanuele II called back Cavour, who would officially begin his new mandate as Prime Minister on January 21, 1860, one month later. This is something one can now read in history books. But newspapers truly are the first draft of history. Reading newspapers of the age we are transported to a new present, sharing the uncertainties of history in progress (while aware of what will actually occur). Newspapers allow us to be present as history unfolds, revealing how



13.2. "Italy 1815-1914." From *Macmillan's Historical Atlas of Modern Europe*. Edited by F. J. C. Hearnshaw. London: Macmillan, 1920, map vii, p. 13. This historical map of Italy shows the dates in which the various small Italian states joined the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, uniting to form the Kingdom of Italy, which was officially proclaimed in 1861. Venice and its surrounding region, Venetia, were later conquered in 1866, while Rome, the "Eternal City," became Italy's capital in 1870.

seemingly minor decisions and initiatives contribute to determining historical processes.

Let us look at history in the making with the first page of *Le Siècle*, December 23, 1859, where Émile de la Bédollière's article closes by announcing that in a later part of the paper they will publish fragments of an anonymous pamphlet called “Le Pape et le Congrès” (The Pope and the Congress), concerning Italy and the “papal question,” plus another “remarkable” text on the same topic. We shall soon come back to these important texts. Still on that day's first page, the second piece in the political part of the paper also starts with short Italian news items, telegraphed from Florence and Turin, reporting the arrival in Livorno and Florence of the General Governor of the United Provinces of Central Italy, solemnly received by ministers, members of government, and local authorities, and enthusiastically welcomed by an immense crowd.⁷ We shall not be surprised at this point to see that the next piece in this political page is titled “Nouvelles d'Italie” (News from Italy). This was, in fact, a permanent column on the first page of *Le Siècle* of those times. On that day, it transcribed official bulletins from Milan and Florence, and news from Perugia via Bologna, which reported the revolutionary steps taking place in northern and central Italy, leading toward the permanent annexation of those areas to Vittorio Emanuele's Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, as a further step toward Italian unification.⁸

This incredible list of articles and news coming from Italy published on the first page of a French paper documents the critical situation of a country that was moving toward its birth as a nation, and the special attention with which this revolutionary process was followed by public opinion in France. France was directly involved in the Italian events, and so this sensitivity to what was happening across its borders was doubly motivated. Yet this keen interest in Italy and its political metamorphosis extended well beyond those borders.

The Italian Risorgimento was on the front pages across the Atlantic as well. The impact of the Italian struggle for freedom on American culture and imagination had become particularly strong since 1848, at the time of the First Italian War of Independence (1848–1849) and of the Roman Republic (1849), and it is most significantly reflected in the poetry of Walt Whitman. When Whitman celebrated the European Revolutions of 1848 in a poem published in the *New-York Daily Tribune* of June 21, 1850, he titled the poem “Resurgemus.”⁹ The Latin word, echoing the internationally well-known Italian word “Risorgimento” (“resurgence”), testifies to the impact that the Italian Risorgimento was making much beyond the geographical borders of a country that did not yet exist as a nation, since it was a verb inviting resurgence inspired by the name of the Italian movement of independence that was poetically extended, by the American bard, to extol the

revolutionary events of the whole of Europe. “Resurgemus” is the earliest of the twelve poems that Whitman included in his first edition of *Leaves of Grass* of 1855 and the only one in that seminal collection already published in a periodical, a sign of its importance to him. Significantly, the opening of the poem equates the European condition with slavery: “Suddenly out of its stale and drowsy air, the air of slaves, / Like lightening Europe le’pt forth. . . .” This metaphoric association, present in other texts by contemporary American observers as well, was the premise for the frequent use of the term “Emancipation,” with reference also to the events of the Italian Risorgimento.

In April 1849, as reported by Paola Gemme in her *Domesticating Foreign Struggles*, the *Southern Literary Messenger* “hailed the ‘cry of Emancipation’ that had awakened Italy from ‘near two thousand years of slavery.’”¹⁰ This vision of Italy as an enslaved country, suffering new enslavement in times of defeat, or now living in an age of deliverance and “resurrection,” is frequent in all the contemporary literature produced by both liberal observers abroad and Italian patriots: see, e.g., Margaret Fuller, who, in one of her journalistic reports of 1848, connected the ongoing struggle for “the emancipation of Italy” with the one for “the emancipation of our blacks” in the United States, and then, after the bloody end of the Roman Republic, in a private letter of July 1849 mourned for the new enslavement suffered in Italy, once again drawing a parallel with the American case: “You felt so oppressed in the Slave States; imagine what I felt at seeing all the noblest youth, all the genius of their dear land, again enslaved!”¹¹; or see Garibaldi’s farewell speech to his soldiers in 1860.¹² According to Dennis Berthold, who studied the influence of Italy and Italian culture on Melville, Italy’s quest for national unity and freedom from foreign oppression was “the one inescapable international event” in the life of every major writer of the American Renaissance, “as significant,” he even says, “as the Napoleonic Wars had been for William Godwin, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Wordsworth, the Great War for F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner, World War II for James Jones and Norman Mailer, and Vietnam for Tim O’Brien and Francis Ford Coppola.”¹³ In fact, it was not only at the time of the 1848 European upheavals, when Whitman in the United States wrote “Resurgemus,” and Margaret Fuller reported the revolutionary events of the Roman Republic from the field as a foreign correspondent for the *New-York Daily Tribune*,¹⁴ that Italy and the Italian Risorgimento made a strong impact on American culture. Interest in the troubled Italian situation was kept alive in the course of the following two decades and reached one of its high peaks at the end of the 1850s.

Melville’s case is exemplary from this point of view. Italian culture and themes are manifest in his writing for the first time immediately after the

tumultuous European events of 1848, when, in his third, allegorical novel, *Mardi* (1849), and more precisely in its so-called Maramma chapters, 105–117, he found a way to deal with contemporary political and moral issues by imagining, probably under the influence of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, within the frame of a kind of pilgrims' voyage toward the island of Serenia (Paradise, eventually rejected by the main quester-narrator), their passing through an Inferno-like region of darkness, and even horror, having its center in the island of "Maramma" (a name and location derived from Dante's description of a former marshland in Tuscany called Maremma), "where lived and reigned, in mystery, the High Pontiff of the adjoining isles: prince, priest, and god, in his own proper person: great lord paramount over many kings in Mardi; his hand full of sceptres and crosiers."¹⁵ In his satirical portrait of the High Pontiff of Maramma, "Hivohitee MDCCCXLVIII" (1848), first described as "invisible," and later in the novel described—even more explicitly—as "the priest-king of Vatikanna,"¹⁶ Melville makes an open attack against the Supreme Head of the Roman Church in 1848, Pius IX, "in one of the strongest denunciations of the papacy in canonical American fiction."¹⁷

Herman Melville visited Italy for two months in 1857, and his continuing interest in the political affairs of this country in travail is well testified to by his Italy-inspired poems of the following years, such as his "Epistle to Daniel Shepherd," Melville's first-known poem, of July 6, 1859,¹⁸ and his Neapolitan diptych, "At the Hostelry" and "Naples in the Time of Bomba," full of precise references to the political situation in Italy and the problematic alliance with Napoleon III in 1859, in the first of these poems, and to Garibaldi's much admired military actions in 1860, in the latter two.¹⁹ In the scholarly opinion of Melville's biographer Hershel Parker, it was "during the Risorgimento" that Melville became a poet:²⁰ such was the impact of recent Italian events on Melville's career and poetic imagination.

During my research on Séjour, I have often wondered about another important American writer in Italy at the end of the 1850s, Nathaniel Hawthorne, who lived there with his family for a year and a half, from January 1858 to May 1859, and was therefore in the country, mostly in Florence and Rome, at the time of Edgardo Mortara's kidnapping. After his Italian sojourn and a final short stay in England, Hawthorne went back to America in 1860, having completed a new novel with an Italian setting, which was published simultaneously that year in the United States and in England with two different titles: *The Marble Faun* in the United States and *Transformation* in Britain (the subtitle, *The Romance of Monte Beni*, hinting at its literary genre and setting, is the same in both editions). Hawthorne was much less interested than Melville in the Italian *political* context; one cannot expect to find any detailed reference to specific events of the time in his fiction or in his

Notebooks; but he was highly sensitive to the whole general *atmosphere* of the place, as remarked by James Russell Lowell in his review of the novel in *The Atlantic Monthly* of April 1860.²¹ The “Italian atmosphere” in which, according to Lowell, the “book is steeped,” can be synthesized as one of corruption and pervasive oppression, of impending peril, of depravity and moral malady not devoid of some repellent charm, of mystery and danger, all associated with both the city of Rome where the novel is set (“where she lies, like a long decaying corpse, . . . with accumulated dust . . . , corrupted by myriads of slaughter”) and the mysterious nature of one of the four main characters, Miriam, whose dark, secret past and inscrutable background is a persistent question throughout the novel.²²

With his usual, refined, allusive indirection, Hawthorne (who is, according to Melville, one of the “masters of the great Art of Telling the Truth, even though it be covertly, and by snatches”)²³ provides several, sometimes contradictory, clues to Miriam’s identity and origin. He first presents her, among other multiple exotic conjectures, as perhaps “the daughter and heiress of a great Jewish banker” (the chapter containing these rumors is significantly called “Subterranean Reminiscences”), and then, in the final, perhaps unreliable disclosure made by the character herself, furnishes her with a hybrid pedigree, stating that she was “springing from English parentage, on the mother’s side, but with a vein, likewise, of Jewish blood, yet connected, through her father, with one of those few princely families of southern Italy, which still retain a great wealth and influence.”²⁴ Further Jewish allusions are spread throughout the text, such as when Miriam is described as having a “certain rich Oriental character in her face,” or when she, a painter, shows her young Italian friend Donatello (the “sylvan Faun” of the story) her self-portrait, which “had what was usually thought to be a Jewish aspect.” At this point the narrator comments: “if she were really of Jewish blood, then this was Jewish hair, and a dark glory such as crowns no Christian maiden’s head”; and that self-portrait immediately evokes in the narrator’s mind an association with the biblical figure of Rachel (“Gazing at this portrait, you saw what Rachel might have been, when Jacob deemed her worth the wooing seven years, and seven more”) and then with Judith, the Jewish heroine who seduced and beheaded Holofernes to free her country from foreign invasion.²⁵

It is noteworthy that some of these phrases defining Miriam’s supposedly Jewish features and biblical associations can already be found in Hawthorne’s *English Notebooks*, in the writer’s description of a Jewish woman he met in 1856, at a dinner at the Lord Mayor’s Mansion in London, where he was invited in his capacity as U.S. Consul in Liverpool. The Lord Mayor was David Salomons, a Jew, and the long account of that dinner and of the Jewish couples he met there testify to the attraction and, at the same time, “sort of



13.3 and 13.4. Palazzo Cenci in Rome, next to the ghetto area, one of the Roman settings in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*, 1860. The first view (13.3) is from the arch in via dell'Arco dei Cenci. The second image (13.4) shows another secluded side of Palazzo Cenci's imposing mass. In Hawthorne's romance, Hilda's mysterious captivity takes place inside this palace. Photos: Elèna Mortara.

repugnance" the American writer felt toward the "beautiful Jewess," sitting opposite him across the table, and the total disgust he felt for her husband, "this ugly Jew," "the very Jew of Jews; the distilled essence of all the Jews," "this Shylock, this Iscariot," whose profile looked to him "so hideously Jewish and so cruel."²⁶

It is not only Miriam, the character, that seems to hide the mystery of her past. It is the writer himself who seems to be guided by "authorial fears of disclosure—as if the novel itself is subject to inquisitorial intrusions by Church authorities, who listen everywhere and anywhere for traitorous confessions, even in fiction."²⁷ This intriguing observation was made in 2001 in an article by Augustus M. Kolich, "Miriam and the Conversion of the Jews in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*," where the critic expressed his belief that "the Mortara kidnapping offers an important cultural context for

Hawthorne's creation of Miriam in *The Marble Faun*, as well as for his portrayal of Hilda's abduction and his overall attitude toward both Catholics and Jews.”²⁸ Kolich thinks that in creating Miriam, whom, as we saw, Hawthorne depicts as partially Jewish, the novelist was influenced by the literary image of the Secret Jew, “the Jewish victim,” who is compelled to convert and hide his or her true identity, and “to assume false identities in order to remain ‘free’ in the Papal States.”²⁹ According to this interpretation, Miriam brings to Hawthorne’s last novel “both the mystery and danger of surviving,” as a Jew, or, rather, a converted Jew or a person of Jewish descent, in the Papal States in the 1850s; and, as a Secret Jew, she “also represents a threat to unwary Protestants who allow themselves to become enmeshed in her desperate plight.”³⁰ In the “atmosphere of oppression and surveillance created by the papal government” that one finds in the novel, in a city where the Pope’s political despotism is supported by the constantly evoked presence of French troops (their pervasive presence observed by the narrator is, according to Leonardo Buonomo, “one of the rare instances in which the political situation of Rome is referred to”), it is not only the Secret Jew who is in danger.³¹ Catholic Rome in the 1850s is not completely safe for Protestants too, as “evidenced by Hilda’s capture and detainment for purpose of conversion at the Convent of the Sacre Coeur.”³²

The detainment of this American Puritan girl from New England, and its double, political and religious, purpose, only hinted at in the previous fiction, is revealed more explicitly in the well-known Postscript (or “Conclusion”) that Hawthorne was “reluctantly” persuaded to add for the second edition in 1860, when, in order to satisfy the curiosity of his readers, who demanded “further elucidations respecting the mysteries of the story,” he imagined an encounter between himself as the author-narrator and his fictional characters on top of Saint Peter’s. “It occurred to me,” he writes, “that, being so remote in the upper air, my friends might safely utter, here, the secrets which it would perilous even to whisper on lower earth.”³³ Secrets and mysteries, essential ingredients in Hawthorne’s aesthetics and Gothic writing, find their perfect, historical justification in the contemporary setting of the romance, “under such a government as that of Rome”; that is, “under a despotic government,” as we read in the course of the fictional conversation. In the Postscript, we learn from the author-narrator that Miriam was probably “suspected of implication with some plot or political intrigue” and that “every movement” of hers “was watched and investigated far more thoroughly by the priestly rulers than by her dearest friends.”³⁴ We also learn that Hilda, the victim of the secret detainment, being still under that despotic Roman government, is afraid of speaking about that experience. “Hilda threw her eyes on all sides,” we read in an astonishing passage, “and seeing that there was



13.5. “Hilda’s Tower” in via dei Portoghesi, Rome. Photo: Elèna Mortara.

not even a bird in the air to fly away with the secret, nor any human being nearer than the loiterers by the obelisk, in the piazza below, she told us about the mysterious abode.” After Hawthorne’s long sojourn in Rome, it was easy for the writer to imagine his character’s fear of revealing her imprisonment in a convent, a legal detainment justified in the Postscript by reasons that are both political (“My entanglement with Miriam’s misfortunes”) and religious (“and the good Abbate’s mistaken hope of the proselyte”), and which seem to her “a sufficient clue to the whole mystery.”³⁵

The motif of the kidnapping for the sake of conversion—so important in the context of our research—needs further attention, since it does not appear only in the Postscript of *The Marble Faun*. It is already explicitly introduced in the previous part of the romance, when the American sculptor (Kenyon) in love with the young woman is looking for his beloved around the city of Rome, after her mysterious disappearance, and suddenly suspects that she might have been kidnapped by the Jesuits. In the following passage, which describes the character’s thoughts, the term “kidnapping” is meaningfully used with reference to a religious-political practice that appears shocking to the American artist sojourning in Rome:

With so pious an end in view, would Jesuitical morality be shocked at the idea of *kidnapping* the mortal body, for the sake of the immortal spirit that might

otherwise be lost forever? Would not the kind old priest, himself, deem this to be infinitely the kindest service that he could perform for the stray lamb, who had so strangely sought his aid?

If these suppositions were well founded, Hilda was most likely a prisoner in one of the religious institutions that are so numerous in Rome.³⁶

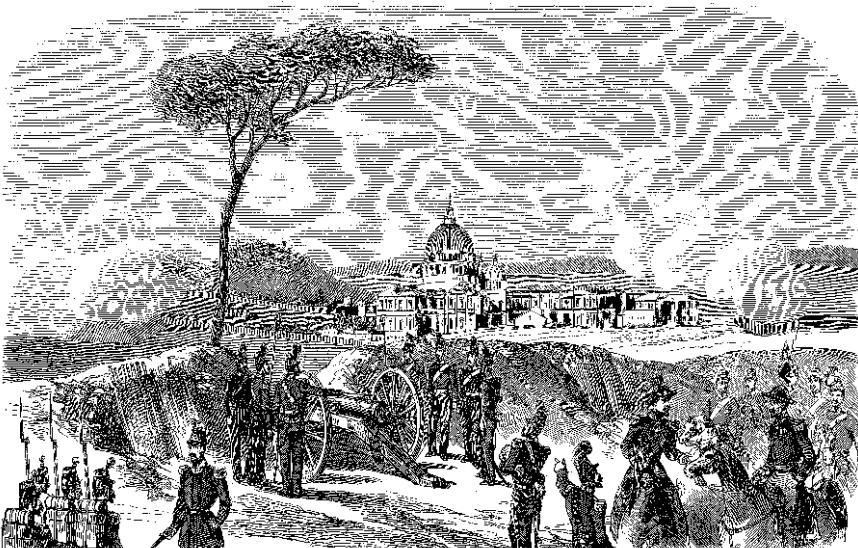
Considering that *The Marble Faun* was written at the time of Edgardo Mortara's kidnapping, while the writer was in Rome, and that the international scandal was at its highest in the following months, it is difficult to imagine that Hawthorne was not influenced by the "actualities" of a contemporary scene that he knew so well and that was the setting of his own fiction.

The hypothesis of a kidnapping motivated by "so pious an end" is not only present in *The Marble Faun* as a character's suspicion, but seems shared by the narrator himself at the end of his narrative, when, in the novel's last chapter, he addresses the "Gentle Reader," and defends his narrative strategy of not giving "minute elucidations" of the "romantic mysteries of the story," by exposing his mystery-based theory of art.³⁷ For what concerns Hilda's mysterious detaiment and reappearance, the secret kept about it by the involved character, and the narrator's consequent ignorance, are justified by the historical circumstances of the story. For the author-narrator explains that, "as long as she remained in Italy," the kidnapped girl (Hilda) had been remarkably reserved "in her communications upon this subject, even to her most intimate friends," because of some secret reason, probably since "a prudential motive warned her not to reveal the stratagems of a religious body, or the secret acts of a despotic government, (whichever might be responsible, in the present instance), while still within the scope of their jurisdiction."³⁸

I have supported the notion that Hawthorne, living in Italy at the time of the Mortara case, must have been aware of the "actualities" of his Roman setting.³⁹ I have used the term "actualities" on purpose, because this word is used in an interesting way by the writer, with reference to Italy, in his Preface to *The Marble Faun*. In this very important prefatory text, Hawthorne writes that his "Romance was sketched out during a residence of considerable length in Italy," and, writing about himself as the Author in the third person, he explains the deepest reasons of his choice of setting in this way: "Italy, as the site of his Romance, was chiefly valuable to him as affording a sort of poetic or fairy precinct, where *actualities* would not be so terribly insisted upon, as they are, and must needs be, in America."⁴⁰ In the same fundamental passage of his Preface, Hawthorne theorizes about the "difficulty of writing a Romance in a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight, as is happily the case with

my dear native land.”⁴¹ This famous statement has aroused considerable discussion among readers and critics, since the claim that America in 1860, on the eve of the Civil War, had nothing “but a common-place prosperity, in broad and simple daylight,” is indeed astonishing, and might justify the outrage of some of its earliest readers at the writer’s “obliviousness to slavery as a possible ‘shadow’ on America” and the modern critics’ charge of the “seeming obtuseness of this preface.”⁴² Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet, however, in her *The Poetics and Politics of the American Gothic* (2010), suggests a completely new reading of this statement, which, “after a decade of graphic debate about slavery” in antebellum America, as she writes, “could not help but sound grotesquely ironic,” and which she interprets as being “deliberately ironic.”⁴³ As for the statement concerning Italy as a favorable setting, when Hawthorne declares that an advantage of choosing that “precinct” is that “actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon,” this does not mean that “actualities” would not be present at all. Robert S. Levine is probably right when he invites readers “to be more attentive to the sociocultural and historicist dimensions of Hawthorne’s Roman updating,” and urges us toward a revisionary reading that must “see through” the allegories, and observe Hawthorne’s “portrayal of the tense political and cultural scene in Rome,” a portrayal that “speaks to the similarly tense scene in pre-Civil War America.”⁴⁴

The ubiquitous presence of papal authorities, priests, and armed soldiers, in the novel, the repeated descriptions of the French military and of their coercive patrolling throughout Rome, and the frequent reference to a local despotic government, are facts that cannot be overlooked by any reader of *The Marble Faun*. The political subtext of the whole plot is basically founded on a perception of Rome as a place of political and moral corruption and of danger, where religion can be a matter of discrimination, kidnapping, and coercion of bodies for the sake of souls. Therefore, although the details of actuality are not “so terribly insisted upon,” the basic atmosphere of the time, as perceived by a sensitive American, is undoubtedly there. Despite the fact that in his *Italian Notebooks*, as remarked by John Carlos Rowe, “Hawthorne makes consistently superficial observations about the great political events taking place around him” (“The Italian nationalists Cavour, Garibaldi, and Mazzini are not even mentioned, whereas Hawthorne makes only brief references to Napoleon III and to Papacy”), yet, as underlined by the same critic, “*The Marble Faun*’s Italian setting is sufficiently concrete and historically specific, especially between 1858 and 1859 when Hawthorne was composing the romance.”⁴⁵ Therefore, this last completed romance of an American writer who was in Italy at the time of Edgardo’s kidnapping turns



13.6. "Siege of Rome." Engraving from *Histoire populaire contemporaine de la France*. Vol. 2. Paris: Hachette, 1865, p. 173. The illustration shows a group of French soldiers on a hill overlooking St. Peter's, preparing their attack next to a tall pine tree, symbolic of the city. Although this visual document refers to the occupation of Rome by the French in defense of Pope Pius IX (against the Roman Republic of Mazzini and Garibaldi) in 1849, it also illustrates the ubiquitous presence of French soldiers in Hawthorne's Rome ten years later. This presence is recurrently underlined in the writer's *Notebooks* and is one of the leitmotifs defining the historical setting in his 1860 romance *The Marble Faun*. Illustration: Author's collection.

out to be a surprising document of the historical situation we are exploring. The contemporary "legal" kidnapping of a Jewish child in the Papal States, and the international scandal aroused by it, might indeed have been in Hawthorne's mind, at least as a factor reinforcing his vision of the city, while writing his dark romance. The Mortara case can help us understand the background of Hawthorne's novel and to illuminate some of its dark regions, while, on the other hand, the novel helps us get an insight into the atmosphere of those troubled times and visualize the way those alarming events might have been perceived by attentive foreigners.

This detour into the experience and written testimony of first-class American writers travelling in Italy in the late 1850s has proved fruitful and quite helpful in sketching the scene and a web of influences. But let us now go back

to our French observation point, and see what other aspects of the contemporary reality the Parisian press allows us to discover.

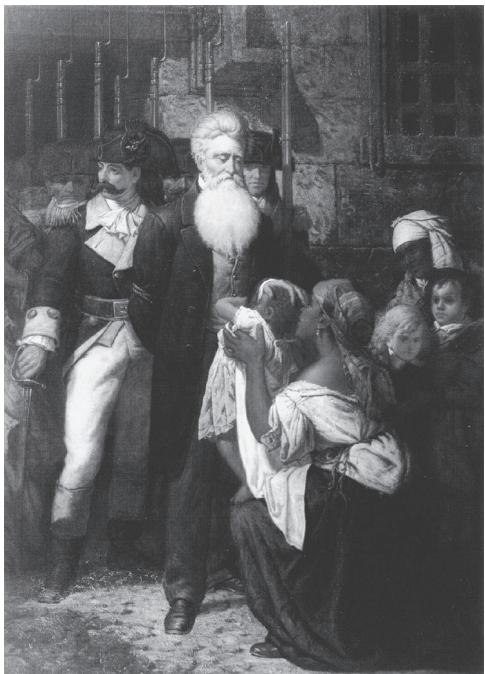


In that age of revolutionary transition and change, although the Italian news was followed with particular interest, other countries' foreign affairs attracted international public attention. That is documented in the French press by *Le Siècle* of December 23, 1859, whose first page appears as a broad canvas, portraying the contemporary scene with colorful strokes of immediacy. As a matter fact, still on the first page of that day's paper, in the following section titled "Bulletin de l'Exterieur" (Bulletin from abroad) one can read two short pieces devoted to news from Germany and Prussia, another European region in turmoil, and then a final, longer one titled "Amérique" (America). This one offered a moving account of John Brown's testament, written by him in Charlestown, Virginia, on December 1, 1859, and published in its entirety with a comment on the first two pages of *Le Siècle*.⁴⁶ This article from the United States, mentioning as its first source the French language paper published in New York, *Courrier des États-Unis*, plunges us into the troubled North American scene, and helps us grasp the contemporaneity of the transatlantic events whose goal was the emancipation of oppressed groups and the reverberations that those struggles were having internationally, on both shores of the Atlantic.

In the United States, the urgency was particularly acute. Nothing was more troubled and contentious in those years than the issue of American slavery. As is well-known, the American abolitionist John Brown (1800–1859), originally from Connecticut—who was in the 1850s the most influential advocate of armed insurrection as a means to abolish slavery in the United States—in October 1859 had led a raid of armed abolitionists on the federal armory at Harper's Ferry, in Virginia, aiming at gathering weapons for the liberation of slaves in the southern slave states of the Union. The raid, while initially successful, ended in bloody failure. Two of Brown's children died in the action. John Brown was captured, tried for murder, conspiracy with slaves, and treason against the State of Virginia, found guilty and sentenced to be hanged in public on December 2, 1859. On November 2, in his last speech in court after the conviction, John Brown declared: "Now if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, I submit; so let it be done!"⁴⁷

John Brown's speeches during the trial, and his letters from jail, aroused great national and international attention in the press, with opposite reactions depending on the pro- or anti-slavery ideology of the papers and their readers. American writers from New England such as Thoreau, Emerson, and John Greenleaf Whittier,⁴⁸ who shared his antislavery views, condemned Brown's death sentence. A particularly strong reaction came from Victor Hugo, the great French Romantic poet, novelist, playwright, and human rights activist. On December 2, 1859, from his exile on the island of Guernsey, a British Crown dependency in the English Channel off the coast of Normandy (where he, a Republican, would live until 1870, in protest against Emperor Napoleon III),⁴⁹ Hugo wrote an open letter to the United States, published by *La Presse*, the *London News*, and other papers on both sides of the Atlantic, asking the American Republic to save John Brown.⁵⁰ In this eloquent and powerful letter, which I am quoting in the English version of the *Chicago Press and Tribune*, Hugo presents Brown as a heroic "liberator," who, himself a free man, sought to deliver the "negro slaves from bondage," accomplishing the "sacred duty" of fighting against slavery. John Brown, declares Hugo in his letter, animated as he was "with the old Puritan spirit, inspired by the spirit of the Gospel," "endeavored to commence the work of emancipation," by liberating slaves in Virginia and by sounding "to these men, these oppressed brothers, the rallying cry of Freedom." In describing the trial, Hugo expresses his total astonishment at the idea that it could take place "not in Turkey, but in America!"—the land of Washington and of the American revolution. He warns the judges in Brown's trial and the population of Virginia that "they are watched! They are not alone in the world. At this moment, America attracts the eyes of the whole of Europe." They must know that they are judged by an "ever-watchful eye," the "universal conscience of humanity."

A surprising statement appears at this point of the letter. Hugo had been misleadingly informed that there was still time to save John Brown, since a respite had been granted—he would die not on December 2, as announced, but on December 16. Thus, with this new hope in mind, the French Republican writer addresses the whole American nation, stating that if Brown should die on the scaffold on the 16th of December, "the whole American Republic" would be held responsible for "such a catastrophe," for "the opprobrium of this murder," and that, on a larger scale even outside the United States, all the believers in democracy, including the writer ("bound together as compatriots by the common tie of a democratic creed"), would feel themselves "in some measure compromised." Hugo is "horror-struck" at the idea that "John Brown, the Liberator," might be "slaughtered by the American Republic," whose "brow is irradiated with a glorious halo of freedom" (a



13.7. Thomas S. Noble. *John Brown's Blessing*. Oil painting on canvas, 1867. New York Historical Society. It was reported that while John Brown was taken to the gallows, he was stopped on the way by a black mother who asked for his blessing on her child. Several contemporary artists were inspired by this moving episode.

few lines before, when still expressing his hopes, he had written: “America is a noble nation. The impulse of humanity springs quickly into life among a free people. We may yet hope that Brown will be saved”). It is at this point that the French writer even comes to foresee the political possibility of a civil war that would shake the nation: “Viewed in a political light, the murder of Brown would be an irreparable fault. It would penetrate the Union with a gaping fissure which would lead in the end to its entire disruption. It is possible that the execution of Brown might establish slavery on a firm basis in Virginia, but it is certain that it would shake to its centre the entire fabric of American democracy.” This was indeed a prophetic statement. Moving toward his conclusions, Hugo introduces both a moral and political perspective. By murdering John Brown the liberator and preserving the “infamy” of slavery, the American Republic would sacrifice its “glory”: “Viewed in a moral light, it seems to me that a portion of the enlightenment of humanity would be eclipsed, that even the ideas of justice and injustice would be obscured on the day which should witness *the assassination of Emancipation by Liberty*” (my italics).

Since the final words of the statement above are particularly meaningful in expressing the paradox of the situation and the issues at stake, it is worth-

while to check the words actually used by Hugo in his French original of December 2, published by *La Presse* on December 8, 1859. It is worth noting that the English translation as presented by the London *Daily News* of December 10, and then reprinted in the *Chicago Press and Tribune* of December 27, is somewhat at odds with the original French. The word “Emancipation” in the English version actually translates Hugo’s French word “*Délivrance*,” meaning “Liberation” (in Hugo’s denunciation of “l’assassinat de la Délivrance par la Liberté,” the paradoxical contradiction of “Liberation” being murdered by “Liberty” becomes even more evident). Also in the other sentence quoted above, where one reads that “John Brown endeavored to commence the work of emancipation by the liberation of slaves in Virginia,” what Hugo writes in French is, as a matter of fact: “John Brown a voulu commencer l’oeuvre de salut par la délivrance des esclaves de la Virginie” (meaning, “John Brown wanted to commence the work of rescue by the liberation of slaves in Virginia”); so here too in the French original we do not find the French word *émancipation*. What the English text translates as “emancipation” is expressed in Hugo’s French with the word “*salut*,” which means “rescue” and also “salvation,” conveying a larger, even religious sense, possibly suggesting also the deliverance from sin of a whole nation. On the other hand, where the English text mentions “the rallying cry of Freedom” sounded by Brown to his oppressed slave brothers, what Hugo exalts is not, precisely, the “cry of Freedom,” but rather, more literally, the cry of “enfranchisement,” of making free, of liberation: “le cri d’affranchissement.” Here Hugo uses the word *affranchissement*, indeed a synonym of *émancipation*: both words were in fact commonly used at that time in France when referring to the liberation of slaves and other oppressed groups, including women.

The reason for this detailed comparative analysis and discussion is manifold. On the one hand there is the philological need of reconstructing the real text written and signed by Hugo; on the other hand there is the interest in realizing the variants in the version that reached the American and English-speaking audiences. Finally, there is the desire to understand these alternative choices in the linguistic systems of the time. The peculiarities of the English translation have not been stressed for the sake of an abstract exercise in the practice of translation, but rather because by comparing these texts we can focus our attention on the historical use of words in specific language contexts and on the ideological weight of these uses, and we can try to detect the way in which value systems are transmitted to the reading audiences. Thus it is instructive to realize the variety of French words—*délivrance*, *affranchissement*, *Liberté*—used by Hugo to express and support Brown’s action in favor of the liberation of American slaves, as it is interesting to perceive the choice made in the English translation by introducing into the text

the word “Emancipation” (sometimes with its first letter capitalized, sometimes not) to express some of these alternative words.

Why did this significant change occur in the English version of Hugo’s letter? We can make some suppositions, grounded on the different contexts in which the different versions appeared. The point is that in France the battle for the emancipation and equality of rights of all its citizens as individuals had been legally won for the first time decades earlier, at the time of the French Revolution, when the principle was ratified in the Constitution voted by the National Constituent Assembly in 1791 (and in that context the issue occasioning the general principle had been the problem of giving equal rights to the members of its Jewish minority).⁵¹ It is true that even there the process of granting full citizenship to all citizens and abolishing slavery had taken longer and contradictory steps: free people of color had been granted full citizenship on April 2, 1792, but slavery in the French colonies, first abolished on February 4, 1794, had been re-established by Napoleon in 1802, and then, after a long abolitionist struggle, had been eventually abolished on April 28, 1848 under the Second Republic (Victor Séjour’s story “Le Mulâtre” in 1837 was part of that struggle). Therefore in 1859, over ten years later, despite its Imperial Restoration, France had made great strides toward universal emancipation and was ahead of other countries in the battle for liberal values of freedom and equality.

On the other hand, in the English-speaking countries of the United Kingdom and the United States, notwithstanding the different legislative systems in both nations, the issue of “Emancipation” was still a politically relevant topic, although the people yet to be “emancipated” were not the same in each country.

In Britain slavery had not existed legally since the late eighteenth century, while in its colonial Empire that institution had been abolished with the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833–1834 (and fully in 1838).⁵² A famous American celebration of the event was held by Ralph Waldo Emerson in his speech “An Address on the Anniversary of the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies,” which he delivered in the courthouse of Concord in 1844.⁵³ The remaining nineteenth-century emancipation struggles in England had mainly concerned its religious minorities. In a country where, since Henry VIII, the dynasty’s political authority and the nation’s independence of foreign powers had been grounded on the break from the Roman Catholic Church and adhesion to the Protestant Reformation, and where the monarch was also the head of the Church of England, the Catholic question had been a constant cause of political controversy. The Catholic minority had historically suffered serious political discrimination and passed through long struggles, before achieving its emancipation with the Roman Catholic Relief Act, or, Catholic Emancipation Act, of 1829.⁵⁴

But in the mid-1850s another emancipation struggle was still being fought in Britain, this time by the Jewish minority. Jews had suffered a long history of prejudice and legal discrimination in the country, and, in previous times, even centuries-long periods of legal expulsion, until Cromwell's revolution. After the campaign for Catholic emancipation in Ireland, in 1828–1829, and the Catholic Emancipation Act allowing the first Catholic, Irishman Daniel O'Connell, to take his seat in the British Parliament in 1829, English Jews had hoped there would be an end to Jewish "disabilities," too. But they had to wait for three more decades of struggles before a legislative change, making it possible for Jews to enter Parliament, could be approved by both Houses of Parliament. The breakthrough took place on July 26, 1858. On that day Baron Lionel de Rothschild (1808–1879), who had been elected to the City of London constituency in 1847 and then again in 1849, 1852, and 1857, but as a Jew had never been able to take his seat in the House of Commons, was finally permitted to do so, thanks to a new measure, the Jews Relief Act, allowing him not to take the mandatory Christian oath, which had barred the entrance of Jews in Parliament up to then; after a long political struggle, the words "on the true faith of a Christian" were eventually omitted from the ordinary form of oath and substituted for Jews by a reference to the Hebrew God of the Bible.

This Act, also called the Jewish Disabilities Bill, or Jewish Emancipation Act, first tentatively introduced in 1848 by the Whig leader (and at that time Prime Minister) Lord John Russell but repeatedly opposed by the House of Lords, in 1858 was eventually approved by both Houses, also with the support of the future Conservative Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli (himself a Jew by birth, baptized into the Anglican Church at age twelve with all his family), although with the opposition of his Conservative party. Thus, as synthesised by historian Cecil Roth in his classic study on the Jews of England, on "Monday, July 26th, 1858, Baron de Rothschild at last took his seat in the House. Two hundred years after Cromwell's death, the work that he had begun reached its culmination, and an English Jew was for the first time recognized as an equal citizen of his native land."⁵⁵ On that momentous day, the first Jew to enter the British Parliament with covered head swore his oath on the Hebrew Bible⁵⁶ (in 1885 his son Nathan Mayer Rothschild would be the first Jewish member of the House of Lords who had not converted to Christianity). A few months later, in early 1859, David Salomons (1797–1873), Lord Mayor of London in 1855 and another leading figure in the struggle for Jewish emancipation in the United Kingdom, was the second Jew to become a member of the British Parliament (he was the Jewish Mayor whom Hawthorne met at a banquet in 1856, as reported in his *English Notebooks*).⁵⁷



13.8. Charles Jameson Grant. "Immolation of the Jew!" From the series *The Political Drama*, no. 119. Wood engraving printed by G. Drake, London, 1835. The satirical cartoon refers to the nullifying of the election of David Salomons as alderman of the City of London in 1835 owing to his being Jewish. In the cartoon subtitle, the event is defined as "A Tragi-comic Burlesque, in 20 Acts." Salomons is portrayed while refusing the Lord Mayor's request to forsake his faith and ascending a platform, to be immolated in the steaming cauldron of "Christian Intolerance." Cliché London Metropolitan Archives, City of London (Collage database record no. 20336).

The contemporaneity with the Mortara case of these climactic events in the history of British Jewish emancipation is striking, and helps clarify the larger issue at stake on the international stage. It is easy to see why Sir Moses Montefiore, the highly respected president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, went to Rome in 1859, trying, in vain, to be received by the Pope to petition for the release of the child,⁵⁸ and why the "legal" kidnapping of the Italian Jewish boy by the Church of Rome was followed with such trepidation among the Jews who were fighting for the recognition of their rights as equal citizens in several countries on both sides of the Atlantic (so it was in Germany, where *die Judenfrage*, the "Jewish question," was a matter of concern throughout the nineteenth century; so it was even in the

United States, if one considers that legal restrictions preventing Jews, and all non-Christians, from holding public office and voting remained active for decades in several states even after the Bill of Rights of 1791, and that only in 1868 did those restrictions fall in North Carolina, while in New Hampshire the abolition of the last legal barriers was achieved only in 1877).⁵⁹ One will also realize why that violation was felt as unbearable, and a serious threat, by all the liberal forces supporting their struggles, and those of other persecuted people, in the name of humanity.

The English and American version of Hugo's letter in defense of John Brown has led us to open this long contextualizing parenthesis (or "window") on the parallel processes in the battles for emancipation that were being fought by different groups in various national contexts, both in Europe and in the United States, at the end of the 1850s. The issue of Jewish emancipation, a relevant one for an understanding of what was at stake in the events inspiring Séjour's *La Tireuse de cartes*, might be further explored by following its difficult developments in other influential national contexts, such as the German or the Russian ones.⁶⁰

But we shall rather now move back to the American scene and to John Brown's testament, whose French version was published in its entirety on the pages of *Le Siècle* on December 23, 1859. Parisian readers were thus kept informed on the issue of the "peculiar institution," which was at the center of antebellum American public debate, and knew of the latest tragic page in the U.S. fight for the abolition of slavery and for black emancipation. As for Hugo's letter translated into English by an anonymous British translator and thus "transferred" also into American contexts, by now it should be evident why the translator chose to insert the word "emancipation" when dealing with the *affranchissement*, the "liberation," of the American slaves. That was essentially because emancipation was the key word of those days in both Britain and America (with reference to more than one battle for equality), and because it was in the name of, and with the goal of, "emancipation" that the struggle for freedom, the freedom of enslaved black human beings, was being fought in the United States. And that struggle was coming to its climax precisely then, at the turn of the decade, 240 years after the first arrival of African slaves to the British colony of Virginia in 1619.



The pages of *Le Siècle* from December 23, 1859, give a close, inside view of the historical and political context in which *La Tireuse de cartes* appeared. But the portrait of those days offered by *Le Siècle* is not yet complete. In his political report opening the paper's first page, Émile de la Bédollière had

announced the publication, in that same issue, of parts of a pamphlet dealing with the “papal question.” In fact, a few columns after John Brown’s testament most of the paper’s second page was occupied by an article printed with slightly larger characters, under the headline “Le Pape et le Congrès.”⁶¹ This is the title of the important French political pamphlet that came out at the end of December 1859, in preparation for the Paris Congress, which was due to take place in January 1860, to settle the situation of central Italy after the Italian Second War of Independence. The pamphlet—which would arouse fierce controversy with the Church of Rome—was published anonymously, both in the press and in book form by Dentu, and was universally attributed to viscount Arthur de La Guéronnière, head of the French Emperor’s press office.⁶² As declared in the *New York Times* a few days later, it was “received by politicians as the declaration of the policy of the Emperor NAPOLEON on the vexed question of the right course to be taken by Europe with regard to the temporal power of the Pope.”⁶³

Behind an apparent defense of the temporal power of the Pope, the pamphlet actually advocated the necessity of a territorial limitation of that temporal power, suggesting that the Holy See was “placed on a volcano” for the rebellion of its subjects, and that the Pope was “unfit” for the task of governing a large state, which necessarily required the support of foreign armies. The Pope would resume his moral authority by ruling over a small independent state consisting only of its spiritual center, the city of Rome. One can imagine the controversy that “anonymous,” yet semiofficial, publication provoked. A central part of this pamphlet was printed verbatim in *Le Siècle* of December 23, 1859. Thus, the reader of that time was once again brought back to Italian contemporary events, and more specifically to the question of the Pope’s temporal power, intricately linked with the “Italian question,” both questions being then at the very center of public debate on the international scene.

Since the Mortara case and *La Tireuse de cartes* were obviously involved with the issue of the Pope’s temporal power, most likely it is *not* by coincidence that the play’s premiere took place in the presence of the French Emperor on December 22, 1859, just one night before the publication of a pamphlet that suggested a solution for the Roman and Italian questions and, according to public rumor, conveyed Napoleon III’s ideas and intended policy on the matter. There is cause to assume that the play, reminding public opinion of the scandal that had just occurred in the Papal States, was supportive of the French Emperor’s scheme in preparation for the Congress.

In our reading of the historical context of Séjour’s play, up to now we have been guided mainly by the pages of the influential *Le Siècle*, which have provided an immediate grasp of the issues at stake on the international scene. But since those issues were controversial and public opinion was divided, we



13.9. Nineteenth-century view of the ghetto of Rome, via di Pescheria (Fish Market Street), before the radical rebuilding of the area in the 1880s. This is the walled quarter where the Roman Jews were compelled to live from 1555 until the conquest of Rome by Italy in 1870. Photo: Anderson. Cliché Archivio Storico della Comunità Ebraica di Roma (ASCE). Photographic Archive, Fondo *Fornari* 1, no. 43.

should complete this portrait of the times by consulting other contemporary sources, as we did when reporting the reviews of the play in a large number of different papers.

Given the relevance of the Roman question in the historical foreground of Séjour's play, it is particularly useful to focus attention on the controversy concerning the destiny of the Church of Rome as a temporal power. The intensity of the contrasts, and the strenuous resistance to any transformation that would lead to a purely spiritual power, appears in the sixteen volumes on "The Temporal Sovereignty of the Roman Pontiffs," in which the editors of *La Civiltà Cattolica*, the Jesuits' review founded in 1850, collected a mass of documents (petitions, appeals, letters of encouragement, etc.) produced by the Catholic episcopacy, clergy, and laity of Italy and the rest of the world in support of the Pope's temporal power in the years 1860–1864, as a solicited response to the Pope's official documents and addresses of 1859–1860 and onward.⁶⁴ It is illuminating to compare and counterbalance the news in a French liberal paper like *Le Siècle*, with the information exposed in a rather antithetical Catholic periodical such as *L'Ami de la religion*.

We first encountered this magazine when it was cited, with some resentment, by Séjour himself, as one of the two papers that had criticised *La Tireuse de cartes* for its supposed attack against the Church, and that had thus

prompted his answer in the form of an introduction to clarify his ideas and aims. A survey of this Catholic periodical has proved to be very interesting. More moderate in its political beliefs and style than *L'Univers* (the other leading French Catholic paper of the time, which had been in the forefront in the campaign against the return of the Mortara child to his family), *L'Ami de la Religion* had evolved toward more liberal positions, such as in declaring that it was in favor of the cause of the “liberty of peoples,”⁶⁵ but it had remained loyal to the Vatican in supporting its temporal power. Therefore its comments on this heated matter are highly representative of the opinions of all those who opposed the ideas expounded in the anonymous pamphlet *Le Pape et le Congrès* and shared the viewpoint of the Church of Rome. Besides, with its consistent format of twenty pages published three times a week, *L'Ami de la religion* was not only a paper of opinion, but also a very informative periodical, publishing long extracts of documents both for and against the positions of the Roman Church, so that its pages offer a rich panorama of the debate. An examination of the issues of late December 1859 and early 1860 confirms the enormous effect produced by the publication of *Le Pape et le Congrès* and the intensity of the controversy it aroused.

Mention of the pamphlet was first made by *L'Ami de la Religion* in its issue of Saturday, December 24, 1859. Here, in a “Political Bulletin” concerning December 23, readers were informed that the “event of the day” had been the publication of an anonymous pamphlet called *Le Pape et le Congrès*, which was “announced with a certain uproar, and on whose origins different rumors circulated.”⁶⁶ The text was then discussed, immediately rejected, and presented with large extracts in the following pages.⁶⁷ Worried and outraged reports would grow in the next issues, of Tuesday, December 27, and Thursday, December 29. It was in the latter issue that, after almost ten pages concerning the hated brochure, in the next section two columns were devoted to the premiere of *La Tireuse de cartes*, by reporting the review of *Le Siècle* on the event (we discussed it in chapter 12, when dealing with the contemporary articles on the play).⁶⁸ There is no doubt that the topics and events were closely linked.

All the following issues of *L'Ami de la Religion* testify to the drama of the cultural and political conflict in progress. In its December 31 issue, *Le Siècle* was mentioned among the “enemies of the papacy” (“les ennemis de la Papauté”), and was accused of passionately attacking the defenders of the temporal power of the Church and always being in the front line when one had to support *la cause de la révolution italienne* (“the cause of the Italian revolution”).⁶⁹ In the first issue of the new year, on January 3, 1860, after over ten pages mostly discussing the “Roman question,” the “Italian question,” and “this moment of crisis,” a reference was once again made to

the “revolutionary lyre” (“[l]a lyre révolutionnaire”) of *Le Siècle*, which was accused of modulating its anticlerical melodies in new variations.⁷⁰ On the same page, in a report from the *Courrier des Alpes* (a French paper of the contended region of Savoy), one mentioned, verbatim, “l’émancipation de la Lombardie” (the emancipation of Lombardy).⁷¹ This time the word used was not one of the usual French terms, *affranchissement* or *déliverance*,⁷² but the more international-sounding *émancipation*. Though a French word, here *émancipation* was written in italics. What was the function of the emphasis given to the word, if not that of referring to—and at the same time rejecting—the widespread international notion that the recent liberation of the Milan region from Austrian rule was another case of “emancipation” from oppression, associated with other contemporary struggles?

On January 12, 1860 *L'Ami de la Religion* published the surprising, asymmetrical exchange that had taken place between the Pope and Napoleon III at the turn of the year. In fact, in a speech on January 1 the Pope had expressed both his appreciation of the New Year’s good wishes received by the commander-in-chief of the French Division in the Pontifical States and his confidence in the Emperor’s condemnation of the “false” principles of the recent pamphlet, and had therefore granted his blessing to the Emperor, the royal family and all of France. When delivering his hopeful speech, Pius IX (Pio Nono in Italian) presumably had not yet received the Emperor’s letter of December 31 addressed to him, which was actually a frank declaration of intent, clearly synthesizing the famous pamphlet’s arguments: for the sake of the real interests of the Holy See, and for the sake of peace in Italy and in Europe, the only solution was the Holy Father’s renunciation of the provinces of central Italy (the Romagna), formerly belonging to the State of the Church, that had rebelled against his power, in exchange for a European guarantee of the keeping of the rest—that is, of Rome and the surrounding area, as a residual possession of his temporal power.⁷³

Italian affairs were rapidly moving toward their revolutionary results, with Cavour, now back to his post, once again leading the game. On February 7, 1860, and in the following issues of *L'Ami de la Religion*, the keyword was “annexation.” With the support of the French Emperor and of England, Prime Minister Cavour of Piedmont, close to the realization of his government’s political aims, had officially announced that the idea of a restoration of the former authorities in Bologna, Parma, Florence, and Modena was no longer possible; that the only possible solution was the legal recognition of the annexation, which was already a matter of fact both in Emilia and in Tuscany; and that the Italian populations, after long waiting in vain for a European solution that would guarantee the respect of the peoples’ wishes, had the duty of governing themselves according to those wishes. Therefore, proclaimed

Cavour's circular letter to his agents abroad, the government of the King of Piedmont-Sardinia could no longer advise the governors and the populations of central Italy to wait for the judgment of Europe. In the situation of incertitude concerning the Paris Congress, continued Cavour, the King's government could no longer stop the natural and necessary development of events leading to annexation.⁷⁴

It is within this fluid, revolutionary context, nearing its crucial resolution, that in the next issue of *L'Ami de la Religion* of February 9, 1860, there appears the puzzling report we discussed above about the performance of *La Tireuse de cartes* in Turin in an Italian translation.⁷⁵ This was the historical background of that stormy evening. The stubbornness by which Pius IX had made his inflexible refusal to return the legally-kidnapped child to his Jewish family, summed up in his firm *non possumus* (Latin, “we cannot”), had revealed to the world the questionable nature of his temporal power and accelerated the break from the past. One year after the facts of early 1860, the process of the new suffrages in the revolted provinces of the Pope and in the other former states of central Italy would lead to their formally recognized “annexations” to the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia. And the initial stage of Italian unity would soon be accomplished: King Vittorio Emanuele II, formerly of Piedmont-Sardinia, would be proclaimed King of Italy on March 17, 1861.

These were the momentous events taking place in Europe when Séjour wrote his play and put it on stage at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, under the benevolent eyes of the Emperor of France. On the other side of the Atlantic, the struggle for the emancipation of oppressed slaves would soon explode into a civil war.



In 1828 Heinrich Heine, in a passage from his travel book that was mentioned in the introduction to this study, reported his reflections from the Italian battlefield of Marengo and expressed his firm belief that the main problem and task of the age was that of Emancipation:

But what is the great question of the age?

It is that of emancipation. Not simply the emancipation of the Irish, Greeks, Frankfort Jews, West Indian negroes, and other oppressed races, but the emancipation of the whole world, and especially that of Europe.⁷⁶

Thirty years later, at the end of the 1850s, Heine's vision was confirmed. It is fascinating to follow the various, parallel advances in the struggles for

equality that developed with special strength and awareness in the course of the nineteenth century, and to remark the growing relevance of one word, always the same—used to define a common ground of values, desires, and expectations, in the fight against ancient systems of power and oppression—*Emancipation*. What a sequence of events: in the United Kingdom, the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829, the Emancipation of Negroes in the British West Indies in 1833, the Jewish Emancipation Act of 1858; in Italy, the Emancipation of Protestants and Jews in Piedmont-Sardinia in 1848; in the United States, Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation for black slaves, achieved, amid thousands of deaths, in 1863; and then, the emancipation of European countries from foreign oppression, and the emancipation of women. Yet all these processes were not so linear as this triumphant list might suggest, nor was the adoption of this term to define each phenomenon immediate, as one might think. As a matter of fact, when was it that this keyword—from the Latin *emancipatio*, in ancient Rome a legal term identifying the official release of a child from paternal power (*patria potestas*)⁷⁷—acquired its present meaning and was adopted to define the liberation from bondage and legal restrictions, and the acquisition of civil rights by oppressed groups and individuals? The denomination of all the centuries-long human struggles for equality now labeled with that term was not immediate, but took place in the course of their different historical processes, being first adopted in the seventeenth century for the cause of religious toleration, and then, particularly since the 1780s, specifically with reference to freedom from slavery, and to signify the hoped-for release of all sorts of oppressed groups from conditions of injustice and inequality.⁷⁸ A close analysis of the historical use of this term leads to many surprises, since on the one hand one finds the pervasive presence of this word and its derivatives used by different fighting communities in the same periods (e.g., the 1820s are in that respect quite interesting);⁷⁹ on the other hand, one often discovers that documents that are now classified under the name “Emancipation” were originally published with different, perhaps more technical, words. And this concerns even the key acts that were mentioned in my first “triumphant list”!⁸⁰ Yet the truth is that the name that stuck and remained was one word, more popular than the others: Emancipation.

It is fascinating to see how ideas and keywords were reverberating across the Atlantic in the emancipating struggles for liberty and equality of those mid-nineteenth-century years, years that were so important for the future of several nations and so near their dramatic resolutions. Yet it is also true that each fight, while sharing a set of values based on the ideas of liberty and equality, was different, being born out of varieties of historical circumstances.

Therefore, in defining those times and those emancipatory movements, one should rather use the plural, and say that this was an Age of Transatlantic Emancipations. This is the larger historical context, an “international context of liberal ideas of nationality and freedom,”⁸¹ in which Séjour took his stand when writing *La Tireuse de cartes* and thus playing an active role in the global events of his days. It is now to this expatriate playwright, and to the last part of his adventurous career that we shall return.

RISE AND FALL OF AN EXPATRIATE
PLAYWRIGHT—"THIS SHAKESPEARE
OF THE BOULEVARD"

WHILE THESE STRUGGLES AND epochal events were in progress on both sides of the Atlantic, Victor Séjour was at the peak of his career as a playwright in Paris. Gratified by critical consideration and popular success, in 1859 he staged no less than three new plays: *La Tireuse de cartes* at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin from December 22 had been preceded by *Les Grands vassaux* at the Odéon in February, and followed on December 28 by the production of a one-act play, *Le Paletot brun* (The brown overcoat), a light comedy set in modern times (ironically portraying the state of boredom and mutual dissatisfaction in the short love affair of a baron and a widowed countess), which opened at the Porte-Saint-Martin:¹ the contemporaneous production of two such different plays in the same theater is impressive.

The year 1860 was one of great achievements and satisfactions for Séjour. On August 6, he was granted the title of Chevalier of the Legion of Honor in the category of Belles Lettres, and once again three new plays of his were performed in Parisian theaters in the same year, while a fourth one, his hit *La Tireuse de cartes*, was still on stage until April 2. When on March 3 a new play of his, *Compère Guillèry* (Comrade Guillery), a melodrama in the cloak-and-dagger style, opened at the Ambigu-Comique, and one month later, on April 12, 1860, *Les Aventuriers* (The adventurers), another play of his set in Italy like *La Tireuse de cartes*, opened at the Gaîté,² a critic of *Le Monde dramatique* reported his popular success: "This author has definitely taken the monopoly of somber plays, and from the Porte-Saint-Martin to the Gaîté, his name shines out in triumphant letters on the posters."³ Most reviews of these cloak-and-dagger plays, however, denounced their inferior poetic quality. But on December 28 an important new play of his, *Les Massacres de la Syrie* (The massacres of Syria), opened at the Théâtre Impérial



14.1. “The Theaters of Boulevard du Temple,” engraving by Provost, from *L’Illustration, Journal universel*, April 1862, p. 240. This illustration celebrates the beauty and liveliness of the Boulevard du Temple, just before its breakthrough and complete transformation by Haussmann in his re-planning of Paris. On the left side one can see the astonishing sequence of theaters located on the boulevard, all of them destined to be pulled down and relocated. From left to right there were, one next to the other, the Théâtre-Historique founded by Alexandre Dumas (also named Théâtre Lyrique), the Théâtre Impérial du Cirque, the Théâtre des Folies-Dramatiques, the Théâtre de la Gaîté, the Théâtre des Funambules, the Théâtre des Délassements-Comiques and the Théâtre Lazary. The wide tree-lined sidewalk facing the theaters was a favorite meeting place for Parisians.

du Cirque; performances would last, with great critical and public success, until the third week of March, 1861.⁴

Just as he had done in *La Tireuse de cartes*, with *Les Massacres de la Syrie* Séjour was staging dramatic contemporary events that were shaking public opinion. But in this play it was more manifest, since the events were explicitly mentioned in the title. Thousands of Maronite Christians had been massacred, first in Lebanon in 1859, and then in Damascus in June–July 1860, at the climax of a bloody civil war that had broken out in the Syrian area of the Ottoman Empire. The European press, especially the French, “was outraged at what it portrayed as the indiscriminate and brutal slaying of Christians at the hands of Druze, Muslims, and the Ottoman army.”⁵ The

decision for military intervention was made by Napoleon III with his foreign minister Thouvenel on July 20. In August, six thousand French soldiers went to the relief of the Maronite Christians, landing in Beirut on August 16 (they would remain in Syria until June 1861). Séjour's play, which stages the events immediately preceding the expedition, was undoubtedly written in support of that campaign.

A contemporary review, describing the hundreds of actors and extras on stage in a phantasmagorical performance ("mixing comedy with history, drama with ballet, the magic charm of the Opera with the vicissitudes of the boulevard") that kept the audience breathless until one o'clock in the morning, once again reported Napoleon III's personal secretary Mocquard as co-author of this play.⁶ The excited gossip concerning the collaboration of such an important political figure recurs in other reviews as well (though not in all).⁷ Such is the case of the article by Ernest Gebauer in *Le Monde dramatique* of the same day, where the supposed co-author's name is not revealed but hidden under three dots ***, yet one hints at Séjour's "mysterious collaborator, whose name is a mystery to no one" (*son collaborateur mystériuex, dont le nom n'est un mystère pour personne*) (and later again: "Mr. Victor Séjour and his unknown collaborator . . . whom everybody knows"), and one even suggests that the much expected play had been apparently "somehow, commissioned from the authors" (*en quelque sorte, commandée aux auteurs*).⁸ Commissioned by whom? By the Emperor, of course, one could infer (though that was not spelled out), since his attendance of the premiere was not without purpose according to Gebauer's innuendos; his point was that by his presence Napoleon III showed the approval he gave to the *tableaux* presented by the authors and to the political ideas concerning the future of the "Eastern Question" expressed there. "We suppose it is useless to insist further on this subject. Our readers are people of wit: they will take the hint,"⁹ added the journalist, winking at his readers.

When Séjour published the play, with himself as the only author, he acknowledged the rumors by dedicating the work to Mr. Mocquard, with the following, interesting words: "À l'homme d'État / Au spirituel écrivain / À mon éminent collaborateur / M. MOCQUARD / Secrétaire et Chef du Cabinet de l'Empereur / V. S." ("To the statesman / To the witty writer / To my eminent collaborator / M. MOCQUARD, / Private Secretary and Chef du Cabinet of the Emperor / V. S.").¹⁰ This dedication was both an admission and a proud authorial self-affirmation: yes, Mocquard, the eminent statesman, was indeed his collaborator (and the definition of him as a "witty" writer is notable), but the work was Séjour's. The political importance of the play and the political role of the writer, openly revealing his collaboration with the Emperor's private secretary and chief of staff, were underscored by

this “coming out.” Four years later, after Mocquard’s death (December 12, 1864), a long “Letter from Paris,” published in the New Orleans paper *The Daily Picayune*, which gave a detailed account of Mocquard’s important figure, also mentioned his close relationship and friendship with Séjour. This friendship was probably based on commonality of interests (as one learns from the same article, Mocquard loved drama; “he was every night at some theatre”) and, obviously, on mutual appreciation.¹¹ There is a further biographical element that may have added to the two men’s feeling of familiarity. Jean-François Constant Mocquard (1791–1864) was born in France, but, as one learns from a book on the Second Empire of 1897, his father’s family, like Séjour’s, was from Saint-Domingue.¹² This unexpected fact suggests the presence in Paris of a society of men, with more or less distant roots and memories in colonial Saint-Domingue, into whose network of connections Séjour had been welcomed from the time of his first arrival in Paris onward.

The political context and political function of *Les Massacres de la Syrie* is only one aspect to be considered, since the play deserves special attention both for its being an accomplished work of Séjour’s maturity, in which his vision is expressed more clearly than elsewhere, and for its several connections with *La Tireuse de cartes*. The ingredients of the plot in *Les Massacres de la Syrie* are the bloody politico-religious conflict taking place in Syria in 1860 and an intricate love affair where people of different religious associations intertwine. This multiethnic setting is particularly congenial and stimulating for the writer, who can give voice to opposite national and political viewpoints and reveal contrasting national passions, while at the same time expressing his authorial point of view as well. The multiethnic context allows the author to introduce a few lines directly hinting at racial issues (the invisibility of black faces to white onlookers; the scandal of slavery).¹³ The main theme, however, is a broader one: what is put on stage with special emphasis is the need and capacity of crossing one’s racial and religious borders, to comprehend the suffering of other human beings in the name of justice and humanity.

Though the play has strong nationalistic tones in exalting France and its Emperor as the savior of the Christians in Syria, this exaltation is connected to the idea that this display of national power, while involving death and destruction, is nonetheless conducting a humanitarian mission that goes beyond its national interests. There is a world one might belong to that extends beyond the borders of one’s nation. This idea and broader theme is announced in the first scene of the first tableau, when Martha de Moréac, daughter of a Christian family of French origins living in Syria, suggests to her father that there is a wider homeland (*patrie*) than one’s country (*pays*)

of origin, a homeland that is not fixed in one place, but can be found *partout*, anywhere: it exists wherever people are suffering and their suffering calls for your presence. The play's theme and philosophy is all summarized in this prelude. This ideal transnational homeland, open to all human beings who respond to the suffering of others, is recreated in the souls of those that are detached from passions—*our* passions, says Marthe, thus including herself, her father, and all her family on the opposite side of this human spectrum, in a world agitated by more limited human desires and ideals.¹⁴ This is the great theme of the play and a major theme of the playwright's.

National and religious passions, where resentment for unjust treatment mingles with desires for vengeance, resonate in the play on both sides of the conflict, even within the Christian family victimized by the Druze and their allies. The idea that “justice” means “revenge,” that the two concepts are the same, is voiced both by Martha's brother Georges (a favorite name for rebellious characters by writers of that time),¹⁵ desperately asking for “justice and revenge” (*justice et vengeance*, act 6, scene 1), and then again, on the opposite ethnic and religious side, by the bloody leader of the Druze.¹⁶ In contrast to these destructive sentiments, where religious difference becomes a justification for murderous hatred, there is also a central theme of the crossing of religious borders, which is first dramatized through the figure of a beautiful Druze girl, Gulnare, the main female figure in the plot. In the midst of the Syrian massacres, she converts from the religion of the Islamic persecutors in which she was born to that of their Christian victims. This time, contrary to the forced conversion of a kidnapped child that had scandalized liberal Europe and inspired *La Tireuse de cartes*, what is shown is a conversion freely and consciously chosen by a young adult, motivated by the desire to be counted among the oppressed and share their condition.¹⁷ The playwright once again seems to respect the conventional gender distinction, by associating the spirit of rebellious vengeance with a male figure, and that of charity and forgiveness with a woman. Yet this observation is contradicted by the role given to the most ideologically important figure in the play, a man, and a non-Christian, who more than any other represents the capacity for human sympathy and understanding across ethnic and religious barriers exalted by the play: Emir Abd-El-Kader.

Abd-El-Kader (1808–1883) is a historical figure, and was an actual protagonist in the events of those days. A hero in the resistance against foreign colonialism in Algeria, he had led the fight against the French invasion of Algeria from 1832 to 1847, before eventually being defeated. Respected as a noble and wise man by his French enemies, he was released by Napoleon III after a few years of detention in France in 1852 and since 1855, with the agreement of the French, had fixed his permanent residence in Damascus. In

July 1860, when Christian massacres spread from Mount Lebanon to Damascus, and the local Druze attacked the Christian quarters of the city, Abd-El-Kader, a faithful believer in the values of Islam, saved thousands of Christians by providing them sanctuary in his house and protecting them with his guards in the citadel of the city.¹⁸

Even before the events of 1860, Abd-El-Kader had inspired the imagination of other French writers such as Victor Hugo, who in 1853 in his *Les Châtiments* (The punishments) had devoted one of his poems, called “Oriental,” to Abd-El-Kader;¹⁹ also Camille Thierry, the New Orleans-born poet, had sung the praises of this leader of Algerian resistance.²⁰ In *Les Massacres de la Syrie* he stands for that “sentiment of humanity” (*sentiment d’humanité*), which at a certain point he himself declares to be the voice he is listening to, which guides him in his actions.²¹ The first words he pronounces on stage are against the intentions of the fanatic leaders that he considers “desecrators of whatever is holy,” despite their speaking in the name of Allah.²² When he welcomes the young Christian hero Georges in his house, his words are: “Here is a Christian . . . a Frenchman . . . He is already at his home . . . he is my guest, he is my brother.” And when, in a central scene of confrontation with the other Muslim notables of the city, he is accused of endangering the sanctuary of Allah by protecting the Christians, his memorable answer is: “I am saving the sanctuary of the safest cult: conscience!” (*Je sauve le sanctuaire du culte le plus sûr: la conscience!*).²³ In that same scene, he warns the bloody Druze leader against the “two specters that are choking empires: intolerance and fanaticism!”²⁴ And in the play’s final scene, it is in the name of *justice* that he proclaims the end of all vengeance and murderous violence: “Now no more retaliations . . . no more vengeance! . . . no more blood! . . . Let justice act, its hour has arrived.”²⁵ The figure of Abd-El-Kader shines out in the somber context of the fight and represents those universal values of justice and humanity that Séjour so ardently shared.

Justice and humanity, and the plea for tolerance against fanaticism: these key concepts in the play have a strange historical resonance, when one puts them next to the real words pronounced by Emperor Napoleon III in his speech of August 7, 1860, when he told the French troops departing for Syria that France happily saluted an expedition that had “one purpose only, that of making the rights of *justice and humanity* triumph. For you are not going in order to wage war against any nation, but to help the Sultan bring back to obedience subjects blinded by a *fanaticism from another century* [un fanaticisme d’un autre siècle].”²⁶ What’s striking is not only the evident similarity in the ideas expressed, but also the firm belief that what one was fighting against actually did not belong to the culture of present times, but was only the negative legacy of a dark past (similar arguments were used by Séjour in

his preface to *La Tireuse de cartes*). In his speech of August 7, the Emperor had concluded that, thanks to the French soldiers' courage and prestige, nations would know that, wherever the French flag flew, there was "a noble cause preceding it and a noble people following it."²⁷ Here came the likely political function of *Les Massacres de la Syrie*, for, in order to have "a noble people following" the flag in support of the Emperor's international initiative, it was necessary to show the historical drama visibly on stage and make people understand that there was "a noble cause" one was fighting for. Séjour's play glorifies the figure of the French Emperor, described by the noble Emir Abd-El-Kader as "a glorious and powerful sovereign who left everything aside to protect a foreign people and resurrect Italy by his own hands" (notice this reference to Italy's "resurrection"), and as one who was now going to save the Christian victims of Syria; "he will call forth civilization against barbarism," declares the Muslim ally of the French who is trying to convince other Muslims to stop their massacres.²⁸

Les Massacres de la Syrie ends in triumph in a scene where the villain is delivered to justice (not to vengeance), and everyone onstage shouts a universal double hurray of exaltation for the wise, enlightened Muslim and for France (the latter followed by two exclamation marks). This peaceful vision, in which a national hero joins hands with the foreign "saviors," and the patriotic exaltation of France may rightly disturb many modern readers, distrustful of these "humanitarian missions." Yet one would not do justice to the quality of Séjour's accomplishment if one did not clarify that its dramatic value is given by the author's ability to give powerful voice also to the feelings and motivations of the characters contrasting this harmonizing conclusion. As in *La Tireuse de cartes*, Séjour is particularly effective in showing situations of conflicts and in creating dialogues where the different viewpoints are articulated, although his tendency is to try to find a way out that pleases himself and his audiences (e.g., the issue of barbarism is completely reversed in the words of the Druze leader of the rebellion, who defines the Europeans as "barbarians").

Staged exactly one year apart, *La Tireuse de cartes* and *Les Massacres de la Syrie* constitute a sort of diptych in the playwright's literary corpus and career: both works were inspired by current events, both of them were honored by the presence of the Emperor at their premieres (a fact which increased their political relevance), both were rumored to have been written with the collaboration of Mocquard, the Emperor's private secretary, and both probably responded to the input of some superior political scheme, shared by the author.

There are, however, some important differences in the dramatic treatment of contemporary events in these two works. While in *Les Massacres de la*

Syrie the factual reality is explicitly mentioned in the title itself and then openly portrayed in the play, in *La Tireuse de cartes* the events on stage are set one century earlier; the characters' names are changed, and the reference to the controversial contemporary events that stirred public opinion is hidden behind the mask of a mysterious title, suggesting the idea of an unknown future. There is a rationale for this difference, and the reason in both cases is historical and political. When *La Tireuse de cartes* was staged, the Roman question—that is, the issue of the Pope's temporal power—was still a matter of open debate, and the Emperor was in the middle of difficult political affairs, since his support of Cavour's unification of Italy under the Savoyard King needed to be counterbalanced by a parallel desire to keep his traditional role as military defender of the Church of Rome. References on stage could not be so manifest, though in his preface the author had then taken a public position on the debated issue. In the case of the Syrian crisis, on the other hand, when Séjour produced his play, the French Emperor had already completed his international schemes allowing him to wage a war in support of the Christians in Syria; in fact, the French expedition had already started, and that initiative could be, and needed to be, openly endorsed by a drama in Paris. Besides, and this is another important difference concerning the playwright himself in his relation to his subject matter, while in *La Tireuse de cartes* the conflict was one where the writer's loyalties were somehow in conflict within his soul (since he was a Catholic who, as a liberal, was criticizing the head of the Church of Rome, and that embarrassment might be shared by his audience too), in *Les Massacres de la Syrie* he was able to manifest more fully those ideals of justice and humanity across ethnic and religious differences that were so deeply engraved within him. That's why it has been important to consider carefully this "twin" play, because *Les Massacres de la Syrie* sheds new light on the previous one, by revealing more explicitly the ideals of justice and human brotherhood in which Séjour believed, which were somehow kept under the surface in his earlier work inspired by current events.

Séjour was at the pinnacle of his career. The New Orleans-born émigré, recently nominated French Chevalier of the Legion of Honor in the category of Belles Lettres, had achieved a position that allowed him to collaborate with the Emperor's private secretary, and even to meet the Emperor privately and be congratulated by him, as one learns from a note by the editor-in-chief of *Le Monde dramatique*, Théophile Deschamps.²⁹ His work was functional to the national needs of his adoptive country, whose ideals of "justice and humanity" he shared, and which he was glad to dramatize and propagate. He could be proud of his social position and popular success, and of the critical attention that surrounded his work. Despite occasional harsh attacks and criticism, there was usually appreciation for the artistic quality of his

writing and the dramatic effects of his theatrical performances. *Les Massacres de la Syrie*, in particular, had been welcomed by a “concert of praise,” as we know from the harsh pamphlet of a rival of his.³⁰ One critic, Paul de Saint-Victor, had immediately written that “this great spectacle” was “one of the most magnificent the boulevard has ever given,”³¹ and the adjective “magnificent” (*magnifique*) keeps recurring in many critical reviews. Two days after its premiere his play could already be described as “famous,”³² such was the interest with which it was received. In his very positive review of the play, the critic of *Le Théâtre* appropriately connected his new play with *La Tireuse de cartes*: “Interest is sustained from beginning to end,” he had written, “and you feel penetrated also by that loftiness of ideas that characterized last year’s *La Tireuse de cartes* as different from the common run of melodramas that clutter up the theaters.”³³

We have briefly referred to the rare criticism of *Les Massacres de la Syrie*, mostly concerning the timeliness of dealing with such current events (a danger that Séjour had already dared to face in *La Tireuse de cartes*, when imagining a possible development for the Mortara case).³⁴ But one attack needs to be mentioned, not only for its violence, but also for the contribution it curiously offers in defining the figure of the playwright. The attack came from another playwright, Eugène Audray-Deshorties, in a pamphlet (*A Propos des Massacres de Syrie*) whose sixteen pages and seventeen sections were devoted solely to the play and the mystery of its rumored collaborator.³⁵ The attack was violent, but the tone was ironical. The play is humorously described as “this historical, religious, political, choreographic, and zoological play” (this last adjective referring to the real camels and horses on the stage); the Parisian press, held responsible for the indiscrete revelation of the “anonymous collaborator” as Mr. Mocquard, is described with a pun as “*officiellement officieuse ou officieusement officielle*” (“officially unofficial, or unofficially official”), that is, as one prone to serve authority in its information, behind the mask of independence. What Eugène Audray-Deshorties particularly dislikes is the confusing mixture of politics with literature: “I would certainly have dared to tell Mr. Séjour, this Shakespeare of the boulevard,” he says mockingly, “that his new drama shocks me in many respects. In a country which has a press and a tribune, the theater does not seem to me a well-chosen place for politicking (*politiquer*). / Is it the comedians’ role to pronounce on stage, in the midst of lightly clad dancing girls and dazed camels, the funeral oration over Turkey and the panegyric of a great prince? / But how can one address these criticisms to M. Mocquard, especially when I hear on all sides a concert of praise?”³⁶

As it often happens with many other originally deprecatory definitions (such as Baroque, Romanticism, Decadent movement, etc.), the description

of Séjour as “this Shakespeare of the boulevard” (*ce Shakespeare du boulevard*), divested of its original mocking intention, can be happily retained as a definition of this playwright. Séjour’s literary ambition was indeed, although within his own recognized limits, that of imitating Shakespeare (with whom he once openly competed in rewriting *Richard III*). He attempted to preserve the moral aims and poetic qualities of high literature, while at the same time writing for the large audiences of the Parisian boulevards. And he did not disdain to mingle with politics and deal with political themes and situations, and even gladly accepted a place in the king’s “court,” like Shakespeare when writing for the Kings’ Men, the company of actors to which he belonged, whenever Séjour felt that the political vision was worth sharing. This is indeed what happened with *La Tireuse de cartes*, when he used his artistic gifts to plead for the cause of natural justice and human values that were crushed by a religious authority. And this is what happened again with *Les Massacres de la Syrie*, when the writing of a political play meant the defense of persecuted Christians abroad, and the exaltation of the role of France in defense of those persecuted minorities. Yet, despite his high literary ambitions and recognized standards, Séjour was also a playwright of the boulevard, the successful author of plays that not only relied on the quality of plots, themes, and language, but also wanted to appeal to the audience with spectacular technical effects, and sometimes even music and dancing accompanying the words on stage, as was so popular in Parisian theaters.



After the 1859–1860 period, certainly the highest point of his career in terms of public recognition, Séjour’s fortunes started to decline. In the following years he wrote a few more plays: *Les Volontaires de 1814* (The volunteers of 1814) and *Les Mystères du Temple* (The mysteries of the Temple) in 1862, *Les Fils de Charles-Quint* (The sons of Charles V), and *Le Marquis caporal* (The corporal marquis) in 1864, *Les Enfants de la louve* (The children of the she-wolf) in 1865, *La Madone des roses* (The madonna of the roses), his last success (set in the Italian Duchy of Modena), in 1868, and *Henri de Lorraine* in 1870.³⁷ Performances of new plays of his became less frequent, and were not always met with critical approval. Some works suffered from the mutilations that censorship inflicted on them. Such was the case, for instance, of *Les Volontaires de 1814*, another “patriotic play,” this time dealing with a painful page in the immediate past of France, when the nation was threatened by foreign invasion and Napoleon I was obliged to abdicate.³⁸ Significantly, this was the last play of his to be performed at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, the prestigious theater that had hosted some of Séjour’s

critical and popular successes, including *Richard III*, *Les Noces vénitiennes*, *Le Fils de la nuit*, and *La Tireuse de cartes*. His next plays were staged in two other large, but a bit more popular theaters, the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique and the Théâtre de la Gaîté. All these theaters, including the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, were close to one another: the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin and the Ambigu-Comique were both on the Boulevard Saint-Martin, while the Gaîté, which until 1862 was on the lively Boulevard du Temple, had then been relocated in a new elegant building, with a capacity of almost 2,000 seats, on the rue de Papin, in the third arrondissement. That happened during Georges-Eugène Haussmann's radical renovation of Paris commissioned by the Emperor, when all the theaters on the Boulevard du Temple (a fascinating neighborhood, with the highest concentration of cafés and playhouses, according to a contemporary journalist *la kermesse permanente du plaisir*, "the permanent pleasure carnival")³⁹ were demolished in order to create a large square at the crossroad of the boulevards (future Place de la République). It was a time of profound transformation, even in the renovated urban landscape of the French capital: "Paris change! Mais rien dans ma mélancolie / N'a bougé!" ("Paris changes! But naught in my melancholy / Has stirred!"), Baudelaire had already sung in the early 1860s.⁴⁰

In the context of such rapid change, Séjour's fortunes also changed, and one wonders about the reasons for his decline. The slowing down of his activities as a playwright might have been partly due to private factors, such as family concerns and health issues. In 1863 or 1864, his aging parents eventually moved from New Orleans to the safety of Paris during the American Civil War, and within a few years they both died there (his father Louis Séjour in 1864, his mother Héloïse Ferrand Séjour in 1868). These were certainly difficult experiences for him, both emotionally and on a practical level.⁴¹ Health issues also began to plague him, as one can learn from an 1865 letter to a friend, where he complains about heavy headaches, torturing him. His personal family situation also must have been rather complicated, as one can infer from news concerning his three sons, all of them born from different mothers (one in 1840, the other two in 1857 and 1858).⁴²

Yet, though private worries may have played a role in the decrease of his writing and staging, there were other deeper reasons of taste that were causing his artistic collapse as well. His "flamboyante" style, his complicated imaginative plots, his ideological contrasts highly declaimed, were increasingly regarded as outdated and old-fashioned in the new literary climate where the culture of Romanticism was being replaced by the new school of Realism. In addition, the political and national situation was also radically changing. It is highly symbolic that just a few months before Napoleon III's disastrous defeat at Sedan in the Franco-Prussian War, which led to the collapse of the

Second Empire in 1870, Séjour had his greatest artistic failure on stage, and for the first time in his career he himself decided not to publish his text. That happened in the spring of that year, with the last new play of his to be performed in his lifetime, *Henri de Lorraine* (set in Naples at the time of Masaniello's revolt against Spain), which opened at the Ambigu-Comique on March 10, and whose performances did not even reach the end of the month. It was a fiasco, decreed this time by both audiences and critics. Despite some positive comments (such as the one by Jules Janin, who still referred to him as "Séjour-le-Bienvenu"—Séjour-the-Welcome),⁴³ most reviews were so harshly critical that, when Séjour made the decision not to publish the play, he communicated the news to his publisher, Michel Lévy, with the following dramatic words: "the play has not been judged; it has been crushed, assassinated. I will keep my dead to myself."⁴⁴

At that critical moment in his personal life, coinciding with a national crisis and revolutionary times in his adopted country, Séjour attempted a different literary genre, turning from drama to fiction. He started writing a novel, *Le Comte de Haag* (The count of Haag). Part I, set in contemporary France at the time of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–1871, was serialized in the Bonapartist daily paper *L'Ordre de Paris*, from March 23, 1872, to May 8. At that stormy time, there was even a proposal to transfer the French capital from Paris to some safer place, because France was being besieged by Prussia. Arguing against that proposal in the 1872 preface to his novel, Séjour expressed all his love and admiration for the city of Paris that those people wanted to "decapitate." But, asked an indignant Séjour, who had the right to do that? To whom did Paris belong? "Paris," he answered, "does not belong even to Parisians, hardly even to France. It is the work of all, the common product. It belongs to Europe, to the entire world, to history, to *just law* which it represents, to *liberty* which stirs it, to *social regeneration* which it carries within itself. Grandeur is there, and with it France's vitality, prosperity, usefulness, France's *raison d'être*. There are Idea-cities, Principle-cities, Mother-cities. Athens and Rome were such. Paris is." What Athens and Rome had been in the past, Paris was in the present, and there was no possible alternative, according to Séjour: "What city would you make the capital in its place? [...] Where find the Gaulish city, the Frankish city, the *universal* city, the great seductress of Europe, if it not be Paris?"⁴⁵ In that hymn to Paris, capital of France and *universal* city, ideal seat of *just law*, *liberty*, and *social regeneration*, which introduced the writer's new literary enterprise, there was a synthesis of all that France and Paris stood for, for the Creole expatriate who had found his "haven"⁴⁶ and place of expression in that old-new world capital. The vibrant style, rich with rhetorical questions answered by strong

statements expressing high ideals of civil commitment, was still akin to that of his noble introduction to *La Tireuse de cartes*.

Because of ill health, Séjour was not able to complete his novel. But in the summer of that same year 1872, at the Gaîté there was a successful revival of his *Le Fils de la nuit*, welcomed once again by popular success and critical appreciation, and running for almost three months, from early August until October 29.⁴⁷ It was to be Séjour's last artistic satisfaction, although not his last writing effort.

When he died of tuberculosis at fifty-seven on September 20, 1874 (he was living then with one of his sons in a small apartment at 14 Boulevard Magenta),⁴⁸ he was working on a play about Oliver Cromwell, titled *Cromwell*, which, as we will see, would be performed posthumously in 1875, a few months after his death, at the Théâtre du Châtelet, arousing great problems of censorship and political scandal. His expenses at the Maison Municipal de Santé on Boulevard Saint-Denis, the city hospital where he entered in the second week of September 1874 and spent his last days of life, were partially covered by the Société des auteurs et compositeurs dramatiques (the Association of Dramatic Authors and Composers) to which he belonged. Despite all his past successes, he was financially poor, but still respected by his colleagues: three days before dying, on September 17, he was called on by the president of the Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques, August Maquet (past collaborator and ghost writer of Alexandre Dumas *père*). "Recalling Séjour's American origins," the news of his death was conveyed by the agent general of the Society, Léonce Peragallo, to the Consul General of the United States in Paris, who forwarded Peragallo's letter with translation to U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Cadwalader, September 23, 1874. Séjour's funeral was held on September 22, 1874, in a chapel of the hospital, filled with playwrights, actors, and critics, beside his family, and then at Père-Lachaise Cemetery, where the vice-president of the Société des auteurs et compositeurs dramatiques, Paul Féval, gave a moving grave-side discourse.⁴⁹

News of Victor Séjour's death spread through the newspapers and crossed the ocean. The *New York Times* of September 22, 1874, published a long obituary beginning with these words: "A cable dispatch from Paris this morning conveys intelligence of the death of M. Victor Séjour, the French dramatic author. He was born in Paris."⁵⁰ Likewise, that same day the *Philadelphia Inquirer* announced on its first page: "Victor Séjour, the French dramatic, writer, is dead."⁵¹ It is amazing to see how the American origins of the expatriate playwright, actually born in New Orleans, had disappeared from public knowledge; yet few years earlier, in 1869, an American scholar

writing on *The Living Writers of the South* had included him in his list of southern writers, although with some uncertainty about his origins, and had reported that “his friends in New Orleans consider him an American and a Southern author. He is, I am informed, a quadroon.”⁵² In 1874, even some New Orleans papers gave the news of his death without mentioning his local origins.⁵³ The American-born “free man of color” had been absorbed by his adoptive mother country and, alas, disclaimed by his original one.

A WRITER'S INDIGNANT CONSCIENCE

IN THE ENGRAVING OF Victor Séjour published in *Diogène*, March 8, 1857, the triumphant young man was represented next to a shining column where the titles of his works inscribed were: *La Chute de Séjan*, *Richard III*, *Les Noces vénitiennes*, and *Le Fils de la nuit*. That selection of titles could only include plays up to 1857. Then came the “political” phase of his production at the turn of the 1850s and the remainder of his body of work. Which were the plays of Victor Séjour that were particularly remembered by his contemporaries after his death? An updated and slightly different list of selected titles can be found in the Séjour family grave of Père-Lachaise Cemetery, where the playwright was buried in 1874. At the foot of his tomb, on the greyish family slab lying horizontally on the ground, there is a special inscription stone, which, according to O’Neill’s detailed description, “is in the form of a book which rests on a desk lectern; the whole is supported by four round balls of stone, one at each corner. The book is open. The left-hand page lists, under ‘Victor Séjour,’ four of his greatest successes: *La Chute de Séjan*, *Richard III*, *La Tireuse de cartes* and *Le Fils de la nuit*.¹ As one can see by comparing the two selections, in this final four-title list of masterpieces the only variation is represented by the inclusion of *La Tireuse de cartes*, inserted at the expense of *Les Noces vénitiennes*. Of all his later works, it was *La Tireuse de cartes* that was most valued by his family and remembered for posterity. For this reason, it is worthwhile to investigate the critics’ reviews after 1860, which will shed light on the later life of this major work on the Parisian stages, and across French borders too.

A memorable episode took place in 1866 on the occasion of the first revival of *La Tireuse de cartes* in Paris, when a theater review published in the biweekly *Messager des Théâtres et des Arts* suggested that Séjour’s motivations for writing the play had been only vulgarly monetary: “Knowing the advantages of the theater and the easy sweeping along of the public, he sniffed

out a good business deal (in the misfortune of the Mortara family) and, catching the child on the bounce, used it as a foundation of a big hit and handsome royalties.” That insinuation was terribly offensive to Séjour, who wrote an indignant letter of complaint to the editor of the paper: “Your assessment astounds me. I consider myself a soul little turned towards money, and more open toward great misfortunes. My sympathy for the Jewish race, as for all the persecuted, does not date from yesterday.”² It was not difficult for the playwright to offer evidence of this statement by proudly mentioning two of his plays dealing with Jewish subjects and giving his interpretation of their professed aims. His sympathy for the oppressed and his social conscience had been sincere, he claimed, since the beginning of his theatrical career:

My work in drama, obviously, is a matter of too little importance for one to be able to remember it. But *my first play, Diégarias*, staged at the *Théâtre Français*, was in my thinking a sort of political protest,—if I dare use this expression,—just as the *Tireuse de cartes* was a social and religious protest in favor of the Jews. If a mind as sincere as yours was able to mistake it, one must blame my incompetence. Doubtless have I ill expressed my sentiments, ill set forth my convictions and the stirrings of my indignant conscience.³

In this important declaration, there is not only the self-portrait of an artist, who describes himself as moved by an “indignant conscience,” urging him to political, social, and religious protests in favor of the oppressed. There is also the definition of a poetics, the belief that art is not only for art’s sake, an idea that Séjour had already expressed in 1857, when he had dedicated his play *André Gérard* (“the least bad of my plays and especially the most moral one”) to his friend Achille Denis, and after claiming: “No one is concerned more than me with the aim and the morality of the theater,” had outlined his high vision of art and placed his ideal models in Shakespeare and Victor Hugo.⁴ With such a conception of art and its function, and with such literary models, the accusation of such sordid motivations must have been distressing for our poor writer. And poor he was, even in a literal sense, at that point of his life, as we can infer from this protest letter of his, whose other main point, apart from his defense of his artistic aims, concerns his self-declared lack of interest in money. This issue, raised again at the end of his letter, is accompanied by a moving description of the critical professional and existential situation he was going through at that time, in 1866: “What shall I say further? My modest situation explains sufficiently the little fascination that money has held for me. Come now, in this moment of your writing, people are all around offering ‘good deals’ as you humorously call them, and my writer’s dignity, although slim, cannot go along with them.”⁵ Once again, as in a previous protest letter of his to *Le Temps* of 1864, when

he had defended his play *Le Marquis caporal* from a political attack by the paper's reviewer,⁶ it was his writer's "dignity" that counted for Séjour in his relationship with his audience.

This letter of 1866 illuminates Séjour's self-perception concerning his artistic relationship with the Jewish world. Yet, that is not all. Besides dealing with Jewish themes and claiming to speak in favor of the Jews in his writing, Séjour also had an enduring personal friendship with the Félix family, the well-known Jewish family of actresses and actors (five sisters and one brother), who had been launched in their theater careers by their father Jacob Félix, a former peddler from Alsace. We have mentioned them from time to time when speaking about Séjour's plays. Not only did Lia Félix act in several of his plays, starting with *Richard III* in 1852,⁷ but the friendly relationship embraced the other members of the family as well. In 1855, when the Félix sisters went on tour in the United States, Séjour kept them informed of Parisian life by correspondence.⁸ Elisabeth (Eliza) Rachel Félix, universally known by the stage name of "Rachel," the most famous Parisian tragedienne of the time and superstar actress on the international scene, celebrated by Matthew Arnold among others,⁹ unanimously admired for her "immense superiority" in acting on stage and envied by many (with remarks often associated with anti-Jewish innuendos) for her resultant economic fortune,¹⁰ never played for Séjour. Yet when she died at age thirty-six in 1858, she left a will in which she bequeathed her writing table and blotting pad to Victor Séjour!¹¹ When the Félix patriarch, Jacob, died, in April 1872, Séjour was at his Jewish funeral ceremony.¹² And when Séjour himself died two years later, at least one of the Félix sisters, Dinah, was at his funeral.¹³

Another Jewish person whose activity interlaced with Séjour's was Michel Lévy, his publisher, whose important cultural role in the Paris of the time deserves careful attention (he founded his publishing house with his brothers in 1836, and published such writers as Honoré de Balzac, Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Alphonse de Lamartine, Prosper Mérimée, George Sand, Alfred de Vigny, Eugène Scribe, Heinrich Heine, and Gustave Flaubert, and a large series of theatrical authors; his obituary in the *New York Times* of May 23, 1875, defines him as "the most prominent publisher in France").¹⁴ Jews had entered public life in France thanks to the equal rights of citizenship granted to them by the new legislation following the French revolution; and at the time of the Second Empire, before the explosion of hatred soon to be revealed by the Dreyfus affair, they were apparently enjoying a relatively good time in France.¹⁵ Yet, even in the case of such a successful and appreciated man as the publisher Lévy, one can infer how fragile that well-being was, when it was enough to refuse a writer's publication to be immediately called "a dog of a Jew," as reported in the American obituary

mentioned above (even Flaubert was not exempt from anti-Semitic bias, as one can see in a letter of his concerning his publisher Michel Lévy).¹⁶ Prejudice and hatred were a constant menace, lying near the surface, ready to spring up any moment against Jews, even in France.



As for Séjour's *La Tireuse de cartes*, its fortune took various forms in different languages, including several free English adaptations by British and American writers. In some cases, these writers wrote their versions without even acknowledging their source, which is one of the reasons why the connection with the original work has been often ignored even by scholars of Séjour up to now. Chronologically, the first of these English adaptations was a drama in two acts by William Travers, titled *The Fortune-Teller; or, The Abduction of the Jew's Daughter*, which was submitted for license to the Lord Chamberlain's office in London in 1860. On September 28, 1860, less than one year after the première of *La Tireuse de cartes* in Paris, the Lord Chamberlain's license was sent for performance at the City of London Theatre.¹⁷ This was a large theater-house built in 1837, with a seating capacity of 2,500, located on Norton Folgate, in an extraparochial area (traditionally outside the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Bishop of London) north of the city. A few months later, in 1861, this English version was performed at another East End London venue, the Pavilion Theatre, with a slightly different title. By simply inverting the sequence of title and subtitle, the theme of the religiously motivated kidnapping was further emphasized. The new title was *The Abduction of the Jew's Child!; or, The Fortune Teller!*, with two exclamation points added, to convey all the scandal accompanying the events represented on stage. In a playbill announcing the play's new premiere ("first time here") for Saturday, April 13, 1861, "Jew's Child!" was capitalized and set in a large font, as if those selected words were the play's whole title. This visual document is now available at the East London Theatre Archive,¹⁸ while the handwritten manuscript of *The Fortune-Teller; or, The Abduction of the Jew's Daughter* by William Travers is kept at the British Library, in the Lord Chamberlain's collection, which retains copies of all plays newly performed in London from 1737 to 1968. What makes this British version particularly relevant is its emphasis on the Jewish context of the events dramatized and the different twist given to the ending of the story. Notable among the changes made from the French original are the introduction of scenes with a Grand Inquisitor and the conspicuous presence of the father figure, who plays a role in the action, and whose survival allows for the reconstitution of the happy Jewish family at the end of the play.¹⁹

Yet, if this reversal of a tradition of Jewish representation was possible in London's East End theaters, this revolutionary transformation is not present in the most popular British version of *La Tireuse de cartes*, by the Irish-born playwright (and cofounder of *Punch*) Joseph Stirling Coyne (1803–1868), a free adaptation titled *The Woman in Red*, which was first staged at an important West End theater, the Royal Victoria Theatre, on March 28, 1864. That same year Coyne published in London a fictional version of the same story, *The Woman in Red: A Romance*, which he dedicated to Madame Céleste, the famous French actress who played the role of the Jewish mother in his play. In both versions of *The Woman in Red*, Coyne's "Romance" in forty chapters and his "Drama," the key role, as in Séjour's original, is that of the mother (here called Miriam), who in her search for her lost daughter adopts the persona of an exotic fortune-teller (here named Rudiga). The main theme focused on is the mother's suffering and revenge. The persistence of traditional Jewish stereotypes is visible both in the representation of the Jewish mother and in the play's ending. Here too, in fact, there is a happy ending, as clearly conveyed both by the title of the play's final act, "Heart's Victory," and by the title of the "Romance's" last chapter, "All's Well That Ends Well"; but what is missing is the unconventional recreation of the Jewish family's unity staged in the East End version of the play. In the last scene of *The Woman in Red*, the Jewish mother welcomes the adoptive mother's love for her daughter ("We shall love her better, if united"), and she even approves of her daughter's marriage with her gentile lover. This is a conclusion that is not as openly represented in Séjour's play, by which "we anticipate the daughter's assimilation into a gentile world" (Heidi J. Holder). *The Woman in Red* was once again performed in London, at the Royal St. James's Theatre, in the West End, in 1868. The text was then published several times on both sides of the Atlantic.²⁰ No other work by Séjour had such a multiple fortune in contemporary English theaters and publishing.

This was the conclusion I had come to after finding the unforeseen fictional version of *The Woman in Red*, plus the many editions of the play by the same name, and after making the exciting discovery that another British version had been staged in an East End theater as early as 1860, and then at another East End theater in 1861. Yet, unexpectedly, a passage from a contemporary article made me think there was still more to discover. In an article on Mocquard published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in December 1867, Olive Logan, an American-born actress and journalist temporarily living in Paris, briefly mentions *La Tireuse de cartes* and declares that the play "is known to the American public as 'Gamea, the Jewish Mother,' another translation of it being dubbed 'The Woman in Red.'"²¹ "Gamea, the Jewish Mother"? What is Logan referring to, I wondered? It could not be a

reference to *The Woman in Red*, since there the Jewish mother is called Miriam, not Gamea; besides, the journalist herself had defined the latter play as “another translation.” Could that be the title of a further, still unknown translation of Séjour’s play? I searched for the supposed title on the web and in all my archival sources, but found no answer. Defeated, I thought the mystery would be solved by future research. All at once, I noticed a detail: the Jewish mother’s name was not spelled “Gemea,” or “Géméa,” as in the French original, but “Gamea.” I checked again, digitizing the new spelling correctly this time. How exciting it was to see my supposition immediately confirmed, not only by one single source, but by a series of data kept in precious archives, proving the existence of another English adaptation of the play expressly created for the American audience! More surprises and literary, and even political, connections were to emerge from the subsequent research.

This American free adaption of *La Tireuse de cartes* is titled *Gamea; or, The Jewish Mother*. The initiative for it was taken in 1863 by an actress of Irish origins, Matilda Heron (1830–1877), who had immigrated to the United States in 1842 and had become famous in the mid-1850s for *Camille; or, The Fate of a Coquette*, her melodramatic interpretation of Dumas’s novel *La Dame aux camélias* (1852). In 1857, at the time of her biggest triumph as Camille in New York City, Heron had married the German-born American composer and conductor Robert Stoepel. On September 29, 1863, Heron’s version, *Gamea; or, The Jewish Mother*, a drama with incidental music composed by Stoepel, had its premiere in New York at Niblo’s Garden, a theater on Broadway that seated over 3,000 people (it was here that Giuseppe Verdi’s *Macbeth* was first performed in the United States in 1850).²² Gamea’s role was played by Felicita Vestvali, a theater and opera star of Polish origins much admired for her contralto voice.²³ After the September 29 premiere, the play was staged eight more times at Niblo’s Garden in October 1863, with improvements made after the first two performances. It played to crowded houses and elicited contrasting reviews, and then it started a years-long career across the country. On January 22, 1864, it was performed at Pike’s Opera House in Cincinnati. On March 28, 1864, it was staged at the Boston Theatre, on Washington Street, Boston. A two-page playbill prepared for this last event announced the first appearance in Boston of “M’lle” Vestvali (“one of the greatest of Lyrical Tragic Artistes” and “one of the greatest Actresses of the age”), mentioned her recent success at Niblo’s Garden in New York, “where she performed for a month to houses crowded to the excess, (hundreds being turned from the door nightly, unable to obtain admission),” and also reported “her splendid engagements in the cities of Philadelphia, Washington, Pittsburg.”²⁴ On March 6, 7, and 8, 1865, *Gamea; or, The Jewish Mother* was performed at Maguire’s Opera House

in San Francisco. On May 4, 1868, it was once again played in New York City, in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Williamsburg.²⁵

The second page of the playbill for the 1864 Boston performance acknowledged that “the new and powerful drama” was “translated and adapted from ‘La Trieuse [sic] des Cartes,’ by Matilda Heron.” The play’s history and authorship were described as follows: “This Drama was first produced in Paris, some three years ago, where it met with the most unbounded success, and ran for nine consecutive months to overflowing houses. The success of the play, in addition to its own merits as a dramatic production, was probably due, in some measure, to the bearing which it had upon the celebrated ‘Mortara Case’ which at that time excited the whole Christian World. The authorship of the play was nominally given to Victor Séjour, but it was well understood in Parisian circles, that the play proceeded from the pen of”—and here in a new line, in large block letters, was the name “Mons. Mocquard, / The Secretary of the Emperor.”²⁶ Besides the relation openly established once again with the Mortara case and the definition of the “celebrated” case as one which had “excited the whole Christian World,” one of the striking points of this synthesis on the play’s Parisian background obviously concerns the double authorship of the drama, with Séjour playing only a nominal role, while hiding behind his mask would be the real author: the French Emperor’s secretary.

A similar reconstruction on this issue was also offered by Olive Logan, the American actress and journalist living in Paris whose 1867 article gave me a first clue for my discovery of this American version. In that article (written after Mocquard’s death in December 1864), Logan, who presents herself as a young friend of Mocquard’s, cites the Emperor’s chief of cabinet as the author of *La Tireuse de cartes* and gives supposed “state reasons” for his nonofficial authorship of this and other plays. “The Drama,” she explains as a justification, theorizing on the possible political use of a play’s artistic power, “is a powerful lever with which to move the mass; and when some pet bit of policy was entertained by the Imperial Cabinet Mocquard produced a play in which the same appeared, ‘tried it on’ the people, and if it was favorably received, adopted it.” Therefore, according to Logan, it was “wholly for state reasons that Mocquard denied himself the satisfaction of hearing his name announced on ‘first nights’ as author of the piece,” and it was for these reasons that he “transferred all the glory and part of the money to Monsieur Victor Séjour, a professional dramatist, who was undoubtedly a skillful *collaborateur*.²⁷ One should remark that even in this reconstruction of the two writers’ roles suggested by an admirer of Mocquard’s, Victor Séjour is at least acknowledged as being a “skillful *collaborateur*”: therefore, neither just a nominal author’s mask, as apparently stated in the playbill for

Gamea, nor simply a collaborator, but a *skillful* one, that is, a co-author of the text. And this also sheds new light on the words in the Boston playbill, where one should pay attention to the verb used in the statement, “the play *proceeded* from the pen of Monsieur Mocquard, / The Secretary of the Emperor” (my italics): for “to proceed” means “to come forth from a source,” “to originate,” “to begin to carry on an action, a process or movement,” and thus refers mainly to the origin of an action which is still in the process of being accomplished. And this might refer to the hypothesis that the writing of *La Tireuse de cartes* was actually born as a political initiative schemed by Mocquard and the Emperor to test and influence French public opinion in the struggle for the liberation of the kidnapped Mortara child, within the larger plan of an alliance with the Italian liberal forces that aimed at the independence of Italy, and that Séjour was the “skillful collaborator” in this initiative, one who shared the humanitarian liberal goals and used his writing skills in carrying out the project. The possibility that the idea of the play was born from Jean Mocquard, who, for ten years and more, “wrote nearly every word that was spoken from the throne of Louis Napoleon, and penned every official document which issued from that cabinet on which the eyes of Europe were centred,”²⁸ simply adds to the political importance of the text, confirming its high political, and human, purposes, so openly revealed in the play’s preface (“But I am a man . . .”). If the plight of a Jewish family which had stirred the world’s public opinion could become part of the French Emperor’s concern and be considered a “pet bit of policy” to be tested onstage, this concern was certainly shared by Séjour, who, as we saw, in 1866 could still claim proudly that the *Tireuse de cartes* was “a social and religious protest in favor of the Jews,” where, as in previous works of his, he had expressed his “sentiments,” his “convictions,” and the stirrings of his “indignant conscience.”²⁹

In the English adaptation inspired by the Mortara child’s kidnapping performed on American stages in the dramatic Civil War years, until 1864 the star playing Gamea was, as in New York and Boston, Miss Felicita Vestvali: “Magnificent Vestali,” who because of her Italian-sounding stage name was also known, erroneously, as “the Italian cantatrice” (see *The Israelite* of January 22, 1864, announcing the play). Even President Abraham Lincoln was among her admirers; he specifically went to see her in this performance, as we learn from his biographer David Herbert Donald: “The President was so impressed by the singing of Felicita Vestvali—‘Vestali the Magnificent,’ as the newspapers called her—that he attended her long-forgotten musical play called *Gamea; or, The Jewish mother* not once but twice.”³⁰ This was probably in 1863, as one infers from the context. In that period of great political

worries, the President's wife, Mary, "tried to divert her husband by going with him to concerts and the opera."³¹ The historical context of the play's performances is quite manifest in the *New York Herald* of October 10, 1863, on whose first page a theatrical review of the play at Niblo's Garden appears next to a political article titled "The Origin and End of the War: How to Give Effect to the Emancipation Proclamation."

From 1865, Gamea's role was taken by Matilda Heron herself. She had given birth to a daughter in 1863, which is probably why she did not play the role earlier. An advertisement in the *Daily Alta California* of March 2, 1865, announced the revival of "the great play of *Gamea, or, the Jewish Mother*," with "Miss Matilda Heron, supported by the Popular Dramatic Company," at Maguire's Opera House in San Francisco.³² This Californian scene leads to another surprise, one that has Mark Twain as a protagonist. The young writer Samuel Clemens, who had adopted his pen name only recently, in 1863, was then living in San Francisco and contributing humorous sketches to various local papers, including the *Daily Alta California*. In December 1865, in the Virginia City *Territorial Enterprise*, he published a humorous poem entitled "A Rich Epigram," soon republished in the San Francisco *American Flag*, where he made fun of the proprietor of San Francisco's Opera House, Thomas (Tom) Maguire, for two episodes of violent physical and legal confrontation he had just had with two artists. Tom Maguire was an Irish immigrant from New York who was the first great theatrical impresario of the city. One of the artists with whom he had quarreled was Felicita Vestvali, who, in the course of a dispute over her contract, had charged him with threatening to break every bone in her body. "Of bone bereft, / See how you've left, / Vestvali, gentle Jew gal—" (lines 13–15): these are the three lines from this poem by Mark Twain devoted to the episode. Mark Twain's allusion to Vestvali as a "gentle Jew gal" refers, as explained in a critical edition of the writer's early works, "to her popular role as the Jewish mother Gamea in the play *Gamea, the Fortune Teller*."³³ That in 1865 the fame of such an appreciated non-Jewish performer should have been linked, in Mark Twain's eyes, to an American version of *La Tireuse de cartes* is indeed a surprising discovery, which confirms the statement made by Olive Logan from which this chain of findings started—"La Tireuse de cartes, is known to the American public as 'Gamea, the Jewish Mother'"—and which further documents the popularity of this adaptation and of its Jewish main character in the United States. And this was happening in December 1865, when Mark Twain had taken the crucial step in his career of publishing in the East the humorous story that would make him known all over the country, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County."³⁴

Geographical crossings of texts across a continent, moving encounters of literary destinies mysteriously intertwined . . .



Meanwhile, back in Paris, the life story of *La Tireuse de cartes* did not end with its 1866 revival. In early January 1876, less than two years after Victor Séjour's death, there was a new revival of the play at the Théâtre-Historique (the theater originally founded by Alexandre Dumas *père*), with famous actress Mme Laurent still playing the role of the Jewish mother Géméa, as in 1859–1860 and 1866. (When, aged seventy-six, Marie Laurent was honored with a benefit night at the Opera House in Paris in 1901, a silver bifacial medal with two portraits of her by the famous medalist Oscar Roty engraved in her honor listed *La Tireuse de cartes* as the first of her triumphs).³⁵ The role of the contested daughter, Paola, was no longer played by Lia Félix, but by Mme Raphaël Félix, another member of the same talented family of actors, as one learns from the review in *Le Temps* by Francisque Sarcey, the paper's drama critic since 1867.³⁶ Since Sarcey was very influential as a reviewer at the time (according to Émile Zola, an opinion of his could determine a play's fortune),³⁷ it is interesting to read his comment on Séjour's play and its new, posthumous staging. The review started by recollecting the "immense" success of the play in its first edition, the historical case of the Mortara kidnapped child prompting it, and the fact that its performance had almost been "a political event," since, because of the rumor concerning Mocquard's collaboration, or, at least, protection, one had seen in that "adventure brought on the stage a sign of the Emperor's secret provisions concerning the Pope and Italy." The play had therefore had the honor of being discussed by political writers, which had increased its contemporary success. Now, continued the critic, the moment had come to evaluate the drama in itself, "devoid of this prestige of current events." The review went on to describe the freezing cold of that January day that had reduced the number of spectators; and yet, despite the uncomfortable temperature, the play had eventually been able to overcome the initial indifference of an audience chilled to the bone. "There is in the fourth act," continued the reviewer, "one of the most beautiful scenes that I know of in theater."³⁸ And such is the enthusiasm for that scene, the famous one with the two mothers contending over "their" daughter, that he goes on for two columns describing it in all its details and nuances, stressing the increasing intensity of the confrontation, the eruption of the contested girl's anguish, and the great ability of the playwright in slowly building up that dramatic situation in a crescendo of emotions.

Considering Zola's comments about this critic's influence, that review was a major coup for the deceased playwright's reputation.

That was not the only time that a play by Séjour was performed in Paris after his death, nor was it the only case in which Sarcey spoke up in favor of him. Just one year earlier, Sarcey had defended the play Séjour left in manuscript form at the time of his death, *Cromwell*, which opened posthumously on April 24, 1875 at the Théâtre du Châtelet, in a premiere that created a huge political scandal.³⁹ After the collapse of the regime of Napoleon III in 1870, the conflict between royalists and republicans was at its height in France, with the republicans prevailing amid strong resistance by royalist holdouts. In that precarious historical context, the striking fact is that Séjour had felt the need to write a historical play dramatizing the crucial period in which English Puritans had beheaded their king and violently transformed their political system from monarchy to republic, "an explosive theme to stage in Paris"⁴⁰ at that historical moment. A first sign of the troubles with censorship this work had to go through is suggested by the fact that the government censorship bureau exceptionally preserves not only one, but two succeeding versions of the play, which shows how difficult it was to produce an authorized script for this work.⁴¹ But more problems arose a few months after Séjour's death, when *Cromwell* was first performed.

The story can be gathered in great detail from the periodicals of the time, since the scandal and its consequences created a real case. At the premiere the play's main actor, Paul-Félix-Joseph Taillade, added "to his *Cromwell*'s role some words," reported *Le Figaro*, "suppressed by the good sense of censorship, but which, reintroduced by the actor, would bestow him a burst of Communard applause." This had caused catcalls and all sorts of reaction inside the theater.⁴² The contested expression uttered around midnight was: "these wretched royalists" (*ces misérables royalistes*), an offensive phrase shouted by an angry Cromwell in the third act, which had been "prudently crossed out" (*prudemment biffé*) by the censors.⁴³ "The hisses and the applause crossed from all over," writes a rather sympathetic report in *Le Temps*.⁴⁴ The consequences were immediate. On the following day, all performances of *Cromwell* were interdicted by order of the Governor of Paris, first "until further notice," and then irrevocably for fifteen days, a very severe punishment, considering that the play was meant to be on stage only for one month. Despite the disapproval of most of the press, which criticized the excessive harshness of a penalty that was seriously endangering a theatrical direction and reducing to poverty the *hundreds* of people working for the performance, despite the letter of explanation sent by Maurice Drack, the co-author of the play after Séjour's death, and the letter of the actor apologizing

for that “*lapsus*” of his, despite articles demonstrating that the supposedly pro-republican phraseology of Séjour’s play was counterbalanced by opposite viewpoints and visions, particularly in the epilogue, that gave a totally different meaning to the play⁴⁵—despite all this and more, the fifteen-day interdiction remained.⁴⁶ The scandal of *Cromwell*’s staging increased Séjour’s posthumous celebrity, and gives us the opportunity to grasp the problematic political and cultural context of the writer’s late career.

What is even more interesting is to follow the literary debate that developed around his last play when the interdiction was over, and in the second week of May some critics, who had not been able to see the play up to then, could finally write their reviews. In addition to the problem of censorship, which was inevitably mentioned, the discussion about the play was the occasion for raising broader critical issues concerning the future of drama and literature. What was at stake in the case, proclaimed Clément Caraguel in the *Journal des débats* on May 10, was “the very existence of historical drama.”⁴⁷ After being finally allowed to see the subject of such scandal, he expected the play to be a demagogic pamphlet in favor of republicanism. What he found instead was a play grounded in history, in which a republican speaks as a republican and a royalist as a royalist, and both political factions insult each other, which showed that “it is not the authors that are speaking, but only their characters, and the latter are simply expressing the passions, the ideas, the prejudices of their time.” Therefore, he wondered worriedly, if characters were not free to speak to each one in his or her way, what would happen to “historical drama such as conceived by such masters as Shakespeare, Schiller, Manzoni, Victor Hugo?” (notice the balanced multinational and multilingual list of writers, representing the culture of four different European countries, England, Germany, Italy, and France).⁴⁸

As for Francisque Sarcey, with whose defense of *Cromwell* we began this survey of this last play’s controversial history, his two pieces of criticism after the reopening of *Cromwell* plunge us into the literary debate of the time, in the transition from Romanticism to Realism and Naturalism. The theoretical point the critic raises is the distinction between verisimilitude and dramatic truth. The intense ideological confrontation during a love scene is incredible from the point of view of verisimilitude; yet, he says, because of the playwright’s ability to arouse our curiosity about this clash of ideas and passions, and thanks to the powerfully varied rhythm of the verbal struggle, which is necessary in drama, spectators love that debate: the circumstances in which it takes place are unlikely and false, but the debate is *true*, and emotionally exciting.⁴⁹ One week later, Sarcey picked up the argument again and expounded his aesthetic theory more fully: that what counts is the truth of imagination—the only truth that dramatic authors have to respect is the

one that is given reality in the spectators' minds.⁵⁰ With these strong critical statements, Sarcey was trying to contrast the by then rather well-established theories of Realism and emerging Naturalism that, given the importance of the dramatic tradition, were being explored and advocated in France not only in the field of the novel, but also in the popular arena of theatrical performances and criticism.

A leader of the new literary school was Émile Zola, the French novelist, playwright, and critic, who was in the forefront of this literary battle. His public engagement in favor of a new realistic style bringing on the stage "the brutal truth," "the drama of life in its reality," had already started in the mid-1860s, although his main critical works came out in book form, in essays such as *Le Naturalisme au théâtre* (Naturalism on the stage), only in 1880–1881.⁵¹ The controversy among playwrights and critics concerning the future of drama was in full swing when Séjour was still alive. This contextualizes the situation that brought about Victor Séjour's sudden decline and loss of fortune, starting around the mid-1860s, when Realism had become the dominant literary movement in French literature. His writing belonged to the Romantic age. His literary references in French literature were Alexandre Dumas *père* and Victor Hugo, and not the writers admired by the new schools of Realism and Naturalism, Honoré de Balzac and Gustave Flaubert, or an innovator in poetry such as Charles Baudelaire.⁵² The words used by Zola to describe the revolution he wanted to take place on the stage, when he advocated "a dramatic work free from declamation, big words and grand sentiment,"⁵³ might indeed have been a precise counter-description of Séjour's style as a playwright. When in 1875 the prominent theatrical critic of *Le Temps*, Francisque Sarcey, took the occasion of his two reviews of Séjour's posthumous work to theorize on the superiority of the truth of imagination against the truth of realism and verisimilitude, the battle between the opposing literary schools was still open, at least in the mind of the old dictator of public taste in drama, who could find in Séjour's writing an exemplary support for his position in favor of the old Romantic school.⁵⁴ In the 1870s, however, the tide had already shifted to the new aesthetic style.

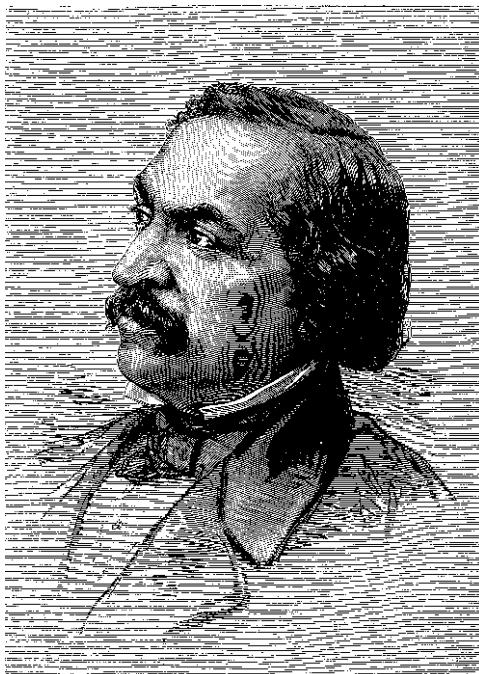


No daguerreotype or photographic image of Victor Séjour has been found up to now, although photography was already at its early stages of experimentation in the mid-nineteenth century (the first-ever photograph of a person was taken by Louis Daguerre in the Parisian rue du Temple in late 1838 or early 1839), and other contemporary writers, such as Walt Whitman, made use of that medium in the presentation of their own work. Yet a few portraits

of the playwright have reached us in the form of engravings, which were popular in contemporary magazines and books for their illustrations. Earlier, I wrote of an engraving of Séjour drawn by Étienne Carjat, from *Diogène* of March 8, 1857,⁵⁵ showing a smiling, forty-year-old man, elegantly standing in the open air next to a bright column inscribed with some of his theatrical successes. That image was the one through which we made our first acquaintance with the writer as a person. It remains as one of the most effective visual portraits of the artist in cartoon format.

A more realistic portrait of Séjour was printed in *Le Monde illustré* in October 1874, a few days after the playwright's death (a note in brackets, in the caption under the portrait, specifies that it was drawn from a photograph communicated by the family).⁵⁶ While the 1857 engraving is a cartoon, this is a real portrait, showing the head of a man in his late fifties, no longer smiling and no longer looking toward the "camera," but rather turning a serious and slightly frowning face sideways toward some point in the distance. His thick moustache and eyebrows and his wavy hair are still there, but less abundant, and their dark color is mixed with touches of grey. From the sketch of the upper part of his shoulders one can still see that he is dressed with a white collar, a necktie, and a jacket as in the 1857 cartoon, though one cannot tell how long the jacket is, nor can one see the rest of the figure. This portrait of an artist who had just died, and whose memory the drawing was fixing for the magazine readers, was not the image of a promising would-be aristocrat facing a brilliant future, but that of a middle-aged bourgeois, of a darkish complexion, not too satisfied with his own life, sadly musing on what had gone wrong. An Italian version of the same engraving was published twice that same year in Italy, in two different periodicals, in one case on the front page. Séjour's fame was still alive in the country where so many of his plays had been set. In the first of the two weekly magazines, both issued by Treves publisher, the caption under the figure announced in Italian that "Vittorio [sic] Séjour, dramatic author," had died in Paris on September 20.⁵⁷ Mysterious, the darkish background and complexion of the original engraving had disappeared.

This realistic portrait, in its ambiguously double version, can help us visualize the man toward the end of his life. Yet, another more fanciful image of him, through which I would like to say a first farewell to this artist and remember him, is one I have "detected" in recent times, and which, as far as I know, has never been mentioned anywhere before. As we know, Séjour's plays were published by Michel Lévy in a series called "Théâtre contemporain illustré" (Illustrated contemporary theater), which, not surprisingly, included illustrations. In each work of that series, the illustration appeared on the first page, above the title, and had the function not only of attracting



15.1. Drawing of Victor Séjour, based on a photograph, published in *Le Monde illustré*, no. 912, October 3, 1874, p. 212, shortly after the writer's death. By the end of the year the same portrait also appeared in the Italian periodicals *L'Illustrazione universale*, November 15, 1874, and *L'Illustrazione popolare*, December 27, 1874, here on its front page. Author's collection.

attention, but also of immediately introducing the setting and atmosphere of the play. No other illustration usually appeared in the text. This is also the case of Séjour's play *André Gérard* (set in Paris in 1844), one of whose hidden subjects, clarified by the important words in the dedication to Achille Denis, is the theme of art. In the theatrical issue of 1857 where the play was published, the illustration above the play's title shows two women, an older and a younger one, inside a bourgeois living room, kneeling in despair at the foot of a man and imploring him, while he seems to be unsympathetically withdrawing from them. This scene, which refers to a crucial moment of conflict in the play, is the only one illustrated in the published text of twenty-two pages. Yet, in the section of the Bibliothèque nationale de France dealing with iconographic documents, the item devoted to Séjour's drama *André Gérard* includes, after the play's text, another illustration on its last page.⁵⁸ This is a cartoon, offering a humorous visualization of *André Gérard*'s last scene. In a moving multifigure triangle, a dying old man (*André Gérard*, recognizably the actor Frédéric Lemaître) is opening his arms, to embrace in his last farewell five beloved members of his family who are weeping and kneeling at his feet, while two men are standing behind, one of them on the left breaking down in tears. Above, on the upper frame of the cartoon,



15.2. Antonio Greppi, “The Gravest Moment in an Engraver’s Life: Realist Picture According to Gérard . . . of the Odéon.” Published in *Triboulet et Diogène*, no. 19, Paris, May 9, 1857, p. 5. Engraved by Ecosse. Wood engraving about Victor Séjour’s play *André Gérard*, performed at the Théâtre de l’Odéon, Paris, April 30, 1857; note the detail of the flying artist. Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

there is a name in capital letters, “Triboulet,” which suggests the satirical key of the cartoon (and of the magazine *Triboulet et Diogène*, where it was actually published),⁵⁹ since it refers to a famous jester at the French court of the past, appearing as a character in François Rabelais’s *Gargantua et Pantagruel* and more recently in Victor Hugo’s play *Le Roi s’amuse* (The King has fun) of 1832, where the role of the deformed court buffoon Triboulet had been plaid by Ligier.⁶⁰ The cartoon’s tragic-comic caption under the illustration is a pun, partially saved in its English version too: “Moment le plus grave de la vie d’un graveur” (The gravest moment in an engraver’s life).⁶¹ The pun refers to the profession of the play’s main character, who is a *graveur* (an engraver), or rather, as one reads in the play’s list of characters, an *artist-graveur*—this clarification being important—who has come

to the end of his life, therefore at the “gravest” moment of his engraver’s life.

One remaining issue about the cartoon draws interest above all others. The scene takes place indoors, in a room wholly occupied by those figures. There is only one descriptive detail of the setting, an open window on the right, and here a flying human figure, who resembles a bat and whose big head is visibly Séjour’s, is flying through the window out of the room on open arm-wings. The engraving by Étienne Carjat representing Séjour next to his column of glory, published in *Diogène*, came out in March 1857; André Gérard opened at the Odéon on April 30 that same year, and the satirical cartoon about it by the Italian caricaturist Antonio Greppi was published in *Triboulet et Diogène* on May 9, 1857. Both cartoons belong to the same period of growing fortune for the playwright. But this flying image of Séjour, and the questions it raises, introduces further elements of consideration. What the cartoonist was obviously representing was the artist, a recognizable writer of some success, who, after creating his melodrama full of family pathos, gives a last look behind at his creation, and then discreetly flies away on open wings, for some new adventure; while what remains in front of us spectators is the human scene he has fancifully invented for his audience. Romantic culture is rich with poets comparing themselves to birds singing and flying in the sky, be it Keats’s nightingale, Shelley’s skylark, Leopardi’s solitary sparrow, or Whitman’s hawk, hermit thrush, and mocking-bird, just to mention a few. It is therefore not surprising that a Romantic playwright like Séjour could also be represented in that airy, winged way. But why should a *bat* be the flying animal into which the departing playwright is fancifully transformed? Reasons for this choice may be found in biology, as well as literature and myth.

Despite their ability to fly, bats are not birds, they are mammals, the only mammals that can fly. Among flying creatures, they are, as mammals, the closest ones to human beings; but because of their capacity for sustained flight, they also resemble birds. They are therefore liminal figures, *in-between* mammals and birds. Because of this hybrid nature, not to mention their flying at night (the light of the day disturbs their sight), they have aroused a large mythology in several cultures. In western cultures, they have often symbolized witchcraft and darkness. In Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, for instance, the three witches, themselves liminal figures according to Banquo’s description at the beginning of the play, and creatures of the night in Macbeth’s words (“How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags!”), in act 4 are presented while preparing their magic brew, or “charm of powerful trouble,” in a cavern, and incorporating “[w]ool of bat” among the ingredients thrown into a boiling

cauldron for their incantation.⁶² If one wants to see a more recent use of bats in literature, one can read a lovely, illustrated children's book by Randall Jarrell, *The Bat-Poet* (1964), whose story begins with this description of the animal protagonist: "Once upon a time there was a bat, a little light brown bat, the color of coffee with cream in it. He looked like a furry mouse with wings. [...] At night they'd [the bats] fly up and down, around and around."⁶³

As we have learned from T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), since the body of literature is a whole that is continuously transformed by its novelties, and "what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it" (despite Eliot's love for tradition, this idea, that "the past should be altered by the present," derives from his American background),⁶⁴ it is Randall's bat presentation that can be our starting point for an analysis of Séjour's flying image. Randall's poetic and yet realistic depiction of a bat, reminding us of its "light brown" color, "the color of coffee with cream in it," introduces a first level of interpretation. Could it be that the choice of the flying animal associated with the writer depended on the brownish color of the man's complexion? While possible, the reference is deeply hidden, since in the cartoon Séjour's face coming out of the flying human-bat body does not have any racial characteristics, the complexion being on the contrary as white as the others' (only his moustache and characteristic hair are black, a sign of his youth). Another interpretation derives from a wider symbolic meaning connected to this animal figure: it might be rather, that it is the flying animal's liminality, so congenial to Séjour's, and its fanciful association with magic and darkness (appropriate for both Séjour's role as an artist and his love of tragic situations; see the title of one of his hits, *Le Fils de la nuit*) is the one that prompted the connection and image in the cartoonist's mind.

But as we are considering all this from our contemporary perspective, and from the viewpoint of research that has fathomed the playwright's work and reached the end of the playwright's life, a further mental association makes this image, of a flying bat-writer leaving the scene through an open window, particularly moving. For this winged silhouette fluttering in the air, already looking elsewhere while flying out and disappearing, imparts a final, poetic image of the playwright, in his last farewell to his created world. This impression is amplified by the cartoon's caption, "The gravest moment in an engraver's life," which refers, though humorously, to a man's death, and more precisely, to the death of an artist-engraver. When we think that all this concerns a play in whose dedication, not by sheer coincidence, the writer ex-

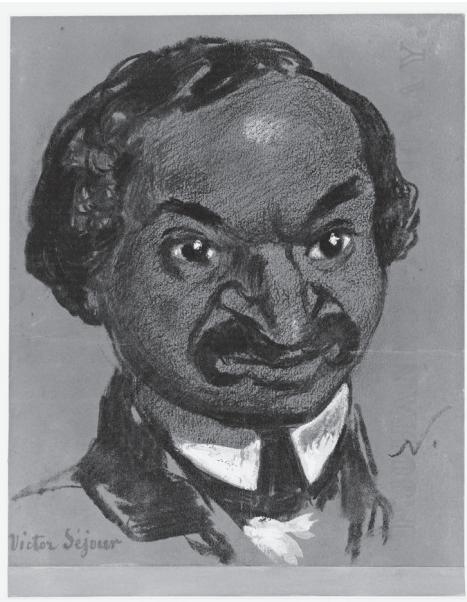
poses his sublime vision of what art is, the hybrid image of his fluttering farewell increases in evocative power.



While moving toward the end of this journey of research into a writer's world, this 1857 cartoon image of the playwright as a flying bat with human face (a totally whitened face, whereas all the black has been transferred to his/its animal body) lingers in the air, with all its weight of ambiguity. The whitening of the writer's face in his 1874 post mortem portrait in its Italian version confirms a strategy of "passing" and adaptation to the white environment, which was obviously made easier by the apparent noninterference of any race problem in the writer's career on the stage. Even in the various ideological controversies that Séjour had to face in the press, nowhere does one find any reference to his race. Yet the representation of his figure in the form of a black bat, among all flying animals, with a white human face, suggests, let's say, a subliminal, repressed awareness of the color line on the part of the illustrator. There are taboos society does not openly mention.

Only satire dares to go against what nowadays is called political correctness and to reveal suppressed perceptions. This is confirmed by two other cartoons devoted to this writer which, on the contrary, emphasize the man's dark complexion. Both of them were drawn in the 1850s by the very famous caricaturist Nadar (pseudonym of Gaspard-Félix Tournachon), who frequently used to sign his caricatures with a simple big "N"; and that's how I was able to recognize his authorship in the visual documents that I am now going to present. The first portrait is a charcoal drawing heightened with gouache on brown paper, with Victor Séjour's name inscribed at the bottom, showing the definitely dark-skinned face of a man with a rather prominent nose, visible moustache and big lips, a small chin and wide forehead, only enlightened by a few bright strokes of white particularly concentrated in his white collar and in the bright whitish sclera of the lively eyes.⁶⁵ In the early 1850s, Nadar created a large collection of similar portraits of French writers, artists, and intellectuals, most of them like this one drawn on brown paper, which he later used for his famous, uncompleted Pantheon of 1854.

The second visual image of Victor Séjour by Nadar is a fierce caricature, where the playwright is represented in his full size as a black walking figure, turning his dark, somber face toward us, while sneaking away and holding in his arms the famous ship of his 1856 hit *Le Fils de la nuit*. The caricature caption reads: "Départ de M. Victor Séjour et de son vaisseau pour les départements" (Departure of Mr. Victor Séjour and his ship for the departments);



15.3. Nadar, "Victor Séjour." Caricature, charcoal drawing heightened with gouache on brown paper, ca. 1850s. Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

since the departments are administrative divisions of French territory, the cartoon hints at the play's fortune and the start of a tour of performances in other parts of the country. Interestingly, this drawing was later republished with great prominence in the magazine founded and edited by W. E. B. Du Bois, *Phylon: The Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture*, in 1943 (significantly, in those tragic years for European Jewry, in the same issue of the magazine there was also an article on "The Common Root of Race Prejudice" by Hans Lamm, Director of Research at the Jewish Wallace Foundation of Kansas City, Missouri). The caption under the illustration in *Phylon*, after sketching the uncertain source of the document, ended by stating: "It seems to be the only likeness of Séjour obtainable."⁶⁶ By now, over seventy years later, this is no longer true.

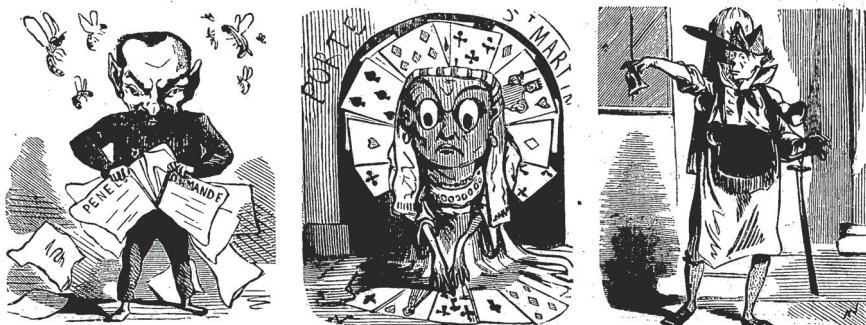
But our discoveries concerning Nadar's view of Séjour's world have not ended. In the Parisian humorous weekly *Journal Amusant* of April 1860, on a full page with a sequence of sixteen sketches, all by Nadar, reviewing the events of the first quarter of the year, I found a caricature of actress Mme Laurent, represented as the fortune-teller in Séjour's *La Tireuse de cartes*. In the drawing, the woman's big head is crowned by a large and luminous aureole made of cards, around which the name of the theater creates a sort of second aureole, while the kneeling fortune-teller keeps her hands joined next to a deck of cards spread out on the ground in front of her.⁶⁷ She is waiting,



15.4. Nadar, "Departure of M. Victor Séjour and of His Ship for the Departments." Caricature of Victor Séjour after his successful play *Le Fils de la nuit* (1856; revival in 1862). Leaving "for the departments" (administrative divisions of the French territory) meant showing the play in other national areas outside Paris: a sign of its success. The cartoon was reproduced in the magazine founded and edited by W. E. B. Du Bois, *Phylon* 4 (1st Quarter, 1943): 2, from which the image is taken. Courtesy of the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

like an exotic sphinx, with wide-open eyes, a mournful expression, and a strikingly dark-skinned face. Why did Nadar add this feature in his drawing of Mme Laurent? Does the blackness mean to express the abused mother's repressed anger? Does it suggest a black racialization of the Jewish figure in her fortune-teller disguise? Or does it imply the racial identity of the play's author, who is always represented by Nadar as a black person?

The satirical drawings by Nadar, one of the most important cartoonists and photographers of the time, have revealed (or perhaps amplified, as satire always does) the "color face" of Victor Séjour. But this color once again disappears in another cartoon of 1859, the last one I have identified in my search for iconographic images of the playwright. The year 1859 saw the production of *La Tireuse de cartes* at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, but also of the historical play performed a few months earlier at the Théâtre Impérial de l'Odéon, *Les Grands vassaux*, to which this new drawing refers, as one learns from its caption. Here Victor Séjour is represented as a painter sitting in front of a canvas, where he is sketching a mysteriously elusive figure. But his face (with his typical wavy hair and important moustache) is momentarily turned toward us—and this time no color sign is visible.⁶⁸ In this rather "benign," yet still slightly satirical image of Séjour in his golden age, all the dark mystery is projected on the canvas, in the figure hiding under



15.5. Strip of cartoons by Nadar. *Journal Amusant*, April 28, 1860, detail from p. 3. In the central panel, caricature of actress Mme Marie Laurent as the fortune-teller in Séjour's play *La Tireuse de cartes*, Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, Paris, December 1859–April 1860. The caption under the panel acknowledges the success of the play and its protagonist. Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

a large cloak and pointed hat, while the stylish playwright-painter surprised at work is turning his interrogative, worried white face toward us.

The ambiguity concerning the color issue we have detected in the cartoons was not absent in the writer himself, in his personal attitudes, as far as one can see. It is true that when writing *La Tireuse de cartes* in 1859, and thus denouncing the inhumanity of the clamorous kidnapping of an Italian-Jewish child, at that crucial historical time in the late 1850s there could not but be in the back of his mind a concern for the violation of basic human rights and the family disruptions suffered by black slaves on the American continent, which he had denounced so powerfully in 1837, in his first and only short story "Le Mulâtre." Yet, regarding his outlook on slavery, one must admit that his position is more problematic than one would expect from the author of such a seminal text as "Le Mulâtre." His interest and apparent liberalism is, in fact, somehow contradicted and called into question by the embarrassing discovery that the prosperity his family enjoyed in New Orleans was accompanied, at least until 1852, as documented by the New Orleans Conveyance Office, by their personal purchase of house slaves, a practice that was common among "free Creoles of color" in that city.⁶⁹ One can assume that his family's liberalism, and his own, was disclosed in the treatment of slaves (avoiding forced separations of mothers from their children and granting freedom in special situations), but also that it did not go



15.6. "Odéon: *Les Grands vassaux*." Drawing of Victor Séjour, portrayed as a painter, while sketching a figure in his play *Les Grands vassaux*, performed at the Théâtre de l'Odéon, Paris, 1859. Cartoonist: unknown. Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

as far as to champion the total abolition of slavery. This attempt at balancing opposing interests and contradictory behavior characterizes Séjour's attitude on this and other delicate matters in his writing.

Undoubtedly, apart from his powerful short story "Le Mulâtre" (which deals with the issue of slavery through the case of a *mulatto* slave owned by his own white father), there is no other work by Séjour where the scandal of slavery and the condition of black people is put at the center. In 1861, Frederick Douglass's magazine *Douglass' Monthly* reported that Séjour, after reading a French biography of John Brown prefaced by "Victor Hugo's famous letter" (the one we discussed earlier) and being very moved by it, was preparing a dramatization of John Brown's life for the stage.⁷⁰ Yet this play never came out. In the inventory of Séjour's works left unpublished at the time of his death, there is a five-act play titled *L'Esclave* (*The Slave*), but this manuscript, like all the others in the list, has not yet surfaced.⁷¹ This is unfortunate, since this drama would have revealed more about Séjour's viewpoint on the subject. However, by looking carefully into Séjour's plays, one can detect other small signs of an awareness of the matter. In particular, in *Le Martyre du cœur*, written in 1858, an important role is played by a black Jamaican man, Placide. This virtuous character also appears in the illustration on the first page of the printed play, standing at the back of the scene

elegantly dressed in a tall top hat, and with a manifestly black face (see Figure 3.3).⁷² At a certain point in act 4 he is addressed vulgarly by one of the play's villains, Forbin (a name from the French *fourbe*, i.e. "sly"), with offensive words referring to his black race. When he playfully reacts, the villain speaking to himself comments in an aside: "He is laughing! . . . Ah! darky! . . . if only I were in America, I'd have him beaten up when leaving!" (act 4, scene 3).⁷³ This revealing sentence contains one of the few references to "America" in Séjour's works, and, quite significantly, the reference immediately evokes the tragic condition of black people there.

This evocation of America can be compared with another, quite different one found in Séjour's posthumous play *Cromwell*, whose opening scene shows a large group of would-be emigrants at a London wharf, ready to leave for America on board the *Syrène*. Cromwell is among them but a royal order forbids the departure, and thus King Charles I, by obliging Cromwell to stay, sows the seeds of his own destruction.⁷⁴ These two references from two different plays by the American-born writer convey a dual vision of America. On the one hand, it is the land of hope, attracting and welcoming thousands of immigrants onto its shores, and, more specifically, it is the country that honors the memory of the Puritans' exodus toward that land of religious freedom, a foundational moment in American history, represented at the opening of *Cromwell*. But, on the other hand, there is the reality of persecution suffered by the country's black population, invoked in a sinister aside by Séjour's villain in *Le Martyre du cœur*. This latter play, set in Paris in 1810, shows racial conditions in an America only a few years before the playwright's birth, at the time when Louisiana, once a French colony sold by Napoleon to the United States, was on the verge of becoming an independent state of the Union (1812). With that sentence—*si j'étais seulement en Amérique* ("if only I were in America")—Séjour denounces the gap between his country of origin, the United States and more in general the Americas, and his adoptive country, France, where black people enjoyed equal rights of citizenship and apparently a status of equal dignity. That sense of equality available in France, a feeling shared by other early black American writers visiting Paris, such as William Wells Brown in 1848 and later Frederick Douglass,⁷⁵ had led many young people of color from New Orleans to Paris, "where prejudice against color was unknown,"⁷⁶ some decades earlier. Séjour was among them, and was probably the most successful of his generation of expatriates.⁷⁷ The awareness of the gap between the two worlds, the United States and France, in dealing with the issue of race, explains the choice of living in the latter country, and the deeply felt loyalty to France that one finds in all of this émigré's work. France, the land of the Revolution in the name of liberty, equality, and brotherhood, had welcomed him as a

young man, and he believed in its values and historical “mission,” as voiced in the words of the noble emir in *Les Massacres de la Syrie*: “protection of the weak, dedication to rights.”⁷⁸ “The first law,” declares the same character in that highly political play, “is humanity.”⁷⁹ These were values and beliefs that Séjour shared; it was in the name of humanity that he had pleaded for the liberation of the Jewish kidnapped child (see his proud “But I am a man,” in his preface to *La Tireuse de Cartes*). And he knew quite well that the law of humanity was not respected everywhere, and especially not in his native country: “*si j'étais seulement en Amérique . . .*”



Séjour’s complex relationship with his multinational and mixed-race origins and identities leads us back to the historical context in which the writer lived and to the way in which the issues of his time were used as a source of inspiration. In all their richness and variety, up to the end, this playwright’s theatrical productions present themselves as a means to debate moral issues and as an endeavor to put on stage, either directly or through historical camouflage, controversial subjects related to contemporary debates. That’s what Séjour did with *La Tireuse de cartes*, in his literary version of the still unresolved Mortara case, when he tried to show the different moral and religious values in conflict, and dared to imagine a pacifying way out of the contemporary drama. His liberal spirit induced him to take an open position in support of an Italian Jewish family and allowed him to identify at least partially with their plight, in spite of the fact that this meant going openly against an act of the head of the Church of Rome to which he belonged. His sensibility for the suffering of persecuted minorities, heightened by his own multilayered experience and by his awareness of the predicament of multicultural, conflicting identities, made him a playwright who could respond with natural indignation to the scandal of the 1858 “legal” kidnapping of a Jewish child and adhere with immediacy to the likely call of the French Emperor’s secretary, in an artistic campaign against this violation of human rights.

At the time of *La Tireuse de cartes* and *Le Martyre du cœur* (where one finds that reference to the abuse of blacks in America), several major struggles for emancipation were reaching climactic moments of conflict and resolution across the Atlantic. And the use of the same word, “emancipation,” to define them all is indeed revealing of common desires and expectations. The debate on race and on the equal rights of citizenship pervaded all fields of contemporary thought, including the scientific one. The decade of the 1850s started with the publication in France of Count Arthur de Gobineau’s *Essai*

sur l'inégalité des races humaines (*Essay on the Inequality of Human Races*) (1853–1855), and ended with a revolutionary scientific counter-text by Charles Darwin championing the common origin of species, in which the notion of shared ancestries asserted by the abolitionists was extended to embrace, not only humanity, but the whole of creation. It is not by sheer coincidence that *On the Origin of Species* came out in 1859 (significantly, the same year in which John Stuart Mill published his *On Liberty*, another fundamental text of the age).⁸⁰ According to Desmond and Moore's recent studies, all of Darwin's family was actively involved in the British antislavery movement, and the inspiration for the scientist's evolutionary theory on the origin of species was his abhorrence of slavery and his belief in the common descent and unity of creation (despite the fact that his associated concept of "natural selection" would be later used to support racist visions of social discrimination and oppression).⁸¹ In this new perspective, one can even interpret Darwin's theories as scientific versions of the belief in the right of emancipation: as if he imagined that all living creatures were in a constant process of release from their origins and would tend to progress in the struggle for life, as he said, "toward perfection."⁸²

In those years of great debate concerning racial issues, when, on the other hand, racist theories kept growing and becoming more threatening, the struggle for the emancipation of slaves in the United States would soon burst out into the bloody Civil War. But problems of civil rights and discrimination did not concern just American blacks, despite the extreme tragedy of their condition. Nor was the battle for emancipation limited to that gravely exploited human community and to America alone. The worried, fiery words by which, in 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe, in her "Concluding Remarks" at the end of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, incited her American fellow citizens to redress the injustice of slavery are in this respect quite meaningful. The "earthquake" that was upsetting the world abroad, she warned them, in an age in which nations were "shaking and convulsed," might upset their nation too, if the United States did not get rid of that injustice from its "bosom." "For," she wondered, "what is this mighty influence thus rousing in all nations and languages those groaning that cannot be uttered, for man's freedom and equality?"⁸³ The best minds of the time across the ocean knew that there was an ideal connection among all those struggles for human freedom and equality. The "groaning that cannot be uttered" had little by little synthesized in one word: emancipation.

Ever since the French Revolution, in Europe the word "emancipation" had been increasingly used to signify the hoped-for liberation of all sorts of oppressed human groups, and the concept extended to people who were only metaphorically enslaved. Thus, for instance, the term had been adopted by

early radical feminist movements, that denounced female “slavery” and drew on the vocabulary of abolitionism to fight against women’s oppression.⁸⁴ But the struggle for emancipation was not only fought along lines of color and gender. Religion also was a powerful barrier of separation and exclusion from civil rights in several countries. This was still partially true also in the United States, as we can see in the relatively late removal of legal restrictions for non-Christians in North Carolina and New Hampshire. If this was the situation across the Atlantic, where the main concern was obviously for the unbearable conditions of black slaves (including “white slaves,” see Richard Hildreth’s novel *The White Slave; or, Memoirs of a Fugitive* of 1852, and its illustration meaningfully titled “Emancipation”), in Europe there were nations where in mid-century the term “emancipation” would immediately evoke the issue of discriminated religious minorities fighting for equality. So it was, as we have seen, in Great Britain, with its long struggle for Catholic and Jewish emancipation. So it was in Germany, with its obsession with the “Jewish question.”

Jewish emancipation on the European continent was a serious issue in countries where the right to full citizenship was still denied to Jews. Such was manifestly the case in the Papal States in Italy. Here, the severe legal restrictions suffered by its most historically important minority, the traditional “other” of European nations, were, as usual, just an indication of a more general problem of lack of justice, liberty, and equality for all. That general condition was accompanied by forms of extreme discrimination against the Jews. In fact, the institution of the ghetto in papal Rome, established since 1555, was still official until 1870, when Rome was eventually liberated by the Kingdom of Italy.⁸⁵ The Jews of Rome were in need of equality and emancipation. And in those years around the mid-century, when the different parts of that fragmented land were moving through a revolutionary process toward unification, the Jewish cause became a visible manifestation of the need for a more general and common struggle against despotic tyranny and oppression, which was being fought all over the Italian peninsula.

By reading the contemporary papers dealing with the dramatization of the Mortara case in Séjour’s play, we were able to contextualize that cultural event, produced at a time when the revolutionary steps toward the political emancipation of Italy were followed with keen attention on both sides of the Atlantic. It was Rome in particular that was the site of greatest interest, on the one hand as a major attraction for visitors, and, on the other hand, as the main political and religious concern for lovers of liberty and independence. And it was here, in the State of the Roman Church, in that area of the yet unborn Italian nation that had been administered for centuries under the

threat of the Inquisition, that the Mortara case occurred and became part of a larger, international, and transatlantic struggle for human rights.

Séjour's liberal views, and his enriching liminality, made him not indifferent to the on-going conflict between despotism, which he denounced, and freedom, on whose side he stood. In his plea and warning to the Pope, issued in 1860 from the stage and press of liberal France, he reminded the Holy Father that both Catholic countries Italy and Spain, "these two lands of the Inquisition," were "struggling against the fatality of their past." In their "final, profound effort to refashion themselves," he wrote, these two lands "seek their own conscience in the conscience of others," and "waver now in the throes of Europe's twofold upheaval, betwixt the temptation of despotism and the attractive force of freedom."⁸⁶ He perceived the danger of such days of "chaos" and "confusion" in those countries that were almost hovering between life and death, and the possible disrupting consequences of archaic and cruel behavior for the future of the Church of Rome itself, as a spiritual and temporal power.

Although in France Séjour was usually neither identified nor self-identified as a black person,⁸⁷ despite his being perceived as such occasionally in satirical drawings, he was clearly aware of himself as a man of mixed identity, and this awareness no doubt led him to understand in depth both the despair of a mother, deprived of her child by an unjust society, and the mental conflicts of a young person torn between two mothers and two religions, after so many years of forced separation from the original ones. These were his ingredients as he transformed the human and political case of the day into a melodrama onstage. He himself had crossed many boundaries, both national and racial. And as a writer, that experience had helped him in identifying with those sufferings.

Yet, what Séjour also teaches us is that boundaries can sometimes be crossed, and understanding between ethnic groups can develop across the borderlines, but it is often difficult to share "other" experiences entirely, however close they may be. Séjour, writing in Europe, dealt imaginatively not with ideal situations, but with the actualities of religious coexistence and persecution in countries laden with history; and he himself was not totally immune to the conditioning of contemporary politics and the prejudices of his culture. He was loyal to himself, to his own high values, to his belief in the superior commonality of human nature, which could go hand in hand, in the fiction of a play, with the gift of his own religion given to a converted child, despite the dramatic circumstances in which the conversion had happened.

The issues of equal civil rights and freedom of religion for non-Christians, overlooked by the expatriate, Catholic playwright living in Paris in his gen-

erous defense of an Italian Jewish family, would be fought with great suffering on the stage of history, in the ongoing struggle for the emancipation of the Jews (few people would have imagined, in those years of belief in “progress,” that worse times were still to come). The long, hard struggle for the emancipation of the African American slaves had reached its turning point and was culminating in the events of the Civil War. The awareness of this issue, and the concern for mixed-identity situations and family rights, underlay Séjour’s text. What is revealing about the possibility of cross-cultural encounters is that Séjour’s personal experience of mixed identity made him sensitive to the anguish of another persecuted minority, and this is one of the greatest reasons for historical interest in *La Tireuse de cartes*. Behind his racially “whitened” face, he used the Jewish plight and an international scandal in order to argue obliquely for the rights of black families in antebellum America, and, more generally, for human understanding and compassion, beyond any racial or religious barrier. His outrage at forced separations and kidnappings was expressed in the sympathy he extended to his fictitious “Mortara” family—even if, as a fervent Catholic, he was not able to fully grasp the centrality of Judaism in the life of Jews. Yet, the strong public position he took in the published edition of his *La Tireuse de cartes* is indeed outstanding. And, considering the whole of his literary production, given the historical circumstances and the complexity of his self-conception, the accomplishment of this New Orleans-born “Shakespeare of the boulevard,” endowed with an indignant conscience, who in his early youth had crossed the threshold of a foreign land, in search of “another shore / where happiness can soar,”⁸⁸ must be taken into serious consideration. American literature is enriched by the French-speaking voice of this expatriate son from its southern coast, whose figure and work well embody the age of mid-nineteenth-century transatlantic emancipations.



WHEN IT SNOWS HISTORY

FAMILY RECOLLECTIONS: A PERSONAL NOTE

Genuine beginnings are rare in human experience. Birth, which seems the most obvious example, comes close. But it too is contingent on events that reach back through the generations.¹ —Leon Botstein

We all carry about with us the histories, shorter or longer, of our shadows.²

—Harold Bloom

IT IS THROUGH FAMILY recollections that we can grasp how close we are to historical and cultural events that may appear a bit remote when we simply read about them in books. That's why I shall now change my clothes as a literary critic, put on my slippers and nightgown, and tell you, dear reader, about a page in my family's history that makes me feel a special relation to Séjour's *La Tireuse de cartes*, and may show how relatively short indeed is the distance that separates us from those mid-nineteenth-century times, when the Mortara affair started and Séjour's play was first performed.

Edgardo, the child snatched from his family by the Pope's guards, whose dramatic story inspired the New Orleans-born French-American Creole playwright, was a member of my family. He was, in fact, my great-grandmother's younger brother. Ernesta, my father's grandmother, was then eleven years old. She was at home when the Pope's guards arrived and witnessed her brother's abduction. In my father's and his cousins' testimony, the shock from that experience never left her. The sinister memory came back to her obsessively as an old woman, even on her death bed, when she desperately implored people around her not to take her children away from her. What happened to Edgardo and his family is what I shall deal with in this personal note, where I shall relate what I have heard in family conversations as well as what I have learned concerning the development of those dramatic events of June 1858. In addition, I will offer a few related remarks as a scholar of American literature.

As is well known, after his forced removal in 1858 the six-year-old Edgardo was kept segregated from his home and was never given back to his Jewish family, notwithstanding the heated international protest. He was



16.1. Marianna Padovani
Mortara, Edgardo's mother.
Photo: Mortara Family Archive.

immediately carried from his native Bologna to Rome, and apart from a few brief encounters with his parents at Rome's House of the Catechumens some months after the abduction (which were allowed to take place only in the presence of his religious guards), for years he was not permitted to see his parents, brothers, or sisters until he was an adult. He was brought up in strictly Catholic religious institutions in Rome, ostentatiously adopted by the Pope himself as a spiritual son, shaped mentally and made to become a priest. His father, Momolo Mortara,³ the heroic struggler for his child's return, died in middle age in 1871, exhausted by useless fighting, without ever being able to embrace his son again. As for his mother Marianna,⁴ she was able to see him again only in 1878, twenty years later! Quite significantly, that memorable encounter, captured in a photograph, took place in the year of Pope Pius IX's death, which occurred in February 1878. Edgardo, the former six-year old child, was now twenty-six years old. He was wearing a cassock and had become a stranger to his family.

Edgardo had a long life, distinguished himself with his prodigious knowledge of languages and was an excellent orator, convinced by his education of the providential meaning of his unique story. In 1870, when Rome was conquered by the Savoyard King of Italy Vittorio Emanuele II (Victor Emmanuel II), Edgardo was forced to leave the city by his religious superiors.

He lived abroad, first in Austria, then in France, and finally, after the end of the First World War, in Belgium. When he went on a pastoral visit to the United States, he was asked by the American Catholic authorities not to stay, as his case was not well received by American public opinion and its retelling would cause a negative impact on the local Church. He died in Belgium, at the abbey of the Canons Regular in Bouhay near Liège where he was living, on March 11, 1940, just two months before the Nazi invasion of the country. Had he lived only a bit longer, he might have been arrested by the Nazis as a Jew and sent to a death camp, notwithstanding his forced conversion as a child, his much debated case, and his having become a monk. But heaven, or fortune, spared him that atrocious destiny and that final existential paradox.

I mentioned Edgardo's re-encounter with his mother as an adult in 1878. After that dramatic period of separation, he slowly re-established connections with his family. What developed on both sides was a sort of appeasement, in which no one would insist on talking about the unpleasant issue of conversion: they wanted him to return to his original religion, which he didn't; while he would have liked them to convert to the only "true" faith, which they didn't. Evidence shows that he was very close to his mother, but he remained in touch with other family members as well. Whenever he came to Italy from Belgium, where he had eventually settled, he would go to Milan, in the north of Italy, and see his sister Ernesta, my great-grandmother ("nonna Ernesta," grandma Ernesta, as my father would call her), who lived there with her family. Her husband, my great-grandfather Eugenio, was a first cousin of hers, and a Mortara, therefore he was a cousin of Edgardo's as well. So Edgardo was kin to both my great-grandparents. With the strange story of his so deeply engraved in his and their lives, he was really part of the family. For my grandfather (Vittorio Mortara), he was an uncle, his mother's brother; it makes a certain impression on me to know that my grandpa, whom I knew and whom I remember sitting in his large armchair, grew up with a mother who had suffered such a scorching experience in her life. When my father's sister Margherita got married, uncle Edgardo wrote a poem of good wishes for her, as my cousins in Argentina remember well (I keep a copy of that text). And my father, Alberto Mortara, who like the rest of his family met him several times in Milan, even went to visit him in Belgium. Their last meeting was in the late 1930s.

Edgardo died in 1940, at the age of 88. He had a long life, which is why so many of my relatives in my father's generation knew him. Here is a man who was born in 1852, whose kidnapping in 1858 had created an international scandal with serious historical consequences, and who was still alive

at the beginning of the Second World War. I am stressing this fact, because it helps us see our relation with the past in a different way. When we think in terms of generations, we realize how close in time we are to events taking place 150 years ago. In my experience, that means only three generations ago—my father's, grandfather's and great-grandmother's. (In terms of generations, as a matter of fact, the whole history of the last 2000 years is summed up in about eighty generations, and each of us can usually go back to three or four of them. It is only when something historically important happens, when our personal or family life is crossed by “history,” that we can fully appreciate that.)



Edgardo, “our uncle the priest” (“lo zio prete”), as we would call him in our family, both as a fact and self-ironically—a priest in a Jewish family!—has been a constant memory in our family chronicle. In writing (or speaking) about these family recollections, I use the first person plural, because I am referring not only to my father's family, but to his sisters' and first cousins' as well. The trauma of the event was deeply engraved in the family's collective consciousness, particularly in the generations prior to mine that suffered the experience firsthand. We were often told that the child's mother almost lost her mind out of grief for her son's loss (which I could not confirm in my historical reconstruction of the affair, where it is rather his father, Momolo Mortara, who appears to have been the greatest victim; but as his mother had a longer life, their children would undoubtedly have acquired a protective attitude toward her and remember her more in their recollections to the following generations). We were told of our ancestors' heroic struggle to get the child back, and of how, through their effort and determination, the case had become an international affair that had involved the most important political leaders and heads of state of the time, from Napoleon III in France to Cavour, the Prime Minister of Italian independence, and so on. We knew that the Mortara case had foreshadowed the Dreyfus affair and had contributed to making the scandal of Jewish discrimination and lack of civil rights manifest to liberal public opinion all over the western world, from Italy to France and across the ocean, in the United States. The family's battle for the restoration of the child had been lost, but, in a way, we felt that the general fight for individual and collective religious freedom and for the equal rights of citizenship had been won. Because of the Pope's stubborn refusal to give the child back, his public image received a serious blow. The entire struggle contributed to the loss of his authoritarian temporal power and the end of the

ghetto institution in Rome in 1870. If there was something “providential” in the affair, as some reactionary forces within the Catholic world still continued to think, what was “providential” was that the suffering and fight of Edgardo’s family had accelerated the birth and civil improvement of the new Italian nation. Jewish communities in Europe and the United States had become more keenly aware of the danger of anti-Semitism and had started to create national and international civil rights organizations whose aim was to defend the Jews wherever they were: in the United States, the first Jewish-American national organization, the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, was instituted in 1859, as a consequence of the “new sense of national solidarity among the Jews of the United States” nourished by the Mortara case;⁵ and in 1860, two years after the shock of the case, the long-lasting and influential Alliance Israélite Universelle was founded in France.

We were aware and, I would say, proud of the historical consequences of our family affair. For my generation, being brought up in the years immediately following the Second World War, with the annihilation of the Jews directly suffered in our parents’ and our own generation, the story of our relative’s kidnapping, and of our ancestors’ public resistance to that abuse, had acquired the meaning of a heroic family role in general history. It stood for the importance of individual and collective resistance to oppression, to discrimination against human beings due to their origins and religion, to segregation and persecution of minorities on religious grounds, not granting them human and civil rights, going against both the traditional notion of family love and the modern notion of citizenship, and against the “self-evident” values of justice and equality. The lesson was the importance of fighting for universal human rights.

These experiences, which have always been in my memory, have come back to me with even greater force in recent times, for several reasons.

The first reason, both moral and political, was the surprising Vatican decision to beatify Pope Pius IX, the Pope responsible for the kidnapping. The beatification of Pius IX was an event that no one in my family would ever expect to be obliged to witness. The shock caused by the announced beatification (a step toward sainthood), in the year 2000, of a man who had so unjustly violated family rights, an enemy of freedom of religion, at a time when liberal culture was triumphing in Europe, the last Pope to keep the Jews of Rome by law in the ghetto, and a leader against whom Italy’s national Independence had eventually been fought—that shock made me feel the moral necessity of taking a public stance against that new scandal by means of published letters and interviews, as a representative of the Mortara family.⁶ This part of the story is one I shall not focus my attention on now. It will be

enough to mention that, as in Edgardo's times, there were many individuals and several institutions within the Catholic world that, like us, were morally offended by that decision.

I shall rather deal with the second reason which made the family story become even more alive in my mind. This time it was a positive experience, directly connected to my involvement in American studies and my interest in cross-cultural encounters.

In March 2002, I received a copy of the just-published English translation of Séjour's play *The Fortune-Teller*, sent to me by M. Lynn Weiss, who teaches American Studies at the College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia. Weiss, who had written the introduction to the play's English version, explained in her letter that she had received my address from Werner Sollors and that she would be coming to Italy in June for a conference at the University of Padua (Italian Padova), organized by MESEA (Multicultural and Ethnic Societies, Europe and America). Since the conference was structured with respondents for each paper, she would be pleased to have me comment on her paper about the play and the case. Coincidentally, or perhaps because of a natural convergence of scholarly interests, I was already planning to attend that conference, where I would present another paper. I therefore accepted with pleasure her invitation.

I am grateful to both Werner Sollors, a great Americanist scholar and a longtime dear friend of mine, and to Lynn Weiss for letting me know about the publication of this modern English translation of *La Tireuse de cartes*. It was this volume and the expectation of a conversation with Lynn Weiss that gave me the impetus to go back to the well-known family memory, this time from an Americanist perspective, something I had always thought would be worth doing. It was fascinating to reconsider the affair through Séjour, a Catholic writer of American origins, an intellectual and artist who was contemporary with those events and who had reacted creatively to them and had left a document that testified to the attention the case had aroused in mid-nineteenth-century public opinion, both in the United States and in France. I began to rethink the whole story from this new angle, from the point of view of a Catholic, and a representative of another persecuted minority, who, though wishing to be loyal to the Pope, had responded to the case, by representing his dramatic fictional version on the stage in Paris in 1859. It was compelling to see how the Jewish cause could become linked, not only to the Italian Risorgimento but also to the African American cause, at a time when both groups were fighting for their emancipation on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. The fact that these struggles for civil emancipation were taking place at the same time, which is often overlooked even by scholars, had to be stressed. It was the double transatlantic viewpoint enjoyed by the black-

Creole writer from Louisiana, living in Paris, that had allowed him to cross borders of understanding.

As a Mortara descendant, I was particularly moved by Séjour's introduction to *La Tireuse de cartes*, where his determination "to plead the Mortara family's cause" is affirmed openly. I admired the commitment of the author in the political tempest of those days, and thanked him posthumously, both as a Jew and as an Italian, and as a human being, for that public statement. As a scholar of American literature, I was delighted to discover a franco-phone American writer from New Orleans who had made his fortune in mid-nineteenth-century Paris and to have one more bit of evidence of the variety of languages (and places) making up the literature of the United States. It was the tangle of experiences and identities within this author that made him so quick in answering to and finding inspiration from contemporary situations. From an Americanist point of view, it was particularly enlightening to realize the relationship between the *cause célèbre* of those days, the scandal over the Jewish child's kidnapping, and the issue of slavery in America, where the violation of the natural bonds of affection between parents and children was so inhumanely practiced and indeed enforced by law. It was undoubtedly the memory of that other outrage across the ocean that added inner strength to the expatriate's protest and to his plea in favor of the Mortaras' cause.

Yet, apart from the issue of the violation of family bonds, so strongly articulated in the author's preface to the play and in the arguments made by the character of the Jewish mother, what was at stake, and effectively represented, was the interconfessional and cross-cultural conflict, and the predicament of people living across different borders. That was the author's real theme, one he had experienced, though in different contexts. And that representation was particularly interesting for me, and central to my research. In an act of self-reflection and revelation, I acknowledge that this research has arisen from my acute awareness of the relevance of ethnic encounters, conflicts, and confrontations in modern multicultural times, but undoubtedly stems from further back, having a longer story and deeper roots in my sensibility. Cross-cultural confrontations are not new phenomena in history, though they may take on different shapes and trappings, and my family story has probably made me particularly aware of that aspect of individual and collective lives, and made me curious to dig into that tangled field.

I shall also add a personal comment on the ideologically "harmonious" conclusion of Séjour's play, with its well-balanced double final triumph, the parallel victory of the original family bond on the one hand and of the newly acquired religion over the old one on the other. That denouement may well represent the noble aspirations of the liberal Christian societies of that time

(the presence of the French Emperor at the opening performance is indeed significant from this viewpoint too). But there is no doubt that, as a Jew, an intellectual, and a member of my family, I can find such a peaceful ending satisfactory only for its artistic achievement and what it reveals as a historical document, but certainly not for its ideological implications. Yet, as an intellectual I had to face the challenge of such a text and understand what was at stake there. I had to go deep into the web of implied cultural references connecting that work with a long historical tradition and its contemporary times. It was an exercise in historical appreciation.

In thinking about the historical case so close to me that had aroused the writing of Séjour's play, I was reminded of the historical lesson so well expressed by Bernard Malamud in *The Fixer* (1966), when, through the musings of his imprisoned character Yakov, he introduces the metaphor of the snow to describe the condition of minority people, who more than others are exposed to the blows of persecution coming from the external world. When it snows, Malamud writes in this novel inspired by the Beiliss case in Russia, not everybody is out in the open to get wet. But persecuted minorities are indeed out, when it "snows history."

If he [Yakov] had stayed in the shtetl it would never have happened. At least not this. Something else would have happened, better not think what.

Once you leave you're out in the open; it rains and snows. It snows history, which means what happens to somebody starts in a web of events outside the personal. It starts of course before he gets there. We're all in history, that's sure, but some are more than others, Jews more than some. If it snows not everybody is out in it getting wet. He had been doused. He had to his painful surprise, stepped into history more deeply than others—it had worked out so.⁷

This is what Malamud's character Yakov Bok thinks in his inner monologue while waiting for his trial. When one "steps into history more deeply than others," one immediately finds out for oneself that our small private lives, indeed all of them, are influenced by and interacting with an intricate web of historical events. But it is easier to realize all that when one's past has been crossed by chilling experiences that cannot be easily forgotten, and that remain imprinted on following generations.

The greatest reason for scholarly interest in Séjour's play is of course the "mirroring" experience that allowed a Catholic Creole writer well assimilated in French society to show sensitivity to, and take a stand for, a Jewish family's predicament. The very thing that dismayed me—how far he could go in that understanding, but not far enough—was the thing that provoked me too, in intellectual terms, as the greatest lesson and a challenge, a real exercise in historical appreciation. It opened me to another point of view,

that was not mine, and made me realize how difficult it is to cross the border of true understanding in cultural relations. Séjour's effort to find common ground with another minority was ultimately weakened by his inability to appreciate the "dignity of difference."⁸ This may sound like a harsh evaluation, but in fact my wish is to place Séjour in the liberal context of his time. Séjour was expressing a fully liberal, enlightened point of view by which Jews were welcomed into the secular world. But the limits of liberalism were such that the Jew could never be fully integrated *as* a Jew. The invitation to enfranchisement was contingent on partial abandonment of identity. And yet behind that only partially achieved understanding there was indeed a sharing of experiences that was fascinating in itself and that promoted a kind of transmission of sensitivity and understanding for which I am grateful. This came to fruition at the international conference in Padua in June 2002, when Lynn Weiss and I met. Lynn read her paper, and I made my observations as a respondent. In the discussion that followed, I was particularly impressed by a remark made by one of the scholars in the audience. Commenting on my personal connection to the nineteenth-century case, and reacting to my stress on how close we are in terms of generations to events taking place in 1858, this scholar said he now understood why so many African Americans still felt so intimately related to the experience of slavery, which may seem so distant to their condition in modern times. I remember there was a young African American scholar in the audience, who spoke immediately afterwards, and confirmed that observation with her experience, by saying how strong the memory of that tragic age was in her family, in her mother's and grandmother's family talks and recollections. It was quite moving to participate in that moment of mutual recognition, and to see that scholarly research could profit from an exchange and sharing of reflections on comparable human experiences.

APPENDIX: A NOTE ON THE TEXTS

This appendix collects a few mid-nineteenth-century documents related to the Mortara case, including the important Preface to *La Tireuse de cartes* by Victor Séjour. The other three texts included, which were published in the United States a few months before Séjour's play, document, on the one hand the way the Mortara affair was perceived and presented to the general public by the *New York Times*, and, on the other hand, some of the literary responses to it coming from within the American Jewish community.

The first text is a short article on the Mortara case, one of the many that appeared in the American press after Edgardo's abduction. This one was published in the *New York Times* on December 4, 1858, and announces a meeting of protest to be held in New York. Summarizing the events, it gives a reading of the values at stake in a battle to be fought against "tyranny," in the name of "civilization." The appeal is addressed to all Americans, since "the violation of one of the most sacred natural rights of man is a question for mankind, without exception of race or creed."

The other two literary documents, published in the *Jewish Messenger* of December 24, 1858, and in the *Israelite* of January 29, 1859, acquaint us with the voice of two Jewish women poets who reacted to the news coming from across the ocean, and who published their poetic responses on the pages of two important Jewish American periodicals that were active in protesting against the kidnapping.

The *Jewish Messenger* was a New York weekly published under the supervision of Rabbi S. M. Isaacs, who would soon promote with others the first national civil rights organization of Jews, the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, in reaction to the Mortara case. In December 1858 it gave space to "Tribute of Condolence" of Penina Moïse (1797–1880), from Charleston, South Carolina, one of the best-known Jewish American poets of the nineteenth century, author of *Fancy's Sketch Book* (1833), considered to be the first book of poetry by a Jewish woman published in the United States; she also wrote about two hundred religious hymns for her Charleston synagogue. In her poems, she dealt with both biblical themes and contemporary social and political issues, as we can see, concerning the latter, from her early poem "To Persecuted Foreigners" (1820), her later "On the Persecution of the Jews of Damascus," and this one on the Mortara case. In the well-structured eight-line stanzas of rhyming couplets of this last poem, Penina Moïse expresses all her sorrow for the suffering of the persecuted Jewish family, her pain and concern for a corrupted Italy living under despotic power, and her worry about the destiny of an "artless boy" easily seduced, if kept segregated from his home—a worry that would be confirmed by the reality of history.

The second poem, "To the Sons of Israel," by Adah Isaacs Menken (1835–1868), was published in the Cincinnati weekly *The Israelite*, edited by Reform rabbi Isaac M. Wise (another leader in the Jewish American reaction to the case), next to a long article by

Rabbi A. Guinzburg of Baltimore on “The Mortara Abduction Case Illustrated.” Adah Isaacs Menken, an aspiring poet, more famous for her sensational career as an actress (particularly after her scandalous role in the melodrama *Mazeppe*), was a Jew by origin or a Jewish convert of likely Creole origins, who led an adventurous short life between the United States, where she was born, and Europe. She became acquainted with many writers, including Walt Whitman, Charles Dickens, Alexandre Dumas, Algernon Swinburne, George Sand, and others. Her only collection of poems, *Infelicia* (1868), was published in Philadelphia one week after her death. Her poem of protest for the Mortara case, “To the Sons of Israel,” made up of quatrains of alternating rhymes, has a very different style from the one by Penina Moïse. Here, meditation is substituted by an appeal to action, the poem has a broken, galloping rhythm, and the core is an invitation to the sons of Israel to wake up and rise in arms against their foes, “for danger that may come.”

The Preface by Séjour that follows does not need any extra introduction.

1. "THE MORTARA CASE," NEW YORK TIMES,
DECEMBER 4, 1858

At Mozart Hall, this evening, our Jewish fellow-citizens will hold a mass-meeting, to which they have invited members of all other denominations who concur with them in denouncing the abduction of MORTARA's child by the Inquisition. We do not doubt that the sympathy of all other sects in our community with the Israelites, in this matter, will be amply demonstrated by the presence of Christians of every shade of religious belief at the proposed meeting. We fully concur in the propriety of a public expression of the feelings which must animate intelligent minds in respect to the outrage that has recently occurred in the Papal States. This is not a sectarian question by any means. It more nearly affects the Jews than it does any other class of religionists, because the family who are the victims of the tyranny of the Inquisition belong to that people; but the violation of one of the most sacred natural rights of man is a question for mankind, without exception of race or creed.

The facts of the Mortara case are pretty generally understood, and may thus be briefly stated: A Roman Catholic servant in a Jewish family in Bologna, having, of her own will, surreptitiously sprinkled water in the face of the child instructed to her care, repeating at the same time the ceremonial form of words enjoined by the Romish Church for baptism, revealed the fact four years afterwards. Immediately on this revelation, the Inquisition carried off the child, then six years of age, and have since, with the exception of one or two very brief intervals, prevented its parents from even seeing their son. The Pope having been appealed to by the French ambassador, his Holiness has been pleased to designate the baptism, under such circumstances, and all unsanctioned as it was by any recognized sponsorial authority, a *miracle*, and refuses to order the restoration of the boy. On one occasion, when, through the condescension and clemency of his Holiness, this innocent child was permitted for one hour to see his parents, against whom there was no legal complaint of any kind, the boy declared that he had repulsed the attempts of the Inquisition to make him wear the Roman Catholic emblems of Christianity, and had demanded to be furnished with those of his own faith. His detention, therefore, is against his own and his parents' wish, and the case against the Inquisition is as simple as it is outrageous. It is merely incidental to the facts that they have occurred in Rome. Had they taken place in Spain, or Austria, or Turkey, and been virtually assumed and defended by the Governments of those countries, the popular indignation throughout the civilized world would have been just as great as it is now. Nay, more—had the facts been reversed—had a Roman Catholic family been similarly treated in a Jewish or a Protestant community—the voice of civilization would have been just as loud in condemnation.¹

2. "TRIBUTE OF CONDOLENCE," JEWISH MESSENGER,
DECEMBER 24, 1858

Touching the forcible abduction of a Jewish boy from his parents in Bologna, under the false plea that baptism by a treacherous nurse was sufficient to constitute him a Catholic.

I grieve for thee Mortara! A Hebrew sister grieves
For that dread stroke, which more than death, thy home and heart bereaves,
Oh! every chord of sympathy vibrated in my breast,
When o'er the broad Atlantic came the news of that arrest;
Which breaking through each ordinance of Heaven and of Earth,
Has torn a helpless infant from the authors of its birth
Consigning to a stranger's care, and to a bigot's creed
A child of Abraham's covenant—one of his chosen seed.

Woe to thee fair Italia! in whom alas! we trace,
Corruption's darkest features, 'neath a veil of classic grace,
Woe! To that mitred despot, who with unhallowed zeal,
Would nature's highest privilege, and holiest law repeal—
Who seated on the ruins of a once imperial throne,
In spiritual polity, assumes a Caesar's tone—
Dictator to the world at large of doctrinal belief,
Ambitious over souls to rule, as arbitrary chief.

I mourn for thee Mortara—fellow-worshipper afar!
Who in an evil hour did thy nursery unbar
To a guardian of the cradle—that casket of a gem,
More prized than any jewel in a princely diadem.),
Unconscious of your danger, till too late you recognise,
In the keeper of your treasure, a serpent in disguise—
Subtle and false as that which to the first of parents spake,
Soon of his blooming paradise, a wilderness to make.

I tremble for that artless boy, whom flattery or fraud,
May lead to offer sacrifice to the oppressor's God!
I tremble for the innocent, whose reason scarce awake,
May the wily tempter's words, for those of truth mistake
Oh! Rather let him perish, like the martyrs of the past,
Than incense on the altar of idolatry to cast.

Descend ye angel visitants from realms of light above,
And whisper to him in his dreams, the promises of love;
Open the gates of memory—in vision let him see,
Himself, within his pleasant home, upon his mother's knee!
Open the gates of memory—and let the dreamer hear
His father's voice repeating still, the Hebrew's daily prayer;
Whilst in the unity of love, the mother and her son,
Respond in soft impressive tone, “The Lord, our God, is One!”

Now comfort thee Mortara—for indignant at thy wrongs,
Is every soul that to the band of liberty belongs,
Nor distant can the period be, when at that spirit's call,
The signal shall be given, for fanaticism's fall!
When each pillar of its bulwarks, shall be leveled to the dust,
And each weapon of its power be left to gather rust;
And the name of “Holy Office” never more be so profaned,
As to mark an odious institute, by tyranny sustained.

No longer weep Mortara—for soon the captive bird,
Back to its old domestic perch, shall safely be transferred,
No feather of the proselyte, shall mingle in its crest,
No symbol of apostasy, defile its little breast.
With the melodies of Zion then, the warbler will assuage
The anguish by his parents felt, lest in his foreign cage,
The songs of gentile choristers, might cause him to forget,
The music of our fatherland, where God his temple set.

Great Sovereign of the universe! Deliverer Supreme,
Whose gracious will alone can foil the bigot's cruel scheme,
Oh! let him not believe that Mercy infinite as thine,
Approvingly can smile, upon a persecutor's shrine.
Suffer him not to manacle the noble human mind,
By sparks of thy intelligence, enlightened, and refined—
Nor ignominious fetters on the soul of man impose,
Which thy reflected image in miniature doth enclose—
But leave them ever free to move, when as thy prophet saith,
*The world will but one altar have, one language, and one faith.*²

ADAH ISAACS MENKEN

3. "TO THE SONS OF ISRAEL," *ISRAELITE*, JANUARY 28, 1859

Written after reflecting on THE MORTARA CASE

Awake! ye souls of Israel's land,
Your drowsy slumbers break;
Rise! heart with heart—Rise! hand in hand!
All idle strife forsake!

For, see, ye not tokens of a storm,
Gathering o'er our hearts and homes?
Then, nerve each soul and every arm,
To *conquer* when it comes!

Already has a sacred home
Been trodden by a foe,
And loving hearts are crush'd to earth,
And in the grave lie low.

The barbarous fiends of priest-hood,
Are gathering fast and strong;
But be it ours to strike a blow,
They will remember long!

A dying mother's heart-shrieks,
Are sweeping o'er the wave,—
How can ye sleep, with that haunting cry,
Praying her child to save?

Brothers, awake! strike high and strong,
For danger that may come;
Strike high for Israel's holy right—
And *strong for hearts and home!*

Rise! ye brave souls of freedom's land,
From every hill and every glade,—
Rise up! one strong and gallant band,
And draw the battle blade!

Lift the white flag that was unfurled
O'er Israel of yore—
Let the cry of "GOD AND OUR RIGHT!"
Echo from shore to shore!

Stand up in your glorious right,
And do what *men* may do—
Men that know not how to yield—
Men of *souls* firm and true.

With bleeding hearts and strong arms
Oh! charge upon the foe!
And down with Popish rule and power,
At every freeman's blow!

Heed not the dark cathedral walls
That frown above ye there,—
Nor *priestly* showers of hissing threats,
That fill the venomed air.

Israel's flag ye bravely bear!
Shake off the chains that gall,
And lift that flag in triumph o'er
Their blood-stained prison wall!

And curses rest upon ye all,
If, when that flag's on high,
Ye are not with the glorious brave,
*To struggle or to die!*³

4. PREFACE TO *LA TIREUSE DE CARTES*, PARIS:
MICHEL LÉVY, 1860

a) French original

L'Ami de la religion et la *Gazette de France*, avec le même éclat et la même violence de style, sinon avec la même fermeté de logique, ont, tour à tour, attaqué *la Tireuse de cartes*. Pour l'un, c'est une œuvre diabolique; pour l'autre, une chose infime. Tous deux s'entendent pour douter de mon salut.

Je désire m'expliquer. On me permettra de ne parler qu'en mon nom et d'accuser ma pensée le plus nettement que je pourrai.

Ai-je voulu, en écrivant *la Tireuse de cartes*, faire un plaidoyer en faveur de la famille Mortara? évidemment oui; ai-je cherché une sorte de pamphlet contre le pape ou le clergé, contre le christianisme, qui est ma foi, ou contre le catholicisme, qui est mon culte? évidemment non. Mais je suis homme; je suis de ceux qui font pivoter l'humanité sur la base sacrée de la famille, qui placent le père sous la main de Dieu.

On a le droit de parler haut quand on défend le foyer outragé: appuyé sur l'enfant, cette touchante et grande chose de la vie; secondé par le père, le plus auguste des pouvoirs; bénî par la mère, la plus glorieuse émanation de Dieu!

Le pape, l'homme saint, l'homme sacré, l'homme bénî, peut-il être l'avant-garde d'une cruauté? La croix qu'il tient n'est-elle pas le symbole de la fraternité? le siège qu'il occupe n'est-il pas le refuge de la justice? Pourquoi abriter derrière suprême manifestation du droit divin d'inutiles et mesquins persécutions? pourquoi faire descendre cette sainteté dans l'arène, au milieu des protestations du droit, pêle-mêle avec les frémissements de la conscience publique soulevée? . . . Ne sentez-vous pas qu'en plein dix-neuvième siècle, c'est au moins une maladresse? ne sentez-vous pas que le drapeau que vous agitez peut être compromis dans une défaite, et n'être jamais glorieux après une victoire.

Je ne suis pas un home politique, je ne suis qu'un home de sentiment. Mais le cœur peut aussi avoir ses révélations; il peut s'élever à la clairvoyance de l'idée. Que de problèmes seraient peut-être résolus, si on l'écoutait! Vous enlevez un enfant à son père, et je dis: C'est horrible! vous l'arrachez des bras de sa mère, et je dis: C'est monstrueux! . . . monstrueux pour eux, monstrueux pour vous. La famille, c'est la société en petit; l'humanité, c'est l'État en grand. Toucher à l'une est un danger, toucher à l'autre est un crime. Tout se tient dans l'implacable série des faits sociaux. En approuvant cet attentat au droit paternel, en acceptant au nom du chef de l'Église cette violation du territoire de la famille, n'est-ce pas mettre en question l'inaffabilité même du pape, et justifier la discipline sociale qu'on voudrait lui imposer? . . .

Le pape est le père des fidèles, comme le père est le pape de ses enfants. Réfléchissez. L'intolérance est mauvaise conseillère; je dirait plus, elle est fatale. Les intolérants sont frappés d'avance par Dieu, hommes et peuples; les peuples surtout: l'Italie se mourait hier,

l'Espagne s'en ira peut-être demain, elles se débattent dans la fatalité de leur passé. Tout est confusion dans leur droit, tout est trouble dans leur autorité: le monde les regarde sans les comprendre. Enfin, dans un remaniement profond et définitif, que deviendraient ces deux peuples de l'inquisition, qui cherchent leur propre conscience dans la conscience des autres et vacillent au double tressaillement de l'Europe: la tentation du despotisme et l'entrainement de la liberté?⁴

v. s.

b) English translation⁵

L'Ami de la Religion and *La Gazette de France* have, with the same passion and violent style, though not with the same force of logic, attacked *La Tireuse de cartes*. For the one, it is a diabolical work; for the other, an insignificant one. Both agree, however, that my salvation is in doubt.

I should like to explain myself, and I ask to be permitted to speak—only in my own name—and to profess my thoughts as succinctly as I am able.

In writing *La Tireuse de cartes*, did I desire to plead the Mortara family's cause? Clearly, I did. Did I seek to produce a diatribe against the Pope or the clergy, against Christianity, which is my faith, or Catholicism, which is my practice? Clearly, I did not. But I am a man; one of those human beings who feel that humanity revolves about the sacred tradition of the family, and who place the father under the hand of God.

One has a right to speak out loudly in defense of the desecrated home; founded on the child, that great and touching phenomenon of life; maintained by the father, that most august of authorities; blessed by the mother, God's most glorious emanation.

Is it possible that the Pope—holy man, sacred man, blessed man that he is—might himself be in the forefront of a cruelly inhumane action? Is the cross that he bears not the symbol of brotherhood; the throne that he occupies, not the refuge from injustice? How can one protect petty and banal persecution behind this supreme embodiment of divine right? How can one debase that sanctity by dragging it into the lists, amid the protests of moral rectitude, in a flurry of public conscience voiced quivering with conviction? . . . Do you not fear that, here, in the middle of the nineteenth century, such a stance is tactless, to say the very least? Do you not fear that the flag you are waving might be shamed in defeat and never be glorious again in victory?

I am not a politician, nor am I a romantic. But the heart too can have its revelations and can rise to the lucid visions of an idea. How many problems might be resolved if only one would heed it? You steal a child from his father, and I tell you: "That is frightful!" You wrench him from the arms of his mother, and I tell you: "That is villainous!" Not only for them, but for you as well. The family is society cast small, just as humanity is the State cast large. To tamper with the one is a danger; with the other, a crime. Every event has its place, relentlessly set in the skein of human life. By approving this attack on the right of a father; by accepting, as head of the Church, this violation of the family's domain, does the Pope not invite us to question his very infallibility, and to justify the social sanction that one would impose upon him?

A pope is father to the faithful, as a father is pope to his children. I beg you to reflect. Intolerance is a bad counselor; worse still, a deadly one. The intolerant are smitten in

advance by God; not only men, but countries as well; indeed, even more so. Yesterday Italy lay dying; perhaps Spain will lie dead tomorrow. Both are struggling against the fatality of their past. Their laws bespeak chaos; their authority bespeaks confusion. The world looks upon them and cannot understand. In the end, in a final, profound effort to refreshion themselves, what will these two lands of the Inquisition become; these two lands that seek their own conscience in the conscience of others, and that waver now in the throes of Europe's twofold upheaval, betwixt the temptation of despotism and the attractive force of freedom?

V. S.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Having concluded my long and engaging research on Victor Séjour, the Mortara case and “the Age of Transatlantic Emancipations,” it is a great pleasure for me to rethink the intellectual adventure this writing has meant to me and to thank the people, and the institutions, that in various ways helped me in the course of this project.

I first learned about the existence of Victor Séjour thanks to Werner Sollors, a great scholar of African American literature and an innovator in American studies, who knew about my family connection with the mid-nineteenth-century Mortara case and about my scholarly interest in the issue of emancipation, and informed me as soon as he came across this fascinating literary figure. A longtime friend since 1979, when I was at Brandeis and then at Columbia in New York as a visiting scholar, Sollors also prompted my connection with M. Lynn Weiss, the editor of the modern English translation of Séjour’s *La Tireuse de cartes*, published by University of Illinois Press in 2002. Her invitation to be her respondent at a 2002 MESEA (Multicultural and Ethnic Societies, Europe and America) conference gave me the first opportunity to start reflecting seriously on Séjour’s work.

Some years later, in 2005, another outstanding promoter of new trends in American studies, Donald E. Pease, director of the Futures of American Studies Institute at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, invited me to participate in a meeting on “Trans-Atlantic Comparativist Work,” organized by him at the Dartmouth Conference Center in Rome. He then invited me to join the 2008 faculty of the Futures of American Studies Institute. I had recently published a volume on Jewish American literature from its origins to the Shoah, part of my lifelong main theme of research, and was free to make new choices. On this occasion, I decided to present a synthesis of my new work in progress on Victor Séjour to the members of the seminar. “Victor Séjour, the Mortara Case, and American Crossings” was the title of my talk. This “disclosure” of a research project whose first motivations are described in chapter 16 of this volume gave me the possibility to rethink my topic within a larger perspective and to discuss the subject with a most stimulating audience of scholars who were engaged in a debate on the possible developments of American studies, from the challenging viewpoint of a newly comparativist, global perspective. After my experience at Dartmouth College, Don Pease expressed his interest in my work on Séjour. He did not see it as a chapter within a larger book, as I had conceived it (at that time I thought this study would be the final chapter in a book on “crossing borders,” where I would examine other mid-nineteenth-century American writers as well), but as a self-sufficient, independent study, appropriate for his then forthcoming series, Re-Mapping the Transnational: A Dartmouth Series in American Studies, published by Dartmouth College Press. I therefore wish to express my deep gratitude to Donald E. Pease for his trust and advice, and for creating the mental and institutional space where new comparative initiatives could develop freely. I am also very pleased to thank Richard

Pult, the acquisitions editor for the Re-Mapping the Transnational series, as well as Amanda Dupuis and all the other skillful people at Dartmouth College Press and University Press of New England and their associates, who shepherded, and contributed to, the publication of this book.

Among the friends and scholars who were important for my research, it is a pleasure to mention my good friend David I. Kertzer, who as the author of *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* is the contemporary historian who most contributed to making the Mortara case well known again in the United States and in many other countries all over the world. Another thorough study on the Mortara case was published in Italy by Daniele Scalise: his book, *Il caso Mortara*, was the first I read on the subject even before its publication.

The bibliography at the end of this book acknowledges the many authors and sources that proved helpful in my study. Within this long list, I feel it is my duty to pay special tribute to the memory of two historians: to Rev. Charles Edwards O'Neill for his biography of Victor Séjour, a very helpful starting point for any study of the writer, and to Rabbi Bertram Wallace Korn for his early study of the American reactions to the Mortara case. I would also like to thank the many libraries and institutions that helped me in my research of texts and images. In particular the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris proved to be a real treasure-house for my investigation; and the British Library in London confirmed its capacity for preserving precious manuscripts. I am pleased to express my thanks to Erik Riedel, curator of the Ludwig Meidner Archive (Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt); to Silvia Haia Antonucci, director of the Historical Archive of the Jewish Community of Rome (ASCR); to Obie Clayton, editor of *Phylon*, at Clark Atlanta University; and to the many other people in the various institutions that supported me in the sometimes elaborate procedures for the acquisition of the illustrations that enrich this volume. The University of Illinois Press granted permission to republish the English translation from the French by Norman R. Shapiro of Victor Séjour's preface to *La Tireuse de cartes*, published in their English edition of the play *The Fortune-Teller*: for this I greatly thank them and Norman R. Shapiro, the translator.

Among the people who were close to me while I was writing this book, I wish to express my immense gratitude to my longtime dear friends Barbara Kreiger and Alan Lelchuk, who read various drafts of my manuscript, helping me in many ways with their accurate and intelligent comments and advice and with their unfailing support. Annalisa Capristo, the librarian at the Center of American Studies (Centro Studi Americani) in Rome, is the friend I could approach with full reliance whenever I was in search of difficult-to-find sources. For helping me in various ways by providing useful information or other suggestions, I would like to thank Bruce Kupelnick, Julie Lerro, Stephen Whitfield, Massimo Flumeri, Etta M. Madden, Jean Pierre Pons, Corey Brennan, and Carla Collina; thanks also to Ghidon Fiano and Giorgio Sacerdote for their help with some of the images; and thanks to Paola Modigliani and Claudio Fano for disclosing the secrets of Palazzo Cenci in Rome to me.

I first explored the theme of emancipation, which plays a central role in this study, on the occasion of the conference “Nation-State, Civil Society and Religious Minorities: The Emancipation of Jews in France, Germany and Italy between Moral Regeneration and Intolerance,” organized by Francesca Sofia and Mario Toscano in 1991, where I dealt with the theme of emancipation and its literary metaphors. Then, in 2004, as a member of the

scientific board of the Roman Center of Studies on Judaism (Centro Romano di Studi sull'Ebraismo, CeRSE) of the University of Rome “Tor Vergata”—my university—I promoted with Anna Foa, Francesco Scorsa Barcellona, and Myriam Silvera, with the collaboration of Bice Migliau, an international conference, “Jews and Emancipation in the Formation of a European Conscience.” In this context, I gave a talk, in Italian, titled “Metaphors of Emancipation: Jews and African Americans in the Literature between the United States and Europe,” raising the issue of a parallel experience of struggles for emancipation of European Jews and American blacks, which could be investigated through literature. On neither of these occasions did I mention Victor Séjour or the Mortara case, yet the way was paved for other discoveries on the subject, which would culminate in the writing of this book. I therefore would like to express my thanks to all the colleagues and friends with whom I lived these scholarly experiences, and to the institutions involved in them. And I would like to extend my appreciation to all the other colleagues and friends, particularly in the field of American studies and cross-cultural studies, but in other academic disciplines as well, who were close to me, with their intelligence, in these years of research. There is such an interweaving of cultures and scenes in the topics I have explored, and such a crossover of fields of study, that the possibilities of receiving challenging feedback and stimuli from others have been endless. In particular, though without being able to mention them individually, I wish to thank all my good friends and colleagues at the American Studies Association of Italy (AISNA, a member of EAAS, the European Association of American Studies, and of IASA, the International American Studies Association), to which I have belonged since its foundation: a scholarly home for all Italian Americanists, and a stimulating meeting place for international events and encounters. The 22nd AISNA Biennial Conference, which was held in Trieste in September 2013, was entitled “Discourses of Emancipation and the Boundaries of Freedom”: a most congenial title for my interests. I also would like to thank Lina Unali and Elisabetta Marino for promoting a series of annual conferences on “Asia and the West: A Difficult Intercontinental Relationship,” which were held at the University of Rome “Tor Vergata” since 2001, and which gave me the opportunity to study a few cases of cross-cultural encounters, not devoid of possible tensions, conceived by American writers of the mid-nineteenth century, in their imaginary “crossings” toward the Far East. The stimuli offered by these annual meetings and the study cases explored thanks to their invitations were inspiringly present in my mind as a hidden context of my present research.

Many journalists interviewed me in 2000 and in the following years, making my civil protest against the beatification of Pope Pius IX audible to public opinion. I wish to thank them all: their interest confirmed the persistent topicality of the case and further encouraged me in my literary and historical research. In particular I would like to thank John L. Allen Jr. of the *National Catholic Reporter*; David Gabrielli (alias Luigi Sandri) of *Confronti* and *ADISTA*; Antonio Carioti of *Corriere della sera*; Jeffrey Smith of the *Washington Post*; Ronen Bergman of *Ha'aretz*; Beatrice Roberti and Hanan Sher of the *Jerusalem Report*; Bob Simon, Solly (Abraham Salomon) Granatstein, and Sabina Castelfranco of CBS (*60 Minutes*); James Walston (of blessed memory) of *The Guardian*; Paul Bompard of *The Times Higher Education Supplement*; Silvia Poggioli of National Public Radio; Paul Miller of *Feature Story News* (FSN) and PBS; Alain de Chalvron of *Antenne 2*; Giancarlo Santalmassi of *Radio 24 Ore* (“Viva Voce”); Martin Penner of *Time* magazine; and, for publishing a letter of mine (which set my public engagement in motion),

Sandro Magister of *L'Espresso*. Thanks also to Myrna Katz Frommer and Harvey Frommer, and to Guido Vitali and Daniela Gross of *Pagine Ebraiche*, for their interest in my work; and to Enrico Modigliani and Pupa Garribba, for their support concerning issues of historical memory.

On February 25, 2010, an opera in two acts by the Italian composer Francesco Cilluffo, *Il Caso Mortara* (The Mortara case), premiered at the Dicapo Opera Theatre, 184 East 76th Street, New York City. I was there on a snowy wintry evening, witnessed the event, and met with the author, thanks to a contact established through Alessandra Farkas of *Corriere della sera*. I would like to express my warm appreciation to the theater's general director, Michael Capasso, and its artistic advisor, Tobias Picker, for commissioning this opera and for its excellent staging, and to the singers of the theater company for their beautiful performance, and I would like to convey my admiration to Francesco Cilluffo, the composer, for his great achievement. Cilluffo (who wrote the Italian libretto as well as composing the music), through a series of crowd scenes and wonderful choruses alternating with solos and dialogic confrontations, has, in fact, been able to communicate in his work both the domestic drama of the kidnapped child and of his family and the nineteenth-century Italian Risorgimento in which the case is set and the events took place. They say that, after Giacomo Puccini's *La fanciulla del West* (*The Girl of the Golden West*, 1910), Cilluffo's *Il caso Mortara* was the first opera in a hundred years commissioned by an American theater from an Italian composer: I wish this opera the same good fortune as Puccini's.

This is not the only contemporary case of a work of art inspired by the kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara in the United States. Other artists, aroused by the discovery of that story, have felt its relevance and dramatic power, and have tried to represent it on stage. Thus, a play about the case by Alfred Uhry, *Edgardo Mine*, had its premiere at Hartford Stage, in Hartford, Connecticut, in 2002. I am also pleased to mention the 2011 artwork of a visual artist, Chaplain Rev. Gregory A. Gilbert (Aeminessence Fine Arts, Brooklyn, NY), inspired by the case: an ink drawing titled *שבר, shavur*, Hebrew for "broken," which shows the unhappy child next to the Vatican palace, while above him a big mezuzah is flying in a watery blue sky, partially covered by the big black writing in Hebrew that gives the drawing its title. And I am delighted to record that an exceptional cultural event happened in the year 2013, when an 1862 painting by Moritz Oppenheim representing the kidnapping that had long been deemed lost was unexpectedly offered at an auction at Sotheby's in New York, and was bought by a private collector in December of that year (I hope it will be exhibited in the near future). Jennifer V. Roth, Sotheby's Senior Vice President, and Head of its Judaica and Israeli Art, an expert in the field, told me in private correspondence about her excitement at the discovery.

I dedicate this book to the memory of Edgardo's father, Momolo Mortara, the brave fighter for his son's freedom and return home, and in loving memory of my father, Alberto Mortara, who was personally in touch with his great-uncle Edgardo, and who not only passed the memory of these events to me and my brother and sister, Carlo Andrea and Paola, but also made us feel their historical and moral relevance. Carlo Andrea and Paola, dear companions in the sharing of these memories, were close to me in all ways in these years of research, and took active parts in the transmission of our family's historical legacy: Carlo Andrea, who gave his contribution to the historical docudrama *Secret Files of the Inquisition* (2006), in the episode of the series that deals with the Inquisition in

mid-nineteenth-century Europe, and Paola, who is in charge of the photographic archive of the Center of Jewish Contemporary Documentation (Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea, CDEC) in Milan, helped me with their affection and advice. I would also like to embrace in this recollection the other members of the Mortara family in my father's generation, people who, after enjoying the equal rights of citizenship conferred in Europe by Jewish emancipation, had to suffer the tragic ordeal of discriminatory racist laws and of the murderous Nazi persecutions. And I extend my mental embrace to all their descendants, the family members of my generation, whose task is that of passing the torch of memory and civil engagement to the next ones—the new beloved generations, already in full bloom. Finally, I would like to express my warmest gratitude and love to my husband and life companion Sergio Di Veroli, for being affectionately at my side in my years of intense study, for his intelligent advice and unfailing support, and for enriching my life in infinite ways.

I am grateful to all these people, and to all those who have encouraged me in my work and who have shared my thrill at the discoveries I was making while researching the momentous mid-nineteenth-century age of American and European emancipations, as manifested in literary texts meant for the public stage: research whose multiple threads, dear reader, are now reunited for you in the pages of this book.

NOTES

Introduction

1. Heinrich Heine, “Italien 1828: Reise von München nach Genua, XXIX,” in his *Reisebilder III* (1830); repr. in *Heinrich Heines Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 4, ed. Oskar Walzel (Leipzig: Insel, 1912), 298 (“Was ist aber diese große Aufgabe unserer Zeit? / Es ist die Emanzipation. Nicht bloß die der Irländer, Griechen, Frankfurter Juden, westindischen Schwarzen und dergleichen gedrückten Volkes, sondern es ist die Emanzipation der ganzen Welt, absonderlich Europas”). Trans. Charles Godfrey Leland, “Italy (1828): Journey from Munich to Genoa,” *Pictures of Travel* (1855); repr., 4th rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Frederick Lepoldt, 1863), 290.
2. Heine, “Italien 1828: Reise von München nach Genua, XXIX,” 299, both for the quotation above (“Jede Zeit hat ihre Aufgabe und durch die Lösung derselben rückt die Menschheit weiter”) and for the following utopian vision. Trans. Charles Godfrey Leland, “Italy (1828),” 290, and 291 for the vision.
3. Heine, “Englische Fragmente 1828: IX. Die Emanzipazion,” in his *Reisebilder IV (Nachträge zu den Reisebildern)* (1831) (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1856), 275–276 (“Der Kreole verlangt die Rechte des Europäers, spreizt sich aber gegen den Mulatten, und sprüht Zorn, wenn dieser sich ihm gleichstellen will. Ebenso handelt der Mulatte gegen den Mestizen, und dieser wieder gegen den Neger. Der Frankfurter Spießbürger ärgert sich über Vorrechte des Adels; aber er ärgert sich noch mehr, wenn man ihm zumuthet, seine Juden zu emanzipiren”). Trans. Charles Godfrey Leland, “English Fragments 1828: IX. The Emancipation,” *Pictures of Travel* (1863 ed.), 454.
4. Harriet Beecher Stowe, “XLV. Concluding Remarks.” *Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly*, 2 vols. (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1852), 2:321–322.
5. Dennis Berthold, *American Risorgimento: Herman Melville and the Cultural Politics of Italy* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2009), 3–4.

Chapter 1. From New Orleans to France:

Séjour’s Early Life and “Le Mulâtre”

1. See J. John Perret, “Victor Séjour, Black French Playwright from Louisiana,” *French Review* 57, no. 2 (December 1983): 187; and Charles Edwards O’Neill, *Séjour: Parisian Playwright from Louisiana* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1995), 3. Victor Séjour’s father (whose full name was Jean François Louis Victor Séjour Marcou), born in 1787, was the natural son of a white man, Marcou Latour (his first name is unknown), and of a free woman of color, Magdelaine Sterlin, while his mother’s parents were Philippe Ferrand, a free man of color, and Françoise Toutant, a free woman of color. Louis Séjour’s name first appears in a New Orleans directory in 1811, listed as a “shopkeeper” (see O’Neill, *Séjour*, 2–3, citing Thomas H. Whitney,

Whitney's New-Orleans Directory, and Louisiana & Mississippi Almanac for the Year 1811: Répertoire général des adresses de la Nlle.-Orleans et calendrier de la Louisiane et du Mississippi pour l'année 1811 [New Orleans: Printed for the author, 1810], and other sources from the St. Louis Cathedral Archives, New Orleans, such as the “First Book of Marriages of Negroes and Mulattoes in the Parish of St. Louis, New Orleans, 1777–1830”).

2. In a long contemporary article on the writer by Charles de La Varenne (“Victor Séjour,” *Diogène*, March 8, 1857, pp. 1–2, 4), one reads that Victor Séjour’s father had a brother in Paris, called Sterlin (their mother’s maiden name), who was a distinguished physician and who, being single, had invited his nephew to Paris, with the hope of making him the successor in his practice. According to this article, Victor Séjour had started medical studies, which he disliked and abandoned for the sake of literature (being therefore disinherited by his uncle).

3. [C.-A. Bissette], “Devoir national de faire respecter par les puissances étrangères la qualité de citoyen français dont jouissent les hommes de couleur libres,” *Revue des colonies* 1, no. 2 (August 1834): 8 (“sans distinction, au sein de la grande famille”) and 9 (“La France a voulu que tout homme libre né dans son sein ou dans ses colonies fût citoyen, quelle que fût sa couleur”). See also the first article in the same issue of the journal, which is on the abolition of slavery: “De l’abolition de l’esclavage,” 3–5. Here, Bissette extols the 1833 bill passed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom abolishing slavery in the British colonies, which was due to be put into practice in August 1834, and firmly urges France and the United States to imitate that “admirable” example, warning the French colonists that they were “marching on a volcano” (“ils marchent sur un vulcan!,” p. 3). As one can see from these two articles, the condition of free men of color (“les hommes de couleur libres”) in French colonies was totally different from that of its black slaves. About the *Revue des colonies* and its editor-in-chief, Cyrille Auguste Bissette, see later in this chapter.

4. Étienne Carjat, drawing of Victor Séjour, engraved by Alexandre Pothey, from *Diogène*, March 8, 1857, p. 3. This issue of the periodical had devoted all its first three-and-a-half pages to Séjour, publishing the previously mentioned article by Charles de La Varenne, “Victor Séjour,” on its first two pages (with conclusion on page 4), illustrated by the drawing on page 3, full page. Carjat, who would become famous for his photographic portraits of great contemporary artists such as Hector Berlioz, Alexandre Dumas, Gioachino Rossini, Arthur Rimbaud, and Charles Baudelaire, was a young journalist, caricaturist, and photographer, and the cofounder with the writer Amédée Rolland (the editor-in-chief) of this short-lived periodical, which was published from August 12, 1856, through April 26, 1857.

5. Victor Séjour, “Le Mulâtre,” *Revue des colonies* 3, no. 9 (March 1837): 376–392. In this first magazine edition of the story, its title appears under the heading “Mœurs coloniales” (“Colonial customs”), under which the subtitle, “Esquisses” (“Sketches”), in smaller characters, conveys the partial portrait of a colonial condition and the novelty of a literary attempt; on the first page of the magazine issue, where there is a brief list of its contents, immediately under the magazine heading and date, the word order in the heading is reversed: “ESQUISSES DE MŒURS COLONIALES—Le Mulâtre” (p. [353]). “Le Mulâtre” was first reprinted in *Revue de Louisiane / Louisiana Review* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1972): 62–75 (intro. David O’Connell, “Victor Séjour,” 60–61); trans. Philip Barnard, “The Mulatto,” in *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. et al.

(New York: Norton, 1997), 287–299 (2nd ed., 2004, pp. 353–365; 3rd ed., ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. et al., 2014, vol. 1, pp. 298–309); and by Andrea Lee, “The Mulatto,” in *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature*, ed. Werner Sollors and Marc Shell (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 148–181 (French-English bilingual edition), intro. Werner Sollors, “Victor Séjour,” 146–147. The French original was recently republished twice in France: in Roger Lille, *Nouvelles du héros noir: Anthologie 1769–1847* (Paris: L’Harmattan [coll. Autrement Mêmes], 2009), 207–226; and in Victor Séjour, “*Le Mulâtre*” suivie de “*La Tireuse de cartes*,” intro. Lydie Moudileno (Paris: L’Harmattan [coll. Autrement Mêmes], 2014), 3–18. In contrast, from David O’Connell’s just-cited 1972 introduction, one learns that in 1972 Séjour’s “Le Mulâtre” was still almost unknown, and that even in Edward Larocque Tinker’s important study *Les Ecrits de langue française en Louisiane au XIXe siècle* (Paris: H. Champion, 1932), although four pages were devoted to Séjour, this story was not included in the writer’s bibliography. Regarding the *Revue des colonies* and its ideological context (very important for an understanding of Séjour’s beginnings), see Kelly Duke Bryant, “Black but Not African: Francophone Black Diaspora and the *Revue des Colonies*, 1834–1842,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 40, no. 2 (2007): 251–282.

6. Illustration in *Revue des colonies* 3, no. 1 (July 1836): [1]. Drawing by Levasseur, wood engraving by John Andrew, Jean Best, and Isidore Leloir. About this important triumvirate of engravers, whose workshop, Atelier ABL, opened in Paris in 1832, see Paul Jobling and David Crowley, *Graphic Design: Reproduction and Representation since 1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 13–16, and 36n12; and Michèle Martin, *Images at War: Illustrated Periodicals and Constructed Nations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 68.

7. For the definition of the emblem, see William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760–1865* (Urbana: University Press of Illinois, 1988), [xiv]. For the history of the seal and the quotation about the slave’s “Posture,” see the website *PBS/Africans in America*, concerning “Revolution 1750–1805,” and its Resource Bank of Historical Documents (Section V, “Am I Not a Man and a Brother?”), <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2h67.html>.

8. See Werner Sollors, *Neither Black nor White yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 165: “Unless an earlier text will be found in the future, this is the first published short story by an author of African ancestry born in the United States”; and *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, 1997, p. 286: “Victor Séjour’s chilling short story *Le Mulâtre* [...] is the earliest known work of African American fiction.” Frances Smith Foster, in “A Narrative of the Interesting Origins and (Somewhat) Surprising Developments of African American Print Culture” (*American Literary History* 17, no. 4 [Winter 2005]: 724), emphasizes that Victor Séjour’s short story “The Mulatto,” “written and published in French in 1837, predates by 15 years Frederick Douglass’s ‘The Heroic Slave’ (1852), which is generally considered the earliest extant short story published by an African American.” In fact, F. Douglass’s short story was published in 1853, in the collection *Autographs of Freedom*, preface Julia Griffiths, secretary of “The Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Society” (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1853), 174–234. F. Smith Foster appreciates the inclusion of Séjour’s story in *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, and stresses the difficulty of reconstructing a complete history of African American print culture, “a definitive or comprehensive

survey of origins or of development" (p. 714). See also her "How Do You Solve a Problem Like Theresa?," *African American Review* 40, no. 4 (2006): 631–638.

9. Hawthorne's first collection of stories, *Twice-Told Tales*, appeared in Boston in 1837. Poe published his first story, anonymously, in a Philadelphia paper in 1832, and his first collection of fiction, *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, in the same city in 1839.

10. A strong plea in this direction is made by Alide Cagidemetro, "'The Rest of the Story'; or, Multilingual American Literature," in *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 17–28. See also the important introduction by M. Lynn Weiss to the collection *Creole Echoes: The Francophone Poetry of Nineteenth-Century Louisiana*, trans. Norman R. Shapiro, intro. and notes by M. Lynn Weiss, foreword by Werner Sollors (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), xxiii–xxxix; and Anna Brickhouse, "A Francophone View of Comparative American Literature: *Revue des Colonies* and the Translations of Abolition," in her *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 84–131.

11. This area of research has particularly been advanced thanks to the activities of the Longfellow Institute, founded at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1994 and directed by Marc Shell and Werner Sollors, whose aim is "to support the study of non-English writings in what is now the United States and to reexamine the English-Language tradition in the context of American multilingualism." For publications in this field, see in particular Werner Sollors, "Multilingual America and the Longfellow Institute," *Journal of American Studies of Turkey* 6 (1997): 85–87; *Multilingual America* (1998), ed. Werner Sollors; *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature: A Reader of Original Texts with English Translations*, ed. Marc Shell and Werner Sollors (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Steven G. Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000); *Not English Only: Redefining "American" in American Studies* (European Contributions to American Studies, 48), ed. Orm Øverland (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2001); *American Babel: Literatures of the United States from Abnaki to Zuni*, ed. Marc Shell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); *La Babele americana*, ed. Sara Antonelli, Anna Scacchi, and Anna Scannavini (Rome: Donzelli, 2005); Lawrence Rosenwald, *Multilingual America: Language and the Making of American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

12. The text by Ralph Waldo Emerson was first published as a pamphlet in 1837, with the title *An Oration, Delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge, August 31, 1937*. It was then republished as "The American Scholar" in his *Nature; Addresses, and Lectures* (Boston: James Munroe, 1849), 75–111; the quotation above is on p. 109 of this edition.

13. Gustave de Beaumont, *Marie: ou, L'esclavage aux États-Unis; tableau de mœurs américaines*, 2 vols., 4th ed. (Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1835, 1840). According to Werner Sollors, the general question of when mulattoes began to be important for literary representation—that is the historical origin of this literary figure—has not yet been fully investigated, but the answer to this question "seems to be that after more or less isolated instances here and there, it is early in the nineteenth century that they become significant" (Sollors, *Neither Black nor White yet Both*, 239). Sollors temporarily concludes by stressing the role of France in the popularization of the theme: "The representation of

important Mulatto characters may thus go back to France (rather than to abolitionists in the United States)" (*ibid.*, 241). In this historical perspective, one can understand what an important and liberating context France may have been for a young American Creole expatriate like Séjour.

14. "Victor Séjour 1817–1874," in *Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (1997), 286–287.

15. See Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

16. The quotation is from David Brion Davis, "Introduction," in his *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 3. Saint-Domingue, on the west side of the island of Hispaniola in the greater Antilles (discovered by Columbus in 1492), was a French colony from 1659 to 1804. The Haitian Revolution, which started as a slave rebellion in 1791, culminated with a declaration of independence from the French and the establishment of the Republic of Haiti in 1804. The new state chose the name Haiti after the name Ayiti, meaning "Mountainous Land," given to the island by its early inhabitants. France recognized the new state's independence in 1833. About the Haitian Revolution, see David Brion Davis, "The First Emancipations: Freedom and Dishonor," chapter 2 in his *The Problem of Slavery*, 45–82; Kaiama Glover, "The Matter of Haiti," in *A New Literary History of America*, ed. Greil Marcus and Werner Sollors (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 141–145; Eric J. Sundquist, "San Domingo and Its Patriots," in his *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 31–36; and Marlene L. Daut, *Tropics of Haiti: Race and the Literary History of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1789–1865* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015). For a nineteenth-century account, see William Wells Brown, *St. Domingo: Its Revolutions and Its Patriots; A Lecture Delivered Before the Metropolitan Athenaeum, London, May 16, and at St. Thomas' Church, Philadelphia, December 20, 1854* (Boston: Bela Marsh, 1855). An early short story set in revolutionary Haiti and published in New York was recently found by Frances Smith Foster: it is "Theresa—A Haytien Tale," originally serialized in *Freedom's Journal* ("the first newspaper published by African Americans") between January 18, 1828, and February 15, 1828 (the other two issues being on January 25 and February 8, 1828). The story, signed by a mysterious "S.," was republished in *African American Review* 40, no. 4 (2006): 639–645, with an introduction by Frances Smith Foster, "How Do You Solve a Problem Like Theresa?," 631–638.

17. In the literature of the mid-nineteenth century, just a few years before the American Civil War, see how William Wells Brown, in his *St. Domingo*, effectively uses the example of the Haitian Revolution to warn American slaveholders on the possible rebellion of slaves, including the "sons of white fathers": "Mulattoes took the lives of their white fathers, to whom they had been slaves . . . ; thus revenging themselves for the mixture of their blood. So frightful was this slaughter, that the banks of the Artibonite were strewed with dead bodies, and the waters dyed with the blood of the slain. . . . / Let the slave-holders in our Southern States tremble when they shall call to mind these events" (25); "Who knows but that a Toussaint, a Christophe, a Rigaud, a Clervaux, and a Dessalines, may some day appear in the Southern States of this Union? . . . if we are not mistaken, the day is not far distant when the revolution of St. Domingo will be reenacted in South Carolina and Louisiana" (32). Brown's text significantly starts with an epigraph

from Byron's *Childe Harold*: "Hereditary bondsmen! Know ye not / Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow?" See also the well-known passage in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly*, 2 vols. (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1852), when, through the character of Augustine St. Clare in chapter 23, the abolitionist writer warns her readers about the threat of the "San Domingo hour" (vol. 2, p. 76).

18. See Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 735–762; and Eliga H. Gould, "Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery," *American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (June 2007): 764–786. See also Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession* 91 (New York: MLA, 1991): 33–40; and Stephen Greenblatt et al., *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

19. The procrastination in taking revenge is important in this "revenge tragedy," not because it creates suspense, but because it ideologically stresses the premeditation of the crime. Georges wants to kill his hated master only when the latter is at the best moment in his life, happy with a wife and a newborn child (see the last section of "Le Mulâtre," section V). The revenge theme, and the moral and physical destruction that slavery causes both to the slave and the slaveholder, are essential ingredients in the story.

20. Edward J. Piacentino, "Slavery through the White-Tinted Lens of an Embedded Black Narrator: Séjour's 'The Mulatto' and Chesnutt's 'Dave's Neckliss' as Intertexts," *Southern Literary Journal* 44, no. 1 (Fall 2011): 121.

21. In her analysis of "Le Mulâtre," Anna Brickhouse notes that if the traveling narrator, whose race is never specified, were not white but, "like Séjour himself, a member of the *gens de couleur libres* from Louisiana or another Caribbean site, differences of class and color could still easily account for the fact that Antoine [the black narrator in the tale within the tale] addresses him as 'Master'" (Brickhouse, *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere*, 292n66). This confirms the racial and cultural liminality of the story's viewpoint, in which possible "passing" for white does not imply indifference to the shameful and threatening condition denounced in the story.

22. Séjour, "Le Mulâtre," *Revue des colonies* (March 1837): 378: "ces ventes infâmes"; "des hommes libres, arrachés par la ruse ou par la force de leur patrie, et devenus, par la violence, le bien, la propriété de leurs semblables." English trans. Philip Barnard, "The Mulatto," in *Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (1997), 288.

23. Ed Piacentino, in his "Seeds of Rebellion in Plantation Fiction: Victor Séjour's 'The Mulatto,'" *Southern Spaces* (August 28, 2007, <http://southernspaces.org/2007/seeds-rebellion>), states that Séjour's story "inaugurated the literary delineation of slavery's submission-rebellion binary." On the Haitian revolutionary contest, see Marlene L. Daut, "'Sons of White Fathers': Mulatto Vengeance and the Haitian Revolution in Victor Séjour's 'The Mulatto,'" *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 65, no. 1 (June 2010): 1–37. "In the nineteenth century," remarks Daut, "the miscegenated 'oedipal drama' of slavery described in Séjour's story was distinctly and explicitly associated with the Haitian Revolution. In fact, the idea that miscegenation might make 'black' sons want to kill their 'white' fathers constitutes one of the primary metaphors of the Haitian Revolution in the nineteenth century" (5).

24. Séjour, "Le Mulâtre," *Revue des colonies* (March 1837): 378 ("Ici, on livre le mari sans la femme: là, la sœur sans le frère; plus loin, la mère sans les enfants. Vous frémis-

sez?”). English trans. Philip Barnard, “The Mulatto,” in *Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (1997), 288.

25. In *Neither Black nor White yet Both*, Werner Sollors discusses Séjour’s story in detail (164–167), with special reference to the way in which the *Code noir* law was thematized in literature in the 1840s. Sollors also mentions a drama entitled “L’Esclave” (The Slave), “on which Séjour was known to be working,” but which has not been found, and reports that “the preparation of Séjour’s dramatization of the life of John Brown was announced in 1861,” in *Douglass’ Monthly* 3, no. 12, May 1861, p. 461 (Sollors, *Neither Black nor White yet Both*, 164 and 474n6). For more information on racial themes and allusions, including references to America, in Séjour’s plays, see later in this book (particularly in chapters 3, 7, 8, and 15).

Chapter 2. Diégarias, a Mixed-Identity Tragedy

1. Victor Séjour, *Diégarias* (“Drame en cinq actes et en vers”) (Paris: Christophe Tresse, 1844) (first performed in Paris, at the Théâtre Français, July 23, 1844). This five-act play is in alexandrine verse (composed of rhyming couplets of 12-syllable lines), the leading measure in French dramatic poetry, also used in the plays of Racine and Molière. It was dedicated to Pierre-François Beauvallet, the actor playing the role of Diégarias, “as a token of gratitude and admiration” (“A Beauvallet: Témoignage de reconnaissance et d’admiration”). The English version is *The Jew of Seville*, trans. Norman R. Shapiro, intro. M. Lynn Weiss (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002). Since I am writing in English, my quotations will be in English, citing from the English translation of the text when existing, as in this case (otherwise translations will be mine), while I will give all the original quotations in French in the notes. I shall use the same system throughout the book when citing other texts originally written in French.

2. Théophile Gautier praised the achievement of this beginner and particularly appreciated his inspiration from Victor Hugo, “the greatest poet of the time,” with this motivation: “C’est déjà une preuve de talent que de savoir choisir un bon maître” (“It is already a sign of talent to be able to choose a good master.”). Théophile Gautier, “Théâtre-Français: *Diégarias*,” *La Presse*, July 29, 1844, p. 1; repr. in his *Histoire de l’art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans*, vol. 3 (Paris: Édition Hetzel, 1859), 237. See also the very positive review in *Journal des théâtres*, July 25, 1844, p. 1 (“début héreux, bien promettant”; “a happy debut, very promising”). About the number of performances, see M. Lynn Weiss, “Introduction” to *Jew of Seville*, xxi. About the play’s reception in New Orleans and the sale of a revised printed version of the play there in 1847, see *Courrier de la Louisiane*, January 16, 1847, [p. 2], and January 22, 1847, [p. 2], cit. in Charles Edwards O’Neill, *Séjour, Parisian Playwright from Louisiana* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1995), 26. As for Séjour’s membership in the French Playwrights Association, see the letter he sent to the Association on June 26, 1846 (New York Public Library, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Image ID: 1169762, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture). According to the date handwritten on the letter, Séjour became a member of the French Playwrights Association on July 24, 1846.

3. The name “Diégarias” was invented by combining the first two names of a historical figure, Diego Arias Dávila, a converted Jew who was King Henry IV of Castille’s finance minister; see Weiss, “Introduction” to *Jew of Seville*, xxxiiin45.

4. The author's French title concealed this secret from the audience as well, until its dramatic revelation, while the English translation makes the religious theme and conflict manifest from the beginning. For a justification of the change, see Norman R. Shapiro, "Translator's Preface" to Séjour, *Jew of Seville*, xiv: "My most striking and immediately obvious liberty is in my change of the title, keeping its Spanishness while alluding pointedly to the play's subject. Perhaps one may object that it reveals too much of the plot too soon. But I think that the curiosity it evokes justifies the trade-off, and hope that it speaks more eloquently than the original to today's potential audiences."

5. The relationship of hatred and envy of the Moor against the Jew plays an important secondary role in the play, beside the one between the Jew and the Christians.

6. Séjour, *Jew of Seville*, act 3, scene 8, p. 98 (a free adaptation). In the French original, *Diégarias*, 19: "C'est qu'il me faut garder l'honneur de ma maison; / C'est que je suis chrétien et dois sauver mon âme; / C'est que je ne veux pas d'une juive pour femme." Ancient prejudice, paving the way for the Spanish laws concerning *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood), is a ready-made excuse for a high-born villain. Séjour's play is set in the late fifteenth century, when Jews had not been expelled from Spain yet (their expulsion would take place in 1492), but their rights, and even those of Jewish converts to Christianity (*conversos*), were already seriously limited, as the play shows. The measures concerning *limpieza de sangre* entered Spanish law in 1556 and were abolished only in 1865, and so were still in force in Spain when Séjour's play was written. On the marranos, see Cecil Roth's classic study, *A History of the Marranos* (Philadelphia: Meridian Books and Jewish Publication Society of America, 1932); repr., intro. Herman P. Solomon, 4th ed. (New York: Schocken Books / Sepher-Hermon Press, 1987). For a history of the Jews in that age, see Anna Foa, *The Jews of Europe after the Black Death*, trans. Andrea Grover (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

7. Don Juan, the Christian lover of the Jew's daughter, is the son of Don Jacques de Tello, who was Bianca's uncle and the person who most contributed to Diégarias and Bianca's earlier forced exile, by opposing their love and marriage, and seriously offending Diégarias. Don Juan is also one of the noble conspirators who have plotted against the king. Diégarias, in disgrace after the revelation of his Jewish identity, but still rich and secretly financing the king, gets his revenge by obtaining Don Juan's death sentence from the king, in exchange for a fortune. At the same time, he finances the king's enemies as well, thus getting his revenge on the king too. The ending is tragic for the main hero as well.

8. Victor Séjour, *Jew of Seville*, act 5, scene 8, p. 166. In the French original of *Diégarias*: "(Se laissant tomber sur elle) / J'ai voulu me venger . . . j'ai tué mon enfant!" (p. 31).

9. M. Lynn Weiss, "Introduction," in Victor Séjour, *The Fortune-Teller*, trans. Norman R. Shapiro, intro. M. Lynn Weiss (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), xvii.

10. Alessandro Portelli, *Bianchi e neri nella letteratura americana: La dialettica dell'identità* (Whites and blacks in American literature: the dialectics of identity) (Bari: De Donato, 1977), 137: "Il 'passing' è un tentativo di estendere la mobilità sociale a chi ne è escluso, forzando la rigidità della casta." The English translation in the text above is mine. See also Sollors, "Passing; or, Sacrificing a *Parvenu*," in his *Neither Black nor White yet Both*, 246–284; M. Giulia Fabi, *Passing and the Rise of the African American Novel* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); Kathleen Pfeiffer, *Race Passing and American Individualism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003); Teresa C. Zackodnick, *The Mulatta and the Politics of Race* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004).

11. Séjour, *Jew of Seville*, act 4, scene 2, p. 116. French original, *Diégarias*: “Tu parlais de pays . . . —Folle, est-ce que tu crois / que la patrie existe où l'on a point de droits” (p. 22). The English version quoted above is by Shapiro in *Jew of Seville*, 116. It is to be appreciated for its poetic quality and its recreation of the rhyming alexandrine scheme of versification. The same passage was translated in prose as “You spoke of country. Foolish, do you believe a country exists where one enjoys no rights whatsoever?,” in T. A. Daley, “Victor Séjour,” *Phylon: The Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture* 4, no. 1 (1943): 10.

12. Séjour, *Jew of Seville*, act 5, scene 8, p. 165. French original, *Diégarias*, 31: “Un juif vient de briser ton trône héréditaire.” For remarks on common elements and differences in the treatment of the Jew’s relationship to the Christian in Shylock and *Diégarias*, see Weiss, “Introduction,” in Séjour, *Jew of Seville*, xxvii–xxix.

13. Séjour, *Jew of Seville*, act 5, scene 5, p. 129. French original, “mère,” *Diégarias*, 24.

14. Weiss, “Introduction,” in Séjour, *Jew of Seville*, xxviii.

15. See M. Lynn Weiss in her introduction to Séjour, *Jew of Seville*, xxvi: “In the decades between 1830 and 1860, and in response to the pressure of the abolitionist movement in the North, the antebellum South clung more fiercely to its identity as slaveholding and white. Consequently, the civil rights of the free people of color were systematically restricted, withheld, and on the eve of the Civil War, all but annulled.”

16. The ideology of art for art’s sake was shared by many writers when this first play by Séjour was on stage; yet, “we seem to see in the hero, Diégarias, a Jew, persecuted and reviled because of his race, the personification of that persecuted race which Séjour had left behind in America.” This is the interpretation of the play given by Daley, “Victor Séjour,” 10. The editor-in-chief of *Phylon*, where T. A. Daley published his 1943 essay, was W. E. B. Du Bois, who founded this magazine in 1940.

Chapter 3. Poet, Playwright, and Double Endings in 1859

1. This is the list of the plays, and of the theaters where they were performed, that was published under the heading “Ouvrages du même auteur” (Works by the same author) at the beginning of his eleventh play, *La Tireuse de cartes* (this text will be analyzed in detail in a following section of this book). At the Théâtre Français, *Diégarias* and *La Chute de Séjan*; at the Théâtre de l’Odéon, *André Gérard* and *Les Grands vassaux*; at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, *Richard III*, *Les Noces vénitaines*, *Le Fils de la nuit*, and *Le Paletot brun*; at the Théâtre des Variétés, *L’Argent du diable*; at the Théâtre de l’Ambigu-Comique, *Le Martyre du cœur*. The two plays defined as comedies are *Le Paletot brun* and *L’Argent du diable*.

2. Victor Séjour, *La Chute de Séjan* (“Drame en cinq actes et en vers”) (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1849; repr. Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2012) (first performed in Paris, at the Théâtre de la République, on August 21, 1849). The actor playing the role of Séjan was Beauvallet, who had also played the main role in *Diégarias*. The rather long lapse of time (five years) that separates Séjour’s second play from his first one is explained by Charles de La Varenne, “Victor Séjour,” in *Diogène*, March 8, 1857, p. 2: according to this report, Séjour’s early career was momentarily interrupted by an accident he suffered during a mass gathering at the Champs-Elysées, when he fell while trying to help a woman who was being crashed by a panic-stricken crowd and was himself trampled and seriously injured, needing to convalesce for several years before recovering.

3. His literary debut, at seventeen, took place at *La Société des Artisans*, when he read a satirical poem about *La Société d'Economie*, a rival literary club, which he lambasted “for its pretentious snobbery and exclusiveness.” About this episode, see T. A. Daley, “Victor Séjour,” *Phylon* 4, no. 1 (1943): 7.

4. Victor Séjour, “Le Retour de Napoléon” (Paris: Dauvin et Fontaine, 1841); repr. in *Les Cenelles: Choix de poésies indigènes*, ed. Armand Lanusse (New Orleans: H. Lauve et Co., 1845), 55–59; repr. in *Les Cenelles* (Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1971); trans., “Le Retour de Napoléon—The Return of Napoleon,” *Les Cenelles: A Collection of Poems by Creole Writers of the Early Nineteenth Century*, trans. and preface Régine Latorue and Gleason R. W. Adams (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1979), 158–165 (bilingual edition). For a bilingual collection of nineteenth-century Creole poetry, which includes poems from *Les Cenelles* and other contemporary publications, see *Creole Echoes: The Francophone Poetry of Nineteenth-Century Louisiana*, trans. Norman R. Shapiro, intro. and notes M. Lynn Weiss, foreword Werner Sollors (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003). On *Les Cenelles* and the issue of identity, see also Thomas F. Haddox, “The ‘Nous’ of Southern Catholic Quadroons: Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Identity in *Les Cenelles*,” *American Literature* 73, no. 4 (December 2001): 757–778; and Thadious M. Davis, *Southscapes: Geographies of Race, Region, & Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 216–224.

5. Michel Fabre, *From Harlem to Paris: Black American Writers in France, 1840–1980* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 1. Twenty years after Fabre’s study, a book by David McCullough, *The Greater Journey: Americans in Paris* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2011), still failed even to mention Victor Séjour among the American artists who set off for Paris in the nineteenth century.

6. *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, 1st ed. (1997), xxxvii (“Introduction”), and 286 (“Victor Séjour”); in the 2nd ed. (2004), xlvi and 352; in the 3rd ed. (2014), vol. 1, xliv and 297. In the first two editions of this *Norton Anthology* the French title *Les Cenelles*, mentioned in its completeness only in the introduction, was misspelled. In fact in the subtitle, *Choix de poésies indigènes*, the first word was spelled “Coix,” without the “h”; besides (relatively minor mistakes), the accents on *poésies* and *indigènes* were missing; in the 3rd edition, the first spelling mistake has been corrected. In all editions, despite the admission that this anthology was the first in “a distinguished tradition of anthology editing” upon which the *Norton Anthology* itself is built, no reference is made in the introduction to the French nature of the texts collected there and to the significant case of a community of francophone artists from Louisiana, that were avant-garde in the early history of African American literature.

7. See “An Act to Prescribe Certain Formalities Respecting Free Persons of Color,” chapter 31, approved by the Governor of the Territory of Orleans, March 31, 1808, in *Acts Passed at the First Session of the Second Legislature of the Territory of Orleans* (New Orleans: Bradford and Anderson, 1808), 138–141 (with English and French on opposite pages). Between 1804 and 1812, all of the Louisiana Purchase south of the 33rd parallel was incorporated into the United States as the Territory of Orleans, until in 1812 that territory was admitted to the Union as the state of Louisiana.

8. Contemporary caricatures of Alexandre Dumas *père* very often emphasized his African ancestry; see, e.g., the caricature by Amédée de Noé, known as Cham, in *Le Charivari* (1858), representing the writer as a “Quadroon Chef,” while preparing his new dramatic

“*bouillabaisse*” (a French mixed-fish soup); and the hand-colored engraving by André Gill, “Alexandre Dumas” in *La Lune*, December 2, 1866, cover.

9. Fabre, *From Harlem to Paris*, 19.

10. On the front cover of *Les Cenelles*, under its title, there are two lines by Alfred Mercier: “Et de ces fruits qu’un Dieu prodigue dans nos bois / Heureux, si j’en ai su faire un aimable choix!” Then the introduction by Armand Lanusse is preceded by a four-line verse dedication, where the “modest” poetic berries are romantically offered “to the Louisianian fair sex” (“*Au beau sexe louisianais*”). The introduction that follows deals with serious themes (the role of instruction, the role of poetry, the difficulties of writing in their native place, the admiration for Europe, and for writers like Hugo and Dumas); then it comes back to its initial gallant tone. It is useless to underline (*ça va sans dire!*) that the “*beau sexe*” could only be expected to *welcome* those poetic fruits, not to produce them themselves.

11. Ben Jonson’s tragedy *Sejanus: His Fall* was performed in 1603 and then at the Globe Theatre in London in 1604. After being revised, it was first published in a quarto edition in 1605 and then collected in the 1616 folio edition of Jonson’s works.

12. In his dedication to Jules Janin, Séjour writes: “A MONSIEUR JULES JANIN. Vous m’avez tendu la main le premier; à vous, monsieur, ma première œuvre sérieuse [...]” (“TO MR. JULES JANIN. You were the first who extended the hand of friendship to me; to you, sir, my first serious work”). Jules Janin had written a very positive review of Séjour’s play in *Le Journal des débats*, August 27, 1849, pp. 1–2 (feuilleton), where he had defined the young playwright as “a true talent” (*un vrai talent*), p. 1.

13. Séjour, *La Chute de Séjan*, act 2, scene 3, pp. 44–45: “La crainte, la terreur, le désordre partout! / Nobles, dans leurs palais, mendiants, dans leur bouge, / Tout un monde s’agit, aux plis du drapeau rouge!”, “Nous taillons hardiment dans Rome dégradée, / Pour en tirer, chacun selon sa volonté, / Cette vierge d’airain, qu’on nomme Liberté!” See O’Neill, *Séjour*, 125, both for the comment and the quotations above, in his English translation, to which I have added only the verse caesuras and the capital letters at the start of each verse, as in the original; the word “velleity” in this translation expresses a weaker degree of “will” than the French original, “volonté,” but I have retained it because of the rhyme with “liberty.”

14. Performances lasted from August 21, 1849, until September 13, 1849, “alternating with classical dramas.” See *Constitutionnel*, September 13–16, 1849, cit. in O’Neill, *Séjour*, 30.

15. Victor Séjour, *Richard III* (“Drame en cinq actes, en prose”) (Paris: D. Giraud et J. Dagneau, Libraires-Éditeurs, 1852; 2nd rev. ed., 1852) (first performed in Paris, at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, September 28, 1852). According to Daley, “Victor Séjour,” 11, *Richard III* may be considered “in many respects” Séjour’s masterpiece.

16. Séjour, *Richard III*, [p. 1]: “Je n’ai pas voulu traduire Shakespeare: traduire c’est diminuer. J’ai pensé qu’en me tenant debout à ses pieds, j’allais mieux faire éclater sa grandeur.”

17. The Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin (or Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin, as it is also spelled) was built on the Boulevard Saint-Martin in Paris in 1781, at first to host temporarily the Paris Opéra. It acquired its final name and function in 1802. Destroyed by fire during the Paris Commune in 1871, two years later the building was replaced with a new one, which is still in use.

18. Édouard Plouvier, *Le Théâtre*, October 2, 1852, p. 1; Théo (Théophile) Deschamps, *Le Théâtre*, September 29, 1852, p. 3; É. Plouvier, *Le Théâtre*, November 27, 1852, p. 2; cit. in O'Neill, *Séjour*, 33, 35. See also Jules Janin, who in his *Almanach de la littérature, du théâtre et des beaux-arts* (Paris: Pagnerre, 1854), 39, declares: “Mr. Victor Séjour is one of the young poets of these times who give the greatest expectations” (“M. Victor Séjour est un des jeunes poètes de ces temps-ci qui donnent les plus grandes espérances”).

19. The Belgian edition is *Richard III* (Brussels: J.-A. Lelong, 1852). Under the play’s title and author, its cover reports the dates and theaters of the openings in Paris and in Brussels. On the following page there is a list of the actors who played in both editions. The new dedication to the writer’s father omits the reference to Shakespeare of the Parisian publication and adds a more intimate comment on the play, defined by its author as “the second link of a vigorous chain I have in my mind” (“le second anneau d’une chaîne vigoureuse que j’ai dans la tête”).

20. Vittore [sic] Séjour, *Riccardo III* (“Dramma in cinque atti”) *Florilegio drammatico*, ser. 4, vol. 2, adapted by Pietro Manzoni (Milan: Borroni e Scotti, 1852).

21. Victor Séjour and Adolphe Jaime fils, *L’Argent du diable* (“Comédie en trois actes et en prose”) (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1854). Its written edition was dedicated by Séjour to the play’s co-author, Adolphe Jaime fils. Its premiere took place at the Théâtre des Variétés on March 27, 1854. For the Brussels performance, see O'Neill, *Séjour*, 40, citing Gaston in *Le Théâtre*, April 29, 1854, pp. 3–4. This was the third play by Séjour, after *Diégarias* and *Richard III*, that was also performed in the writer’s native town New Orleans: it was staged at the Orleans Theater on April 12, 1857 (see *New Orleans Daily Delta*, April 11, 1857, p. 3; cit. in O'Neill, *Séjour*, 40). The comedy was promptly translated into Italian, in a “free version,” by Luigi Enrico Tettoni, *Il denaro del diavolo*, in 1855; in 1858 it was also translated into Danish (see Bibliography).

22. Victor Séjour, *Les Noces vénitientes* (“Drame en cinq actes, en prose”) (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1855) (first performed in Paris, at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, March 8, 1855); Victor Séjour, *Le Fils de la nuit* (“Drame en trois journées et un prologue”) (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1856) (first performed in Paris, at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, July 11, 1856), dedicated to Alexandre Dumas. Concerning the contemporary translations of these successful plays into English and other languages, see immediately above.

23. This American adaptation did not even mention the name of Victor Séjour: *The Son of the Night*, by Charles Gayler, French’s Standard Drama, no. 49 (New York: Samuel French, 1857) (first performed at the Broadway Theater, New York, April, 1857). That year *Le Fils de la nuit* was also translated into Dutch and into Spanish (with full acknowledgment of its French author); and in 1867 it was translated into Greek (see Bibliography).

24. Séjour thanked Alexandre Dumas warmly for the honor of accepting his dedication and added: “If the work is unworthy of you, the thought which inspired it to me is not unrelated to you” (“Si l’œuvre est indigne de vous, la pensée qui me l’a inspirée ne vous est pas étrangère”). In this dedication, beside the recognition of a sharing of ideas and sensibility, one can also detect a reference to the mixed origin of *Le Fils de la nuit*, which was partly based on a play initially called *Le pirate* (“The Pirate”), left incomplete by Gérard de Nerval and Bernard Lopez after Nerval’s suicide in 1855, and which Dumas, unable to collaborate on its completion, had apparently passed on to Séjour. About

this case, see François Ranier, “Le Fils de la nuit,” in the website of the Société des Amis d’Alexandre Dumas, *dumaspere.com*. An autograph letter of Victor Séjour to Alexandre Dumas, of July 3, 1856, is kept in the “Fond Glinel” of the Société Dumas (file 114 LAS), in the library of the Château de Monte-Cristo, in Port-Marly. About the exchange of compliments between Séjour and Dumas for Séjour’s dedication, and its parody in the humorous journal *Le Petit journal pour rire*, September 20, 1856, see O’Neill, *Séjour*, 49–50.

25. Séjour, *Le Fils de la nuit*, “Troisième journée, Deuxième tableau—Le Châtiment, Scène 5” (Third day, second tableau—The punishment, scene 5): “J’ai tué mon enfant!”

26. Théophile Gautier, review of *Le Fils de la nuit*, by Victor Séjour, *Le Moniteur universel*, July 14, 1856, p. 1; quoted and translated in O’Neill, *Séjour*, 45. See also M. Lynn Weiss, “Introduction,” in Victor Séjour, *The Jew of Seville*, trans. Norman R. Shapiro, intro. M. Lynn Weiss (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), xx and xxxiin31.

27. Gautier, review of *Le Fils de la nuit*, July 14, 1856, p. 1.

28. La Varenne, “M. Victor Séjour,” 2: “avec son matériel et ses acteurs.”

29. Gamma, “Paris Theatrical Inklings,” *The Daily Picayune*, New Orleans, October 18, 1874, p. 7.

30. *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, October 4, 1872, p. 4. The journalist is referring to a revival of the play at the Gaîté in August 1872.

31. L. Félix Savard, “M. Victor Séjour,” *La Chronique littéraire* 2 (1862): 50–51: “Que de pages il y aurait à écrire sur la détestable influence qu’a exercée le vaisseau du *Fils de la nuit* sur la littérature contemporaine. Tous nos maux viennent de là. Le public n’écoute plus, il regarde; il faut que sans cesse les directeurs se surpassent eux-mêmes.” The English translation above is mine. As we shall see more in detail later, a caricature showing Séjour holding his ship was “pasted in the cover” of the journal with Savard’s article: see Daley, “Victor Séjour,” 2.

32. Byron’s inspiration is referred to in *The Daily Picayune*, October 18, 1874, p. 7. Regarding the author’s success with *Les Noces vénitaines*, see Albert Monnier, “Théâtres,” *Le Journal pour rire*, March 17, 1855, p. 7: “M. Victor Séjour est maintenant un des auteurs que le succès a consacrés: comme Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas et Casimir Delavigne, il est venu demander au boulevard la popularité et l’argent.” (“Mr. Victor Séjour is now one of the authors hallowed by success: like Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas and Casimir Delavigne, he has come to the boulevard asking for popularity and money.”)

33. Italian translation: Vittore [sic] Séjour, *Le nozze veneziane*. Florilegio drammatico, ser. 5, vol. 11, ed. Pietro Manzoni (Milan: Borroni e Scotti, 1855). The same volume included *Mauprat*, a play by Giorgio [Georges] Sand.

34. *Morosina o l’ultimo de’ Falieri* (“Tragic Melodrama in Three Acts by Domenico Bolognese, Music by maestro Errico Petrella. To Be Performed at the Royal Theater La Scala during Lent 1862”), by Domenico Bolognese, based on Victor Séjour’s *Les Noces vénitaines* (Milan: Francesco Lucca, 1862?) (first performed at Teatro S. Carlo, Naples, January 6, 1860). A note before the beginning of the text acknowledges Séjour’s source: “N.B. Il fondamento del presente lavoro è tratto dal dramma di Vittore Séjour intitolato *Le nozze veneziane*; la catastrofe è dell’autore del melodramma” (“The basis of the present work is taken from the drama by Victor Séjour titled *Le nozze veneziane*; the catastrophe is by the author of the melodrama”). Several copies of this musical version are available at the Biblioteca Sormani, the main public library of Milan, in whose Teatro alla Scala the melodrama was performed in 1862.

35. Victor Séjour, *The Outlaw of the Adriatic; or, The Female Spy and the Chief of the Ten* (“A Romantic Drama, in Three Acts”), adapted from the French of Victor Séjour (*Les Noces Vénitaines*), Lacy’s acting edition, vol. 45 (London: Thomas Hailes Lacy, 1859?); later S. French’s acting editions, 623 (New York: Samuel French, 1872?) (performed at the Royal Princess’s, London, under the title of *The Master Passion; or, The Outlaw of the Adriatic*, November 2, 1859). The adaptation is attributed to Edmund Falconer (born E. O’Rourke) in Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of Late Nineteenth Century Drama, 1850–1900*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; London: Bentley, 1946), 360; while it is attributed to William E. Suter in Kate Mattacks, “Regulatory Bodies: Dramatic Creativity, Control and the Commodity of *Lady Audley’s Secret*,” 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 8 (2009): 9 (“Suter had often collaborated with Lacy to create new ‘versions’ of popular plays such as [...] *The Outlaw of the Adriatic*”) and 20n29, <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/10529>. This second attribution is supported by other theatrical texts by William E. Suter, such as *Lady Audley’s Secret* and *Aurora Floyd*, both published in London by Thomas Hailes Lacy in 1863, on whose original covers Suter is described as the author of (among other plays) *Outlaw of the Adriatic*.

36. The author’s name is mentioned in a way that maintains a certain degree of ambiguity about the authorship of the adaptation: “Adapted from the French of / VICTOR SÉJOUR.” How should we interpret this turn of the phrase, when no other name is mentioned for the text translation, or adaptation? Concerning Lacy’s “policy of piracy,” see Mattacks, “Regulatory Bodies,” 10 and 20n29.

37. The main alteration concerns the important female character “Albone,” whose name is radically changed into the more neutral and Italian sounding “Camilla,” most likely to avoid its being confused with its similarly sounding “Albion” and its association with England.

38. Victor Séjour, *The Outlaw of the Adriatic*, act 3, p. 43; the act is not divided into numbered scenes. The words by Orseolo above are introduced by the following exchange (where Galieno is Orseolo’s enemy for a past feud and at the same time his daughter Camilla’s beloved, and Morosina is a woman in love with Galieno, whom he rejected for Camilla): “*Camilla. (pointing to Galieno)*: Bless him too, my father! Your daughter’s husband, bless him! that together we may weep you dead; that together we may revere your memory! / *Morosina. (beside Orseolo)* You will forgive! My heart has pardoned him—and in a convent’s walls I’ll woo forgiveness for the past. / *Orseolo. (assisted to rise)* Lead me—lead me! / *Morosina.* My jealousy overthrown—your hatred subdued—such a sacrifice will plead for us hereafter!” What follows is the noble declaration by Orseolo quoted above, matching the words of forgiveness by Morosina.

39. Ibid.

40. Dion Boucicault, *The Octofoon; or, Life in Louisiana* (“A Play in Four Acts,” 1859) (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Literature House, 1970), and in Dion Boucicault, *Plays*, ed. with intro. and notes Peter Thomson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984). For the original edition, see the Cathrop Boucicault Collection at Templeman Library, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK (Special Collections: Theatre Collections). Dion Boucicault (1820–1890), dramatist, actor, and stage director, was born in Dublin but spent many years in London and some time in Paris as well. He lived in the United States first in 1853–1869 and then in 1875–1890 (he died in New York). About contemporary American drama, see Alan L. Ackerman, *The Portable Theatre: American Literature and the*

Nineteenth-Century Stage (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999; paperback ed. 2002). For criticism about the *The Octoroon*, see Gary A. Richardson, “Boucicault’s *The Octoroon* and American Law,” *Theatre Journal* 34, no. 2 (May 1982): 155–164; Katy L. Chiles, “Blackened Irish and Brownfaced Amerindians: Constructions of American Whiteness in Dion Boucicault’s *The Octoroon*,” *Nineteenth Century Theatre & Film* 31, no. 2 (Dec. 2004): 28–50; and Diana Rebekkah Paulin, *Imperfect Unions: Staging Miscegenation in U.S. Drama and Fiction* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2012), 1–50. On the whole question of the “color line” and the issue of identity, see Alessandro Portelli’s studies, *Bianchi e neri nella letteratura americana: La dialettica dell’identità* (Bari: De Donato, 1977), 155–161 (on Boucicault’s *The Octoroon*), and *La linea del colore: Saggi sulla cultura afroamericana* (The color line: essays on African American culture) (Rome: manifestolibri, 1994).

41. See Richardson, “Boucicault’s *The Octoroon* and American Law,” 155.

42. Werner Sollors, *Neither Black nor White yet Both* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 112 (chapter on “The Calculus of Color,” 112–141).

43. George is a young American who, after living in Paris, has come back to take possession of his uncle’s plantation in Louisiana.

44. Boucicault, *The Octoroon*, act 2; 1970, pp. 16–17. See Sollors, *Neither Black nor White yet Both*, 121, 459–460.

45. For a discussion about this “happy ending,” see Portelli, *Bianchi e neri nella letteratura americana*, 160.

46. Victor Séjour, *André Gérard* (“Drame en cinq actes, en prose”) (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1857) (first performed in Paris, at the Théâtre de l’Odéon, April 30, 1857). About the Emperor’s attendance, see review in *Le Théâtre*, May 13, 1857, p. 3; cit. in O’Neill, *Séjour*, 55. Séjour’s description of his play as “le plus morale” is in his dedication to Achille Denis. For the play’s Italian translation (1858), see above. The title role in the 1857 performance was played by one of the most famous actors of the time, Frédéric Lemaître, extolled by Paul de Saint-Victor in his review on the play: *La Presse*, May 3, 1857, pp. 1–2; about him, see also Donald Roy and Victor Emeljanow, eds., *Romantic and Revolutionary Theatre, 1789–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 351–355 (among the documents collected here, appears the tribute that Charles Dickens paid to this actor). On the revival of *André Gérard* at the Gaîté in 1861, with Lemaître again in the same role and Lia Félix as his daughter Marguerite, see Théophile Gautier, *Le Moniteur universel*, January 21, 1861 (feuilleton), and O’Neill, *Séjour*, 58n64.

47. Séjour, *André Gérard*, p. 1.

48. W. T. Bandy, “The Literary Climate of Paris in 1857,” *French Review* 31, no. 3 (January 1958): 192 (article published on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the publication of *Les Fleurs du mal* and *Madame Bovary*).

49. Italian translation: Vittorio Sejour [sic], *Andrea Gerard* (“Dramma in cinque atti”), trans. Gaetano Buttafuoco (Milan: N. Battezzati, 1858).

50. Victor Séjour and Jules Brésil, *Le Martyre du cœur* (“Drame en cinq actes, en prose”) (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1858) (first performed in Paris, at the Théâtre de l’Ambigu-Comique, March 15, 1858). It was translated into Dutch and performed at the Royal Dutch Theatre at the Hague in 1860, with a title, *De dochter van den emigrant* (The emigrant’s daughter), which, rather than emphasizing the sentimental theme, focuses on the drama of emigration.

51. O'Neill, *Séjour*, 58 (also for the following “racial message” above). See brief reference to this character in Paul de Saint-Victor’s outline of the play’s plot, in *La Presse*, March 28, 1858, p. 2: “Un bon nègre arrive, qui rapporte à l’héritière le patrimoine paternel” (“A good negro arrives, who takes back her father’s patrimony to the heiress”).

52. Alexandre Flan, “Le Jardin des racines françaises,” *Journal amusant*, October 30, 1858, pp. 4–6.

53. Ibid., 4: “l’Éden de la littérature et des arts, plein de fleurs, de fruits . . . et d’étoiles,—les étoiles de la Légion d’honneur.”

54. Ibid., 6: “Et pourtant que de racines nous avons omises dans cette course rapide. . . .” Also the following quotation from *Journal amusant*, “Séjour (Victor),—victorieux,” is from the same page.

55. Victor Séjour, *Les Grands vassaux* (“Drame en trois époques et en cinq actes, en prose”) (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1859) (opening at the Théâtre Impérial de l’Odéon, Paris, on February 16, 1859, according to the play’s printed version; on February 10, 1859, according to Ernest Gebauer, “Premières Représentations: Odéon,” *Le Monde dramatique*, February 17, 1859, p. 2); with intro. by the author. The play was translated into Italian in 1860 (see Bibliography).

56. Séjour, *Les Grands vassaux*, 1 (“une recherché ardent de la vérité, une sérieuse préoccupation de l’art”; “J’ai essayé de faire un drame dont l’intérêt résulterait [...] de l’ensemble d’une époque vue à travers la pensée et l’agitation d’un homme”). English translation above by O’Neill, in his *Séjour*, 62.

Chapter 4. La Tireuse de cartes: The Mortara Case and Artistic Passing

1. Archives Nationales, F70, p. 118; cit. by Charles Edwards O’Neill, *Séjour: Parisian Playwright from Louisiana* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1995), 85.

2. Victor Séjour, *La Tireuse de cartes* (“Drame, en cinq actes et un prologue, en prose. Par Victor Séjour”) (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, Libraires-Éditeurs, 1860); translated as *The Fortune-Teller*, trans. Norman R. Shapiro, intro. M. Lynn Weiss (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002). Hereafter, for the English-speaking reader’s sake, all quotations above and page references in the notes will be from this American translation of the play (from now on indicated by its English title, *The Fortune-Teller*), while the original French quotations and references, from the second edition of 1860, will be placed in the notes, and introduced by the play’s French title, *La Tireuse de cartes*. In the text above, the play will be normally referred to by its original French title. There were at least three French editions of *La Tireuse de cartes* in 1860–1861, which shows its success. In all three, the text is the same. In the first edition each page is divided into two columns, magazine style, as usual in the Michel Lévy’s “Théâtre Contemporain Illustré” series. Its first page is enriched by an illustration above the title, showing a woman, the fortune-teller, sitting on the pavement of a square, with cards spread out, surrounded by a crowd of people. This edition is undated and usually catalogued by libraries as [1859], with reference to the date of the play’s first performance cited on p.1; but since the author’s preface on that same page mentions an article of early 1860, the publication date cannot be 1859. The second and third editions of 1860 are in exactly the same book format, both with 131 pages, while in the first edition, because of the different format, there are only 35 pages. *La Tireuse de cartes* was immediately translated into Italian, German, and Dutch in 1860, and into

Portuguese in 1861; starting from 1860, it was also translated into English in a few free adaptations performed on stage in both Britain and the United States; the most famous of these English versions was the one by Joseph Stirling Coyne, titled *The Woman in Red*, whose various editions were published in London, New York, and Chicago; this British writer also published a version of the story as a Romance, with the same title (see chapter 15 and Bibliography in this book). The French original of the play was recently republished in France, in Victor Séjour, “*Le Mulâtre* suivi de “*La Tireuse de cartes*,” intro. Lydie Moudileno (Paris: L’Harmattan, Coll. Autrement Mêmes, 2014), 19–165.

3. A similar strategy of “artistic passing” can be found at work in more recent times, in famous musicals by George Gershwin and Leonard Bernstein, Jewish American composers who preferred to stage African Americans in *Porgy and Bess* (Gershwin), Polish and Puerto Ricans in *West Side Story* (Bernstein), rather than Jewish characters, in order to represent human experiences typical of their “ethnic” background, but on a nonparochial, more universal scale, so as to stress the universality of those conditions.

4. On the Mortara case, see David I. Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997; New York: Vintage [Random House], 1998) (all quotations will be from this edition); previous Italian edition of Kertzer’s book, *Prigioniero del Papa Re*, trans. Giorgio Moro and Brunello Lotti (Milan: Rizzoli, 1996). And see Daniele Scalise, *Il caso Mortara: La vera storia del bambino ebreo rapito dal papa* (Milan: Mondadori, 1997). See also Gemma Volli, *Il caso Mortara nel primo centenario* (Rome: La Rassegna Mensile di Israel, 1960); and, by the same author, *Il caso Mortara nell’opinione pubblica e nella politica del tempo* (Bologna: Azzoguidi, 1961), 1087–1152 (offprint from *Bollettino del Museo del Risorgimento*, V, part 2 [Bologna, 1860]).

5. See, e.g., Cecil Roth, “The Forced Baptisms of 1783 at Rome and the Community of London,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s., 16, no. 2 (October 1925): 105–116; Cecil Roth, “Forced Baptisms in Italy: A Contribution to the History of Jewish Persecution,” *New Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s., 27, no. 2 (October 1936): 117–136; and Marina Caffiero, *Battesimi forzati: Storie di ebrei, cristiani e convertiti nella Roma dei papi* (Rome: Viella, 2004).

6. Massimo d’Azeglio, *Dell’emancipazione civile degli Israeliti* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1848). The revolutionary importance of 1848 for Italian Jews is synthesized by Elizabeth Schächter: “The date of the Jews’ re-entry into Italian history is 29 March 1848, when Carlo Alberto, king of Piedmont and Sardinia, granted them civil and political equality, the Statuto Albertino, which was extended to the whole of Italy as it became unified, concluding in 1870 with the annexation of the Papal States and the abolition of the Jewish ghetto in Rome” (Elizabeth Schächter, *The Jews of Italy, 1848–1915: Between Tradition and Transformation* [Edgware, Middlesex: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011], 3).

7. On the American reactions to the case, see Bertram Wallace Korn, *The American Reaction to the Mortara Case: 1858–1860* (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1957). See also Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* (Vintage), 124–128, 316.

8. See Korn, “The Reaction of American Jews and of the Buchanan Administration,” chapter 3 of his *American Reaction to the Mortara Case*, 21–78, in particular 62–64; and Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*, 127, quoting the letters of the Secretary of State Lewis Cass, and President James Buchanan’s negative answer written to a representative of the New York Jewish community on January 4, 1859.

9. Among the nonliterary books about the case that came out in 1858–1860, see: (in France) Jules Assézat, *Affaire Mortara: Le droit du père* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1858); abbé André

Vincent Delacouture, *Le Droit canon et le droit naturel dans l'affaire Mortara* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1858) (for its Italian transl., see later in this note); Anonymous, *Edgar Mortara: dédié aux pères et aux mères de toutes les nations et de toutes les religions* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1860); (in Germany) Anonymous, *Edgard Mortara: Den Israeliten des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, den Vätern und Müttern aller Nationen und aller Religionen gewidmet* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1860); Friedrich Albrecht, *Der gewaltsame Kinderraub zu Bologna: Zugleich ein Wort der Warnung an alle Concordatsfreunde* (Ulm: Gebrüder Nübling, 1858); (in Belgium) Dom Jacobus, *Les vols d'enfants: Impuissance morale du catholicisme* (Brussels: Librairie Universelle de J. Rozez, 1859); (in Italy) Anonymous, *Roma e la opinione pubblica d'Europa nel fatto Mortara: Atti, documenti, confutazioni. Con l'aggiunta del Diritto canonico e Diritto naturale per l'Abate Delacouture antico Professore in Teologia* (Turin: Unione Tipogr.-Editrice, 1859).

10. Moritz David Oppenheim, *Der Raub des Mortara-Kindes* (The kidnapping of the Mortara child, also known as The kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara), oil on canvas, 1862. As already mentioned in the introduction to this book, the painting, long lost, was sold to a private collector at Sotheby's, in New York, in December 2013.

11. The other plays inspired by the Mortara case at that time were: (in the United States), Herman M. Moos, *Mortara: or, the Pope and His Inquisitors; a Drama, Together with Choice Poems* (Cincinnati: Bloch & Co., 1860), a definitely anti-Catholic work by the literary editor of *The Israelite*, the Jewish American magazine founded and edited by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise of Cincinnati, one of the most active and radical leaders of the Jewish American community, who was in the forefront of the American movement of protest against Edgardo's kidnapping (H.M. Moos, 1836–1894, later became the author of several tales and novels, including *Hannah; or, A Glimpse of Paradise* [Cincinnati: Literary Eclectic, 1868]); (in Italy), Riccardo Castelvecchio, *La famiglia ebrea*, (“Dramma in quattro atti e un prologo” [The Jewish family, a play in four acts and a prologue]), *Florilegio drammatico*, Fasc. 409 (Milan: Tip. di F. Sanvito succ. a Borroni e Scotti, 1861), which is set in Bologna in 1859, and is full of the Italian patriotic spirit of the time, portraying the young protagonist (Beniamino), the son of a rabbi, twenty-nine years after his secret baptism by the family servant and his kidnapping, who hates his kidnappers, has become the secret leader of Bologna's patriots, and, like his father the rabbi, believes that the “star of freedom” (*l'astro della libertà*) has arisen, and that in the new kingdom “of civilization and justice,” that is in the future Italian nation, people of all religions will form one family; (in Germany), Leopold Stein, *Der Knabenraub zu Carpentras* (The kidnapping at Carpentras), (Drama in 4 Acts) (Berlin: Heymann, 1862, 1863). The case inspired some fiction as well. See the tale by the German rabbi, philosopher, and novelist Salomon Formstecher, “Der geraubte Sohn: ein Sittenbild der Gegenwart,” *Jüdisches Volksblatt* (Leipzig: Baumgärter, 1859), serialized in this weekly literary supplement to the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*; recently translated into English by Jonathan M. Hess, “The Stolen Son: A Contemporary Tale,” in *Nineteenth-Century Jewish Literature: A Reader*, ed. Jonathan M. Hess, Maurice Samuels, and Nadia Valman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 312–345; as explained by the editors of the anthology, the story, included by them in a section entitled “Experiments in Jewish Realism,” “recasts recent events in European Jewish history, the Mortara kidnapping case of 1858 and the Damascus blood libel of 1840, within the plot structure of a Dickensian melodrama” (*Nineteenth-Century Jewish Literature*, 18), “imagining a happy Jewish ending for a controversy [the Mortara

case] that was very much unresolved" (*Nineteenth-Century Jewish Literature*, 313). Some passionately anticlerical references to the Mortara case can be found in the novel by Italian national hero Giuseppe Garibaldi, *I mille*, 1873 (Bologna: Cappelli, 1933, 1982), 165.

12. O'Neill, *Séjour*, 68. One of the contemporary newspaper articles “indiscreetly” naming the ‘high personage’ was by G. Davidson, *Le Figaro*, December 25, 1859, p. 8. For a detailed survey of contemporary reviews on Séjour’s play, see chapter 12, “Contemporary Performances and Reviews in France and Italy,” in this book. The information about Mocquard’s possible contribution to Séjour’s play was first given to me by Bruce Kupelnick.

13. M. Lynn Weiss, “Introduction” to Victor Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, xix.

14. The French Ambassador’s initiatives were reported to Cavour by his emissary in Rome, Count Dominico della Minerva, in a letter from Rome on October 9, 1858 (reprinted in Gian Ludovico Masetti Zannini, “Nuovi documenti sul ‘caso Mortara,’” *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 13, no. 2 [May–August 1959]: 271–272), and by the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia in France, the Marquis of Villamarina, in a letter from Paris to Cavour in Turin on November 21, 1858 (in Camillo Cavour, *Il carteggio Cavour-Nigra dal 1858 al 1861*, vol. 1 [Bologna: Zanichelli, 1926], 206–207); and the French Emperor’s discontent with the affair was confirmed to the Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Antonelli by Carlo Sacconi, the apostolic nuncio in Paris, in his letter of January 7, 1859 (reprinted in Mariano Gabriele, ed., *Il carteggio Antonelli-Sacconi (1858–1860)*, vol. 1 [Rome: Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento Italiano, 1962], 12). All information appears in Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*, 119–123, 316. For a study about French reactions to the Mortara affair, see Gérard da Silva, *L'affaire Mortara et l'antisémitisme chrétien* (Paris: Éditions Syllèphe, 2008).

15. O'Neill, *Séjour*, 69.

16. Paul Dhormoys, *Le Monde Illustré*, December 31, 1859, p. 432: “la curiosité publique avait pris des proportions qui auraient fait bien désirer à M. Marc Fournier d’avoir pour ce soir-là le Champ-de-Mars ou au moins le palais de l’Industrie en guise de salle”; cit. also in O'Neill, *Séjour*, p. 69, whose translation is quoted in my text.

17. Paul de Saint-Victor, *La Presse*, December 25, 1859, p. 1. The estimated number of theater goers who had gone to see *La Tireuse de cartes* in Paris by April 1860 was given one year later by critic Jules Janin, *Almanach de la littérature, du théâtre et des beaux-arts* (Paris: Pagnerre, 1861), 19; on page 21 Janin published a good reproduction on a full page of the same engraving that can be seen on the front page of *La Tireuse de cartes*, 1st ed., 1860.

Chapter 5. A Catholic Playwright and His Plea to the Pope

1. See Charles Edwards O'Neill, “Theatrical Censorship in France, 1844–1875: The Experience of Victor Séjour,” *Harvard Library Bulletin* 26, no. 4 (October 1978): 417–441.

2. The untitled preface to *La Tireuse de cartes* is on pages i–iii of its original French edition (all French references here and throughout the book are to its second edition of 1860; in its first edition, published in Michel Lévy’s “Théâtre Contemporain Illustré” series, the preface is on pages 1–2), and on pages 3–4 of *The Fortune-Teller*, its American translation of 2002. Séjour takes full responsibility for his play, both in the play’s cover and in his preface.

3. Victor Séjour, *The Fortune-Teller*, trans. Norman R. Shapiro, intro. M. Lynn Weiss (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 3; in *La Tireuse de cartes*: “diabolique,” “une

chose infime” [p. 1]. The violent attacks against *La Tireuse de cartes* mentioned by Séjour appeared in *L’Ami de la religion* (whose articles of December 29, 1859, 867–868, February 9, 1860, p. 335, etc., will be discussed later) and *La Gazette de France* (article by J.-M. Tiengou), January 9, 1860, p. 2. See Charles Edwards O’Neill, *Séjour: Parisian Playwright from Louisiana* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1995), 70, 74–75.

4. Giuseppe Garibaldi, *Mémoires de Garibaldi, traduits sur le manuscrit original par Alexandre Dumas*, 2 vols. (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1860). In the following years, biographers and historians such as Giuseppe Guerzoni and George Macaulay Trevelyan claimed that some parts of Dumas’s “translation” were fiction; they don’t appear in other versions of Garibaldi’s memoirs.

5. Giuseppe Garibaldi, *The Life of General Garibaldi: Written by Himself: With Sketches of His Companions in Arms*, trans. “his friend and admirer” Theodore Dwight (New York: A. S. Barnes and Burr, 1859); new enlarged ed., *The Life of General Garibaldi: Translated from His Private Papers*, by Theodore Dwight (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1861). Two more versions of Garibaldi’s memoirs came out at the turn of that decade: Francesco Carrano, *I cacciatori delle Alpi comandati dal Generale Garibaldi nella guerra del 1859 in Italia* (Turin: Unione Tipogr.-Editrice, 1860), 9–86; and *Garibaldi’s Denkwürdigkeiten nach handschriftlichen Aufzeichnungen desselben, und nach authentischen Quellen*, assembled and ed. Elpis Melena [Marie Espérance von Schwartz] (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1861). For a first English translation of the German version, see Giuseppe Garibaldi, *Garibaldi’s Memoirs: From his Manuscript, Personal Notes, and Authentic Sources, Assembled and Published by Elpis Melena*, 2 vols., trans. Erica Sigerist Campanella, ed., with intro. and annotations, by Anthony P. Campanella (Sarasota, FL: International Institute of Garibaldian Studies, 1981). About the chronology of the four versions published from Garibaldi’s original manuscripts, see A. P. Campanella, “Introduction” in this last text, vol. 1, xv–xvi. About Dwight’s meeting with Garibaldi and Garibaldi’s denunciation of “the cruelties of Popery,” see Paola Gemme, *Domesticating Foreign Struggles: The Italian Risorgimento and Antebellum American Identity* (Athens: Georgia University Press, 2005), 145–146. Garibaldi’s final version of his memoirs came out posthumously in Italian: *Memorie autobiografiche* (Florence: Barbera, 1888). This was immediately translated into English by A. Werner, *Autobiography of Giuseppe Garibaldi*, 3 vols. (London: Walter Smith & Innes, 1889).

6. About the “cult of Garibaldi” in the United States (and in Melville), see Dennis Berthold, *American Risorgimento: Herman Melville and the Cultural Politics of Italy* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2009), 185–216; citation about American newspapers on p. 189. For a historical study of the relationship between the United States and the Italian Risorgimento, see Daniele Fiorentino and Matteo Sanfilippo, eds., *Gli Stati Uniti e il Risorgimento d’Italia, 1848–1901* (Rome: Gangemi, 2013).

7. This is a description of the event in the French version of Garibaldi’s autobiography by Dumas: “En descendant vers la Longara avec Vecchi, lequel était membre de la Constituante, j’appris que mon pauvre nègre Aguyar venait d’être tué. / Il me tenait prêt un cheval de rechange, une balle lui avait traversé la tête. J’éprouvai une terrible douleur; je perdais bien autre chose qu’un serviteur, je perdais un ami” (Giuseppe Garibaldi, *Mémoires de Garibaldi*, vol. 2, chapter 20, “La Fin,” 240). And this is a passage from Garibaldi’s official report on “The Battle of June 30th” 1849, as translated by Theodore Dwight in

The Life of General Garibaldi (1861 ed., p. 249), first paragraph: “America yesterday gave, with the blood of a valiant son, Andrea Aghiar, a pledge of love of liberal men of all countries for our fair and unfortunate Italy.” In May 2014, Rome’s municipality inaugurated a new toponymic plaque for the steps (between Via Fratelli Bandiera and Via Saffi) that are named after him in the Rome district called Monteverde, near the Janiculum hill (Gianicolo, in Italian) and Trastevere, where much of the battle for the Roman Republic took place. There one can now read: “Scalea Andrea il Moro: Andrés Aguyar—Luogotenente della Repubblica Romana (1810–1849)” (“Andrea the Moor Steps: Andrés Aguyar—Lieutenant of the Roman Republic [1810–1849].”) “Andrea il Moro” was one of the old nicknames given to him in Italy. All contemporary witnesses mention the tremendous impression made by Aguiar on the other soldiers and Garibaldi’s special sorrow for the death of this young man who had come with him from across the ocean for Italy’s liberty.

8. After being exhibited at the Royal Academy of London in 1854, the painting “Garibaldi at the siege of Rome, 1849” by British painter and illustrator George Housman Thomas disappeared and was only known to art historians by its title, until the Italian art historian, and gallery owner, Marco Fabio Apolloni bought it untitled on the market and eventually, after some research, exhibited it with other documents in an exhibition called “Garibaldi a Roma! L’arte e la Repubblica Romana,” held in Apolloni’s Art Gallery in Rome, Galleria W. Apolloni (via del Babuino 132–134), in July 2007 (see Lauretta Colonnelli, “Garibaldi 1849: Quella prima volta del generale nell’Urbe,” *Corriere della sera*, May 27, 2007, p. 15). In 2010–2011 the painting was exhibited again in Rome (September 21, 2010–February 13, 2011), with other Italian Risorgimento paintings, in an exhibition at the Museo di Roma (Museum of Rome) titled in English “The Risorgimento in Colour: Painters and Patriots in Rome in the XIX Century,” which was meant to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Italy’s Unity. See exhibition catalogue, *Il Risorgimento a colori: pittori, patrioti e patrioti pittori nella Roma del XIX* (Rome: Gangemi, 2010), 64, 121. As for Housman Thomas, after the successful exhibition at the Royal Academy of London in 1854, he was appointed court artist by Queen Victoria. His 1854 painting of Garibaldi and Aguiar was based on a sketch made during the siege, published in the *Illustrated London News*, July 21, 1849, p. 36; other sketches of his were published in the same weekly magazine on June 23, July 7, and July 14, 1849. Thomas was also one of the illustrators of an English edition of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s 1852 novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or Life among the Lowly: A Tale of Slave Life in America* (London: Nathaniel Cooke, 1853), with more than 150 illustrations, drawn by George Thomas and T. R. Macquoid, and engraved by William Thomas. George Housman Thomas died in his forties in 1868; see his obituary, “The Late George Housman Thomas,” *The Times*, July 30, 1868.

9. On the U.S. reactions to the Roman Republic of 1849 and, more generally, to the Italian Risorgimento, see Sara Antonelli, Daniele Fiorentino, and Giuseppe Monsagrati, eds., *Gli Americani e la Repubblica Romana del 1849* (Rome: Gangemi, 2000); Leonardo Buonomo, *Backward Glances: Exploring Italy, Reinterpreting America (1831–1866)* (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996); Daniele Fiorentino and Matteo Sanfilippo, eds., *Gli Stati Uniti e l’Unità d’Italia* (Rome: Gangemi, 2004); and Gemme, *Domesticating Foreign Struggles; Berthold, American Risorgimento*; and Fiorentino, *Gli Stati Uniti e il Risorgimento d’Italia, 1848–1901*.

10. The emancipation of Italian Protestants and Jews in the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia dated back to 1848. On the “coming out of the ghetto” of Italian Jews in 1848,

see Giorgina Arian Levi and Giulio Disegni, *Fuori dal ghetto: Il 1848 degli ebrei*, intro. Guido Neppi (Modona: Editori Riuniti, 1998). On the process of Jewish emancipation in Italy, see Dan V. Segre, “The Emancipation of Jews in Italy,” in Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson, eds., *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 205–237, and Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, “Italian Jews,” in Rainer Liedtke and Stephan Wendehost, eds., *The Emancipation of Catholics, Jews and Protestants: Minorities and the Nation State in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 169–187.

11. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, 3. In *La Tireuse de cartes*: “Ai-je voulu, en écrivant *La Tireuse de cartes*, faire un plaidoyer en faveur de la famille Mortara? évidemment oui” [i].

12. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, 3. In *La Tireuse de cartes*: “On a le droit de parler haut quand on défend le foyer outragé: appuyé sur l’enfant, cette touchante et grande chose de la vie; secondé par le père, le plus auguste des pouvoirs; béni par la mère, la plus glorieuse émanation de Dieu! / Le pape, l’homme saint, l’homme sacré, l’homme béni, peut-il être l’avant-garde d’une cruauté ? La croix qu’il tient n’est-elle pas le symbole de la fraternité? le siège [sic] qu’il occupe n’est-il pas le refuge de la justice? Pourquoi abriter derrière cette suprême manifestation du droit divin d’inutiles et mesquines persécutons? pourquoi faire descendre cette sainteté dans l’arène, au milieu des protestations du droit, pêle-mêle avec les frémissements de la conscience publique soulevée? . . . Ne sentez-vous pas qu’en plein dix-neuvième siècle, c’est au moins une maladresse? ne sentez-vous pas que le drapeau que vous agitez peut être compromis dans une défaite, et n’être jamais glorieux après une victoire. [sic]” ([i]–ii).

13. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, 4. In *La Tireuse de cartes*: “au double tressaillement de l’Europe : la tentation du despotisme et l’entrainement de la liberté” (iii).

14. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, 3 and 4. In *La Tireuse de cartes*: “je suis de ceux qui font pivoter l’humanité sur la base sacrée de la famille” [i]; “La famille, c’est la société en petit; l’humanité, c’est l’État en grand” (ii). Séjour’s accusation and warning against the Pope’s behavior becomes even more direct in the words immediately following this definition of family and humanity. Séjour starts by speaking of a “danger,” then goes on defining it “a crime,” and eventually explicitly speaks up against the possible social and political consequences of “this attack on the right of a father,” “this violation of the family’s domain,” by whose approval and acceptance, as Séjour suggests, the Pope invites us “to question his very infallibility and to justify the social sanction that one would impose upon him” (Séjour, *Tireuse de cartes*, 4). In *La Tireuse de cartes*: “un danger,” “un crime,” “cet attentat au droit paternel,” “cette violation du territoire de la famille,” “n’est-ce pas mettre en question l’infiaillibilité même du pape, et justifier la discipline sociale qu’on voudrait lui imposer? . . .” (ii–iii). In the French original, the suspension points after the rhetorical question underline the seriousness of the danger for the Pope.

15. William Wells Brown, *CloTel; or, The President’s Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States* (London: Partridge & Oakey, 1853). For good contemporary editions, see the edition by M. Giulia Fabi (New York: Penguin, 2004), “Introduction,” vii–xxviii, citation on vii; and the edition by Robert S. Levine (Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin’s, 2000, 2011), “Introduction: Cultural and Historical Background,” 3–27. The quotations from this novel in my text are from this last edition: here, from chapter 1, “The Negro Sale,” pp. 82, 83. The italics in the first quotation are mine.

16. Three more versions of Brown's novel came out with different titles in the United States, in 1860–1861, 1864, 1867.

17. William Wells Brown also, like Séjour, was welcomed warmly in Paris by Victor Hugo, whom he met at the Peace Congress held in that city in 1850. About the encounter, see Brown's autobiographical sketch, "Narrative of the Life and Escape of William Wells Brown," placed at the beginning of his novel *Clotel* (see also Werner Sollors, *Neither Black nor White yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1997], 484n43). Brown would return to his country in 1854 and be active in the American Anti-Slavery Society, while Séjour would remain in Paris.

18. Among the basic human rights violated by slavery denounced by Brown, there was the loss of the right of parenthood. The human agony of mothers "weeping for their children, breaking the night-silence with the shrieks of their breaking hearts" (Brown, *Clotel*, 105, in chapter 5, "The Slave Market"); "the wail of the mother as she surrenders her only child to the grasp of the ruthless kidnapper" (Brown, *Clotel*, 128, in chapter 10, "The Young Christian"), this is a leitmotif running through *Clotel*, and a human drama that the writer knew well from his own experience, which he described first in his *Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave. Written by Himself* of 1847, and then in "Narrative of the Life and Escape of William Wells Brown," his revised autobiographic memoir in the 1853 edition of *Clotel*. Brown had already denounced the issue in general terms in his *A Lecture Delivered before the Female Anti-Slavery Society of Salem* (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1847); repr. in *William Wells Brown: A Reader*, ed. by Ezra Greenspan (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 109: "Slavery is a system that tears the husband from the wife, and the wife from the husband; that tears the child from the mother, and the sister from the brother; that tears asunder the tenderest ties of nature." This theme has a central role in Séjour's play inspired by the Mortara case.

19. The quotation from *The Declaration of American Independence* effectively appears on the title page of the novel in its first edition, and its importance is further stressed by its repetition as a motto at the beginning of chapter 18, "The Liberator."

20. See, e.g., the concluding comments in Brown, *Clotel*, chapter 1, "The Negro Sale" ("And this, too, in a city thronged with churches, whose tall spires look like so many signals pointing to heaven, and whose ministers preach that slavery is a God-ordained institution!", 88), and the exhilarant in this respect chapter 6, "The Religious Teacher," opened by a quote from Whittier's poem of 1838 "Clerical Oppressors," or the novel's last chapter, chapter 29, "Conclusion," when the writer reports recent statistics about the number of slaves owned by members of different Protestant churches in the United States: "in all, 660,563 slaves owned by members of the Christian church in this pious democratic republic!" (p. 226).

21. Séjour, *The Fortune-Teller*, 3. In *La Tireuse de cartes*: "ai-je cherché une sorte de pamphlet contre le pape ou la clergé, contre le christianisme, qui est ma foi, ou contre le catholicisme, qui est mon culte? évidemment non" [i].

22. Séjour, *The Fortune-Teller*, 3. In *La Tireuse de cartes*: "Mais je suis homme; je suis de ceux qui font pivoter l'humanité sur la base sacrée de la famille, qui placent le père sous la main de Dieu" [i]. My italics in the quotation above.

23. Séjour, *The Fortune-Teller*, 4. In *La Tireuse de carte*: "Le pape est le père des fidèles, comme le père est le pape de ses enfants. Réfléchissez. L'intolérance est mauvaise conseillère; je dirai plus, elle est fatale" (iii).

24. Séjour, *The Fortune-Teller*, 3–4. In *La Tireuse de cartes*: “Mais je suis homme,” “je ne suis qu’un homme de sentiment. Mai le cœur peut aussi avoir ses révélations; il peut s’éléver à la clairvoyance de l’idée,” “[l’Italie, . . . , l’Espagne] que deviendraient ces deux peuples de l’inquisition, qui cherchent leur propre conscience dans la conscience des autres et vacillent [. . .]?” ([i]–iii).

Chapter 6. Plot and Conflicts on Stage in La Tireuse de cartes

1. “Bisagno” is the name of a stream passing through Genoa and of the valley created by its flow.

2. “Marta” is the character’s name in the English translation of the text, while in the French original her name is “Marthe.” Since I am quoting from the English translation, I shall call the characters with the names given to them in that translation, while I will give all the original quotations in French in the notes, as usual.

3. Victor Séjour, *The Fortune-Teller*, trans. Norman R. Shapiro, intro. M. Lynn Weiss (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), Prologue, scene 8, p. 16. In *La Tireuse de cartes* (“Drame en cinq actes et un prologue, en prose”) (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1860), 10: “Je sens à cette heure toute la portée de mon acte: Paula, devenue chrétienne, ne pouvait être élevée que par des chrétien!”

4. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, Prologue, scene 3, p. 9 (in *La Tireuse de cartes*, 5): “Mon cœur de mère, d’ailleurs, me condamne, si l’âme de la chrétienne m’absout”). As for Ottavio’s cue, see act 1, scene 1, p. 5 (in *La Tireuse de cartes*, 1: “Ma petite sœur Noémi ne reviendra donc plus?”).

5. The audience is plunged into the middle of an action whose origins go back into the past, a narrative strategy that one finds in many other texts by Séjour, including his first play *Diégarias*.

6. The French original mentions explicitly the Carignano bridge, the hills of Sarzana and Carignano, and the Church of Santa Maria in Carignano, on top of the hill, while the English translation omits these geographical references. In nineteenth-century Genoa, the leafy Carignano hill, overlooking the sea, had become an elegant residential area, still enriched by surviving villas and convents on its sides, fashionable among the new middle classes and old nobility. The Carignano bridge connected the ancient city center to the church on top of the hill. Victor Séjour seems well informed and accurate in his references to the city where his play is set. For an enthusiastic contemporary American account of the city of Genoa, see James Jackson Jarves, *Italian Sights and Papal Principles, Seen through American Spectacles* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856), 9–17 (“Superb Genoa, shall I ever forget thee? thyself but one of the beautiful series of entrances to a land favored of God and cursed of rulers! By thy gates I first entered Italy. What other country can boast such magnificent portals?” 9).

7. This name seems to be associated in the author’s mind with Christianity. In fact “Bianca” is also used in his play *Diégarias* for Inés’s Christian mother, in her interfaith love story with the Jew Diégarias.

8. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 1, scene 1, p. 5: “Ottavio: I liked little Noémi! / *Marta*: Please! Her name is Paola now.” In *La Tireuse de cartes*: “Ottavio: J’amais [sic] bien Noémi, moi. / *Marta*: Appelle-la Paula maintenant . . . ” (1).

9. “Paula” is closer to its Latin, and religious, etymology, while the English translation by Norman R. Shapiro in *The Fortune-Teller*, with its choice of the Italian form “Paola,”

rather stresses the Italian setting of the story. Likewise, in the English edition of *The Fortune-Teller* the name “Marthe” of the French original is translated as “Marta,” “Rutchioni” as “Ruccioni,” “Frimagouste,” as “Frimagusta,” “Thérèse,” as “Teresa.” These changes are explained by the translator: “I likewise felt I had to tinker with the names of some of the characters: it seemed to me that, as Italians (albeit in a French play), they should at least have Italian names, spelled à l’italienne and not à la française” (Shapiro, “Translator’s Preface,” in Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, xiii).

10. The Christian quality of this name is mentioned in the play by the child’s mother (act 3, scene 4), although without any further explanation.

11. For these subplot scenes, see in particular *La Tireuse de cartes*, act 1, scene 10 (Caterina mentioning her newly found daughter Pepitta), act 1, scene 12 (Géméa addressing young man Ottavio “like a son”), and the many scenes with Loriole (in the French original “La Pinsonnette”) and Ruccioni (in the French original “Rutchioni”); see in particular act 1, scene 11, for a series of identity puns. Loriole is a happy-sounding French girl, who appears singing like a bird in the first scene, as a nurse’s neighbor, and from whose dialogue with the nurse in the Prologue, scene 3, we learn of the child’s secret baptism; Ruccioni is a witty figure, who without much thought accepted a role as a godfather in Noémi’s baptism. Both of them are foundlings.

12. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 2, scene 4, p. 91. It is worth quoting the whole passage, an example of the pro-Mortara family campaign motivating the writing of this play: “*Ruccioni*: [...] I couldn’t help weeping! Just the thought, signora. . . . The unspeakable thought that someone could snatch a poor babe from her mother’s arms. . . . Snatch her away, and give her to another. . . . To turn her into a waif, a stray. . . . Almost an orphan. . . . / *Géméa*: Yes . . . / *Ruccioni*: Worse than a bastard! . . . A nobody. . . .” (in *La Tireuse de cartes*, 65; “*Rutchioni*: [...]—je n’ai pu m’empêcher de pleurer en vous écoutant. J’ai compris que c’était infâme d’arracher un pauvre petit être des bras de sa mère pour le confier à des soins étrangers. . . . Oui, doublement infâme, car, d’un enfant libre et fier, on fait presque un bâtard, un enfant trouvé ou perdu, moins que rien !.”) The English translation omits both the motif of the achieved understanding (*J’ai compris*) and the quality of the child’s nature before his snatching (*un enfant libre et fier*).

13. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 3, scene 9, p. 133. In *La Tireuse de cartes*: “Une juive! . . .” (97).

14. A similar lack of explicit historical reference to the context of the *Code noir* (the Louisiana law by which anyone who was even less than one third, 31/32nds, white would still be legally classified as black) can be noticed in Séjour’s “Le Mulâtre,” as remarked by Werner Sollors in *Neither Black nor White yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 166: “Knowledge of the *Code noir* is so much taken for granted by Séjour’s characters and narrator that it does not even have to be explicitly named or fully cited in the text.” About the United States’ “higher law” tradition and the whole legal race issue in the 1850s, see Gregg D. Crane, *Race, Citizenship, and Law in American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 12–55. For the original text of the Louisiana *Code noir*, or Louisiana Black code, which was introduced in 1724 and remained in force until the United States took possession of Louisiana in 1803, see “*Edit du Roi, Touchant l’Etat & la Discipline des Esclaves Nègres de la Louisiane. Donné à Versailles, au mois de Mars 1724*,” in *Recueil d’édits, déclarations et arrêts de sa Majesté: Concernant l’Administration de la Justice & la Police*

des Colonies Françaises de l'Amérique, & les Engagés (Paris: Libraires Associez, 1744), 135–154. The Louisiana *Code noir* was based on the *Code noir* compiled for the French Caribbean colonies at the time of Louis XIV in 1685. Its fifty-five articles regulated the status of slaves and free blacks, but its first article was about Jews and decreed their expulsion from the colony. The recurrent interest of Séjour in Jewish characters can be further justified by this association of persecutions in the *Code noir*. For an English contemporary translation of this law, see Benjamin Franklin French, “A Translation of the Black Code of Louisiana,” in *Historical Collections of Louisiana: Embracing Translations of Many Rare and Valuable Documents Relating to the Natural, Civil, and Political History of that State*, Part III (New York: D. Appleton, 1851), 89–95.

15. See Charles Edwards O’Neill, “Theatrical Censorship in France, 1844–1875: The Experience of Victor Séjour,” *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 26, no. 4 (October 1978): 421, quoting from the report of the Commission (Paris, Archives Nationales, Série F21, Numéro 975, Commission d’Examen, 25 November 1859).

16. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 3, scene 6, p. 123. In *La Tireuse de cartes*: “Ah! la malheureuse enfant . . . la voilà placée entre la mère que le hasard lui a choisie et celle que la nature lui a donnée!” (89).

17. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 4, scene 6, p. 149. In *La Tireuse de cartes*: “Ce double amour me tue! . . . Ah! si je pouvais les avoir toutes deux là, près de moi!” (108).

18. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 4, scene 9, pp. 159–160. In *La Tireuse de cartes*: “Géméa: Vivras-tu aux milieu de ceux qui ont fait de ta race un peuple errant? Regarde cette nation épargnée aux quatre coins du globe . . . c'est la nôtre! . . . Elle s'en va, emportée par les flots de son propre sang! Le fer et le feu la pressent . . . la nuit s'éclaire pour la trahir . . . D'heure en heure, des gibets se dressent et des hommes meurent . . . de jour en jour . . . des bûchers, et femmes, et vieillards, enfants mêlent leurs clamours désespérées et brûlent! . . . Le monde sait ce que c'est, et rit! . . . mais l'arbre subsiste, si les feuilles tombent: On les bait, on les méprise, on les maudit . . . on les parque comme des troupeaux . . . on leur vend l'air, on leur vend la vie. . . . On leur a tout pris, même l'espérance d'une patrie . . . tout, excepté leur Dieu! / Bianca: N'écoute pas!” (116–117).

19. See the very positive review of the play in the orthodox French Jewish magazine *L’Univers israélite*, by its founder and editor-in-chief Simon Bloch: S. Bloch, “La Tireuse de cartes,” *L’Univers israélite: Journal des Principes conservateurs du Judaïsme*, no. 6 (February 1860): 289–298. Reprinted as an annex in Victor Séjour, “Le Mulâtre” suivi de “*La Tireuse de cartes*,” intro. Lydie Moudileno (Paris: L’Harmattan [coll. Autrement Mêmes], 2014), 177–186. See also Isidore Cahen, “Chronique du mois,” *Archives Israélites* 21 (January 1860): 45–48 (45–47 on the Mortara case, 47–48 on Séjour’s play). On the Mortara case and its relevance for all mankind, see also S. Bloch, “Situation,” *L’Univers israélite*, no. 1 (September 1859): 1–4.

20. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 4, scene 9, p. 162. In *La Tireuse de cartes*: (Bianca) “Vous avez renié votre Dieu! . . .”; (Paula) “Je suis maudite! [. . .] Maudite!” (118).

21. See the allusions to Jewish gold and Jewish “bloodsucking” money-lending activity, to the Jews’ lack of humility, their sticking to the past, their being a wandering race, etc. Géméa herself is shown as being asked by Bianca to lend her money to save her husband, in the two mothers’ first encounter, act 2, scene 7, in a scene strongly reminiscent of Shakespeare’s Shylock (Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, 102–103; *La Tireuse de cartes*, 73–74). The English translation emphasizes these negative allusions by adding some more here and

there (see the addition of “gold” on p. 58, of “vile Jewess” on p. 77, of “damned” on p. 160 of *The Fortune-Teller*; compare with *La Tireuse de cartes*, 41, 55, 77), or with some omissions (Géméa’s disdain for money, her “dédain de l’argent,” mentioned in *La Tireuse de cartes*, 33, is not translated in *The Fortune-Teller*, 45; nor is Géméa’s desperate comment, “Elle aussi nous méprise,” meaning “She also despises us,” on p. 55 of the original, translated in *The Fortune-Teller*, 77).

22. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 1, scene 12, p. 77. In *La Tireuse de cartes*: “Paula, avec horreur: Une juive! . . .” (55).

23. To our modern ears this comment cannot but evoke the well-known notion of the “teaching of contempt” (*l’enseignement du mépris*) as a source of anti-Semitism, that will be exposed in a famous book by the French Jewish scholar Jules Isaac, after the experience of the Shoah in the twentieth century. For Séjour, see his *La Tireuse de cartes*, 55 (comment not translated in *Fortune-Teller*, 77). For Jules Isaac, see his *L’enseignement du mépris* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1962); trans. Helen Weaver, *The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964). Isaac’s work and action were influential in prompting new cultural approaches to the Jews in the Christian and Catholic world. He also influenced the formulation of the Ten Points of Seelisberg issued in Switzerland by the Christian participants at the second conference of the International Council of Christians and Jews in 1947 (for this historical document, see “An Address to the Churches,” Seelisberg, Switzerland, 1947, now also available on the web, in the site “Jewish-Christian Relations,” www.jcrelations.net).

Chapter 7. Mulatta Figures in French and American Literature, 1834–1853: Gender, Race, and Identity

1. Werner Sollors, *Neither Black nor White yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 234.

2. Alain Locke, “American Literary Tradition and the Negro,” *Modern Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (May-July 1926): 217; repr. in Werner Sollors, ed., *Interracialism: Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature, and Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 271.

3. William Wells Brown, *Clotel; or, The President’s Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States* (London: Partridge & Oakey, 1853), ed. Robert S. Levine (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2011), 196, 197, 199 (in chapter 23, “Truth Stranger than Fiction”).

4. Ibid., 101 (in chapter 4, “The Quadroon’s Home”), 174 (in chapter 19, “Escape of Clotel”); 153 (“Dees white niggers,” in chapter 17, “Retaliation”). The first and third of these quotations are discussed by Sollors, *Neither Black nor White yet Both*, 210–211.

5. See the encounter between Hester and Dimmesdale in the forest, in Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850).

6. [Richard Hildreth], *The Slave; or, Memoirs of Archy Moore*, 2 vols. (Boston: John H. Eastburn, 1836), published anonymously, as if it had been a slave narrative; repr., Richard Hildreth, *The White Slave; or, Memoirs of a Fugitive* (Boston: Tappan & Whittemore, 1852), 299 (expanded edition, with the addition of chapters 37–59, and of illustrations).

7. Hildreth, *The White Slave*, 218. I am grateful to Werner Sollors for drawing my attention to this illustration.

8. Sollors, *Neither Black nor White yet Both*, 209.

9. William Wells Brown left the United States in 1849 to attend the International Peace Conference in Paris (1850). He then stayed in England until 1854, when some friends of his purchased his freedom, and he could go back to the United States. While in England, he delivered hundreds of antislavery lectures, published *Three Years in Europe* and *Clotel*.

10. Lydia Maria Child, “The Quadroons” (*Liberty Bell*, 1842), repr. revised (with the omission of the last sentence) in L. M. Child, *Fact and Fiction* (New York: C. S. Francis, 1846), 61–76; and Lydia Maria Child, “Joanna,” in the antislavery collection she edited, *The Oasis* (Boston: Benjamin C. Bacon, 1834), 65–105. William Wells Brown in the “Conclusion” of *Clotel* acknowledges his indebtedness to a short story of Child’s, without mentioning its title, and actually incorporates sections of “The Quadroons” (including the “mezzotinto” description of the eye cited above, in Child on page 63) in his novel. Child’s stories are discussed in depth by Sollors in chapter 7 of *Neither Black nor White yet Both*, 189–208 and *passim*. About “The Quadroons” in relation to Brown’s *Clotel*, see also M. Giulia Fabi, *Passing and the Rise of the African American Novel* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 15–16. About the issue of “miscegenation” in American history and culture, see Sollors, *Interracialism* (2000).

11. Child, “The Quadroons,” in her *Fact and Fiction*, 76.

12. Gustave de Beaumont, *Marie: ou, L'esclavage aux États-Unis; tableau de moeurs américaines*, 2 vols. (Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1835; 4th ed. 1840). It was first translated into English and serialized in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* in 1845 (see Sollors, *Neither Black nor White yet Both*, 49n66). My quotations above are from the English translation by Barbara Chapman, *Marie; or, Slavery in the United States* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958); the French original in the notes is from the 1840 Gosselin edition. Beaumont went to America with Tocqueville in 1831, with the task, commissioned to both men by King Louis-Philippe, to inspect American prison systems. The two friends stayed in the United States for nine months. When they came back to France, they published together their survey of the prison situation, *Système pénitentiaire aux États-Unis, et de son application en France*, 2 vols. (Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1833). Then Beaumont published *Marie*, and Tocqueville his *De la Démocratie en Amerique* (*Democracy in America*, 1835), whose forthcoming publication is announced in Beaumont’s preface to *Marie*.

13. Beaumont, *Marie*, English trans., 66. In the French original: “mon sang renferme une souillure qui me rend indigne d'estime et d'affection. . . . Oui! ma naissance m'a vouée au mépris des hommes!” (chapter 8, “La Révélation,” 79).

14. Ibid., English trans., 60. In the French original: “sa colère devint plus forte que son respect filial;” “Race inférieure! dites-vous? [.] il existe dans ce cerveau de brute une case qui vous a échappé, et qui contient une faculté puissante, celle de la vengeance . . . d'une vengeance implacable, horrible, mais intelligente” (68–69). In his analysis of these two different passages and behaviors, Werner Sollors remarks: “Marie has internalized ‘race’; Georges is turned into a rebel by the racism he encounters” (Sollors, *Neither Black nor White yet Both*, 241).

15. In Brown’s *Clotel*, the “slaveholding city” of New Orleans appears as the main setting of the American slave market (see chapter 5, “The Slave Market”; chapter 20, “A True Democrat,” about New Orleans as “doubtless the most immoral place in the United States,” 179; etc.).

16. Victor Séjour, “Le Mulâtre,” *Revue des colonies* 3, no. 9 (March 1837): 392 (“malheureux Georges”). Philip Barnard, trans., “The Mulatto,” in *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. et al. (New York: Norton, 1997), 299.

17. The subtitle of the *Revue des colonies* was “Recueil mensuel de la politique, de l’administration, de la justice, de l’instruction et des mœurs coloniales” (Monthly miscellany of politics, of administration, of justice, of education and colonial customs); the heading above the story, which used the “mœurs colonials” appearing in the subtitle of the periodical, was probably introduced by the paper’s editor-in-chief, C. A. Bissette.

Chapter 8. The Gender Issue in the Play

1. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, “The Slave Mother,” lines 33–40, from her *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*, preface W. L. G. [William Lloyd Garrison] (Boston: J. B. Yerrington & Son, 1854); repr. in *Complete Poems of Frances E. W. Harper*, ed. Maryemma Graham (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 4–5. Harper’s “The Two Offers,” which is considered to be the first short story published by an African American woman, was published in *Anglo-African Magazine* 1, no. 9 (September 1859): 288–291, and no. 10 (October 1859): 311–313.

2. Endangered motherhood is a central concern and a major theme in Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly*, 2 vols. (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1852), which first appeared as a forty-week serial in the abolitionist periodical *National Era*, in 1851–1852, and was then published in Boston as a book in 1852 (first edition, from which the following quotations are taken). In the course of the narration the writer repeatedly represents the tragic plight of slave mothers who are separated, or in chronic danger of being separated, from their children. See in particular two characters: Eliza, who escapes in order to prevent her child’s sale, and Cassy, the complex mulatta figure and sex slave, who is so deranged by the long-lasting loss of her first two children caused by slavery, that in an act of extreme, ill-directed maternal love, she even decides to poison her new-born third child: “he, at least, is out of pain. What better than death could I give him, poor child!” (chapter 34, “The Quadroon’s Story,” vol. 2, p. 210); in the sentimental denouement of the novel, Cassy will be eventually reunited to her long-lost daughter, that same Eliza. In the last chapter of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe directly appeals to the “mothers of America,” beseeching them, “by the desolation of that empty cradle,” to “ pity those mothers that are constantly made childless by the American slave-trade” (chapter 45, “Concluding Remarks,” vol. 2, p. 316).

3. In “Le Mulâtre” the slave mother dies early in the story. In *Diégarias* the girl’s mother has already died when the play begins. And in *Les Noces vénitudiantes*, it is the father and daughter relation that matters.

Chapter 9. Torn between Belongings

1. All the five acts of *La Tireuse de cartes* are set in Genoa, but in different parts of the town. Act 1 is set in a popular part of the city, lively with fishermen and other simple people, outside the fortune-teller’s home. Act 2 is set in a poorly furnished room inside the fortune-teller’s house. Act 3 is set in the Lomellini palace, where Paola lives with her Christian family. Acts 4 and 5 are set in Villa Negroni, the Jewish mother’s new home, overlooking the sea. The Prologue, however, is set in a big room, with bundles of merchandise

piled up all around, in Géméa's old home in Bisagno. As we know, the real case inspiring the play had actually taken place in Bologna. In its fictional transformation, the setting in Genoa and its surrounding area (Bisagno) might be explained by the scenic and dramatic possibilities offered by a picturesque seaside setting. Significantly, in one of the first reviews about *La Tireuse de cartes* performed at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin in Paris, Georges Roux concluded his article praising the magnificent staging, and in particular the “excellent color” (“excellente couleur”) in the first act, where one could see a square in Genoa, “lit up by this hot and golden sun of Italy” (“éclairée de ce soleil chaud et doré d'Italie”); see Georges Roux, *Le Théâtre*, December 25, 1859, p. 3. Regarding the likely further political reasons for the choice of the Genovese setting, linked with Napoleon III and the Italian Risorgimento, see chapter 12.

2. Act 4 actually starts with a few short scenes showing servants and decorator working to finish preparing the newly furnished villa. Mother and daughter enter in scene 5 of the act.

3. Victor Séjour, *The Fortune-Teller*, trans. Norman R. Shapiro, intro. M. Lynn Weiss (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), act 5, scene 5, p. 145. In *La Tireuse de cartes*, 105: “dans l'azur, une élégante et belle barque pavoiée.” The “gondola” is not in the original (“barque” simply means “boat”), but only in the English translation.

4. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 5, scene 5, p. 145. In *La Tireuse de cartes*, 105: “le Noël de Pêcheurs . . . douce mélodie qui se mêle à tous mes souvenirs.”

5. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 5, scene 5, p. 145. In *La Tireuse de cartes*, 105: “Oh! les souvenirs, les souvenirs où l'on n'est pas!”

6. A similar situation of conflict between two mothers contending for the possession of a grown-up child appears in *Le Fils de la nuit*, where the last part of the play, called “Third Day” (*Troisième journée*), has its “first tableau” (*Premier tableau*) entitled “The Two Mothers” (*Les deux Mères*).

7. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 4, scene 9, p. 161. In *La Tireuse de cartes*, 117: “Sa voix me révèle une autre moi-même!”

8. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 4, scene 9, p. 163. In *La Tireuse de cartes*, 119: “mères dénaturées,” “Toutes deux sur mon cœur!”

9. All quotations are from Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 5, scene 6 (p. 172) and scene 5 (p. 171). In the play's French original: “Ces voix du ciel! . . . elles flottent dans l'air et mon âme aussi!” and “On dirait un fantôme attaché aux pas d'une ombre!” (*La Tireuse de cartes*, 126, 125).

10. In the English translation, Ottavio, who is present in scene 6, utters words of pain for his beloved in a line at the end of the scene; the stage directions explain that he does so “pathetically” and “tearfully.” He is then shown, in the following stage directions, “head in hands, prostrate in his grief,” when Paola moves upstage, ready for the last scene (Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 5, scene 6, p. 174). Yet all these elements are absent from the French original, where Ottavio is indicated among the characters present in scene 6, but without any speaking part. The translator Norman R. Shapiro felt the need to fill this gap, evidently convinced that the fiancé's passivity and silent disappearance are weaknesses in the text. He admits this kind of liberty in his “Translator's Preface”: “anyone who compares my translation to Séjour's original will find what I would like to think is a balanced combination of fidelity and freedom. This is not an archival text intended to transmit literally a work of historical significance and nothing else. Minor, and on a few occa-

sions somewhat more than minor, liberties occur at almost every turn; liberties linguistic and scenic, but all in the interest of bringing the play to life for twenty-first-century actors, spectators—and, of course, readers—alike” (Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, xiii–xiv). However, for those who want to know what Séjour’s text really was, and who consider his play “a work of historical significance” as well, it is important to be informed about the translator’s liberties. This is what I am doing in my notes, whenever a meaningful difference occurs.

11. In a curious reversal of stereotypes, it was the Christian mother who, after realizing in a previous scene (act 4, scene 8) how pale and ill their daughter was, had offered to cure her and bring her back to health by taking her to her villa in the country for two months.

12. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 5, scene 7, p. 177 (in *La Tireuse de cartes*, 129).

13. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 5, scene 7, p. 178. In *La Tireuse de cartes*, 130: “La prière! . . . (Son visage s’éclaire d’une sorte de joie céleste.) Ah ! je m’en souviens! . . . ma prière d’enfance! . . . oui, c’est bien elle! . . . C’est elle qui délie ma pensée et rafraîchit mon âme.”

14. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 5, scene 7, p. 178. In *La Tireuse de cartes*: “Heureuse mère, embrassez votre fille, un miracle vous l’a rendue!” (130).

15. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 5, scene 7, p. 178. In *La Tireuse de cartes*: “GÉMÉA, à Paula, en lui posant la main sur la tête: Prie encore!” (130).

16. Addressing God in her prayer, the girl confesses she has only her heart to know His ways. She then adds that all those who love are God’s children, thus affirming the principle of human brotherhood in the name of universal love.

17. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 4, scene 6, pp. 149–150. In *La Tireuse de cartes*, 107–109; on p. 108 : “Dieu et le monde les séparent!”

18. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 5, scene 7, p. 178. In *La Tireuse de cartes*, 131: “Des haines séculaires les séparent, des passions ardentes les troubulent! mais leur cœur s’élève vers vous dans le même amour. Elles ont été bonnes entre toutes les mères . . . dévoués entre toutes . . . étendez votre main sur elles, mon Dieu . . . mon Dieu, rapprochez-les!”

19. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 5, scene 7, p. 178. In *La Tireuse de cartes*, 131: “Je vous pardonne, madame!”

20. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, act 5, scene 5, p. 171. In *La Tireuse de cartes*, 125: “Ah madame la duchesse, nous avons tous eu tort.” In the American translation above, the title of rank, defining the rich Catholic lady as a noblewoman, is omitted, and substituted by the Italian word “signora,” through which the translator reminds the readers of the play’s Italian setting. Aristocracy still existed in France where the play was written and performed, while it seems it might have disturbed an American republican audience, in the translator’s opinion.

21. Stephen J. Whitfield, “Sympathy for the Outcast, by Way of the Bayou: ‘The Jew of Seville’; ‘The Fortune-Teller;’” *Forward*, December 6, 2002, ii (“Arts & Letters”), p. 10. In “Bonapartist France,” adds Whitfield, “stage-worthy Jews are no more permitted to win than are the uppity blacks in the final reel of ‘The Birth of a Nation.’ But until that point Séjour is too adroit a dramatist to fudge the moral conflict, and his thumb is put heavily on the scales of the Jewish family that has been fragmented and destroyed.”

22. In Séjour’s *Le Fils de la nuit*, while the first tableau of the play’s last section (*Troisième journée*) is called “The Two Mothers” (*Les deux Mères*), the second and final tableau is called “The Punishment” (*Le Châtiment*). See *Le Fils de la nuit*, 23, 26.

Chapter 10. Revenge vs. Forgiveness in Shakespeare and Séjour

1. Quotations from William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* are from *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. with a glossary by W. J. Craig (London: Oxford University Press, 1905, 1947). Act 4, scene 1 of the play is on pages 209–213 of the 1947 edition.

2. Leslie A. Fiedler, "The Jew as Stranger: or, 'These be the Christian husbands,'" in his *The Stranger in Shakespeare* (1972) (Frogmore, St. Albans, UK: Paladin, 1974), 98.

3. *Ibid.*, 99–100.

4. *Ibid.*, 100.

5. *Ibid.*, 98. My next quotation ("blessed apostasy") is from this page too.

6. "The opposing poles are specified everywhere in the text: law versus grace, justice versus mercy, an-eye-for-an-eye versus forgive-ye-one-another—all reaching a climax in the operatic duet which pits the coloratura of Portia against Shylock's basso profundo" (Fiedler, "The Jew as Stranger," 72).

7. John Gross, *Shylock: A Legend & Its Legacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), esp. 125–144.

8. *Ibid.*, 132.

9. Fiedler, *Stranger in Shakespeare*, 101.

10. *Ibid.*

11. On the "absence of fathers" (and of a justice system protecting maternal rights), see also M. Lynn Weiss, "Introduction" to Victor Séjour, *The Fortune-Teller*, trans. Norman R. Shapiro, intro. M. Lynn Weiss (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), xx–xxi.

12. "Can no prayers pierce thee?" (*The Merchant of Venice*, act 4, scene 1, line 126), asks one of them, Gratiano.

13. Fiedler, *Stranger in Shakespeare*, 109. The remark on Portia also comes from this text. The quotations about Shylock and the conclusion of the trial are from *The Merchant of Venice*, act 4, scene 1, lines 350–352. A partially unfavorable critical reading of Portia's figure is given by Hazlitt in his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817), chapter on *The Merchant of Venice* (cited in John Gross, *Shylock. A Legend & Its Legacy*, 131–132).

14. Susannah Heschel, "From Jesus to Shylock: Christian Supersessionism and 'The Merchant of Venice,'" *Harvard Theological Review* 99, no. 4 (October 2006): 422, 424.

15. See J.-M. Tiengou, *Gazette de France*, January 9, 1860, p. 2. Cit. in Charles Edwards O'Neill, *Séjour: Parisian Playwright from Louisiana* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1995), 70.

Chapter 11. Censorship, History, and the Drama's Denouement

1. In Edgardo Mortara's case, the divided family figure was the father, and not the mother, as in the play, since the Pope himself took the father's place in Edgardo's upbringing. Yet, contrary to the play, Edgardo never lived with his real father again after his abduction. He only met him in a few fugitive encounters in the presence of his religious guards at the end of 1858, a few months after his abduction, and once again from afar twelve years later, after the liberation/conquest of Rome by the Italian troops in 1870, while Edgardo was at the station, escaping from Rome. For more information about this historical family context, see Part III of this book ("When It Snows History").

2. In the Italian original: “Egli [Pio IX] mi prodigava sempre le più paterne dimostrazioni di affetto, savi ed utilissimi ammaestramenti, e, benedicendomi teneramente, *ripeteva spesso che gli avevo costato molte pene e lagrime*” (my italics). From Edgardo Mortara’s autobiographical memoir (1878), repr. in Gian Ludovico Masetti Zannini, “Nuovi documenti sul ‘caso Mortara,’ ” *Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia* 13, no. 2 (May–August 1959): 265. The translation of this passage quoted above is from David I. Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997; repr., New York: Vintage, 1998), 255 (Vintage). For a record of Edgardo Mortara’s diaries from 1894 to 1899, kept in the archives of the Canonici Regolari Lateranensi at S. Pietro in Vincoli in Rome, see Daniele Scalise, *Il caso Mortara: La vera storia del bambino ebreo rapito dal papa* (Milan: Mondadori, 1997), 194–205. These diaries show both the depth of Edgardo’s Catholic culture (see his constant use of ecclesiastical sayings in Latin, etc.) and the frequency of his family connections: e.g., in September 1895 he was in Florence when his mother, Marianna Mortara, died; in September and October 1895 he went to Modena to see his niece Margherita (his sister Ernesta’s second child), who was seriously ill; and in 1896 he was in Modena again with the aim to console his “dear sister Ernesta,” who had lost her daughter: “In Modena I devoted myself totally to console my dear sister Ernesta, who unfortunately has lost half of her life.” (Scalise, *Il caso Mortara*, 199: “Mi consacrai in Modena del tutto per consolare la mia cara sorella Ernesta che pur troppo ha perduto la metà della sua vita”); that same year, because of the death of his brother Riccardo, he also went to Florence to meet his brother’s widow.

3. In the Italian original: “Molto caro mi sei, figliuolo mio, poiché ti acquistai per Gesù Cristo a caro prezzo. Così è; *ho pagato caro il tuo riscatto*” (my italics, here and above). See Kertzer, *Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*, 260 (citing from Giuseppe Sebastiano Pelczar, *Pio IX e il suo pontificato: sullo sfondo delle vicende della Chiesa nel secolo XIX*, vol. 2 [Turin: Libreria Berruti, 1910], p. 200); in Kertzer, *Prigioniero del Papa Re*, 379. Also in Scalise, *Il caso Mortara*, 183 (citing, with slightly different words, from Carlo Tesi-Passerini, *Pio Nono e il suo tempo*, ed. Pietro Zannelli, vol. 2 [Florence: Tipografia della SS. Concezione, 1879], 136: “Voi mi siete assai caro, figliuol mio, giacché vi acquistai a grandissimo prezzo.”). This leitmotif, of being a son responsible for one’s father’s tears, comes back in other documents; see, e.g., “Per lui sono stato il figlio delle lacrime e m’ha amato come una madre che dia le sue preferenze al figliolo che le è costato le maggiori sofferenze,” in Pio Edgardo Mortara, “Pie IX, Souvenirs personnels,” *Petites Annales de Sainte Marthe* (July 1907); cit. in Scalise, *Il caso Mortara*, 182 and 205n6. For the more than symbolic meaning of Edgardo’s becoming the Pope’s son, see Inquisitor Feletti’s statement in his 1860 trial in Bologna, when he explained that the Pope was like a real father for the child “in tutta l’estensione del termine” (“in the full meaning of the term”); cited in Scalise, p. 169. The proceedings of the 1860 Bologna Trial against Inquisitor Feletti are in the following archives: Archivi di Stato di Bologna, “Tribunale Civile e Criminale di Prima Istanza: Regio Governo delle Province dell’Emilia. Causa di separazione violenta del fanciullo Edgardo Mortara . . . contro Feletti Frate Pier Gaetano,” n. 52, quer. 1860 (trial extensively reported in Kertzer, *Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*, chapters 18–21, pp. 184–237).

4. Victor Séjour, *The Fortune-Teller*, trans. Norman R. Shapiro, intro. M. Lynn Weiss (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 3. In *La Tireuse de cartes*, p. i: “en faveur de la famille Mortara,” “contre le christianisme.”

5. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, author's preface, 3. In *La Tireuse de cartes*: “On a le droit de parler haut quand on défend le foyer outragé” (p. i); and “Le pape . . . peut-il être l'avant-garde d'une cruauté?,” “Vous enlevez un enfant à son père, et je dis: C'est horrible! vous l'arrachez des bras de sa mère, et je dis: C'est monstrueux!” (p. ii).

6. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, preface, 4. In *La Tireuse de cartes*, iii: “Réfléchissez. L'intolérance est mauvaise conseillère; je dirai plus, elle est fatale.”

7. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, preface, 4: “The intolerant are smitten in advance by God; not only men, but countries as well; indeed, even more so.” In *La Tireuse de cartes*, iii: “Les intolérants sont frappés d'avance par Dieu, hommes et peuples; les peuples surtout.”

8. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, preface, 4. In *La Tireuse de cartes*, iii: “l'Italie se mourait hier, l'Espagne s'en ira peut-être demain, elles se débattent dans la fatalité de leur passé. Tout est confusion dans leur droit, tout est trouble dans leur autorité: le monde les regarde sans les comprendre. Enfin, dans un remaniement profond et définitif, que deviendraient ces deux peuples de l'inquisition, qui cherchent leur propre conscience dans la conscience des autres et vacillent au double tressaillement de l'Europe: la tentation du despotisme et l' entraînement de la liberté?”

9. The political scenario sketched by Séjour in his preface to the play testifies to the writer's extensive knowledge and awareness of the delicacy of the situation, and of the conflicts at stake in those turbulent mid-nineteenth century years. This is the larger historical scenario that contextualizes both the Mortara affair and the play prompted by that national and international scandal. See, in particular, Dennis Berthold, *American Risorgimento: Herman Melville and the Cultural Politics of Italy* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2009), and Paola Gemme, *Domesticating Foreign Struggles: The Italian Risorgimento and Antebellum American Identity* (Athens: Georgia University Press, 2005), for more literary documentation about the interest of American intellectuals on what was happening on the Italian scene at that crucial time of its history.

10. Questions proliferate in this preface, starting from the third paragraph, which reveals Séjour's motivations in writing the play, and going on with the last three paragraphs—the fifth, sixth, and seventh of the preface—where it is the Pope's behavior that is interrogated. The whole fifth paragraph is made up of six long questions. Then in the sixth paragraph even the doctrine of the Pope's infallibility is questioned (and this, at a time when the doctrine of papal infallibility was being debated; in 1870 it would be declared as a dogma by Pius IX in the First Vatican Council), while in the interrogative final passage from the seventh, and last, paragraph of the preface the distressed Catholic intellectual wonders, in a crescendo of worries, about the possible dramatic consequences of intolerance in the “two lands of the Inquisition,” Italy and Spain, both of which are “struggling against the fatality of their past.” See Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, 3–4 (in *La Tireuse de cartes*, pp. [i]–iii), and the appendix in this book with the text of the preface.

11. For more information about the rules for the baptism of Jewish children in Pope Pius IX's times, see Kertzer, *Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*, 310n2. See also a document of that time by Henry C. Kingsley, Esq. (New Haven, Conn.), “Roman Catholic Contributions and Missions,” *New Englander and Yale Review* 17, no. 65 (February 1859): 93–110, esp. 102–103, where the Mortara case is mentioned in relation to the widespread practice of secret baptism of children in danger of death. According to this source, precise statistics appeared in the French yearly report of L'Association de la Propagation de la

Foie in Lyons, about the thousands of children whose “happy souls, regenerated by us in the holy waters of baptism,” had, thanks to that practice, “taken their flight for eternal blessedness.” As for the present situation, in today’s Catholic Code of Canon Law, last revised by Pope John Paul II in 1983, the rule authorizing the baptism of non-Catholic children in danger of dying, even against the wishes of their parents (in Latin, *invitatis parentibus*), has not been abolished. See Canon 868, 2 of the current Code of Canon Law, which reads: “An infant of Catholic parents, indeed even of non-Catholic parents, is lawfully baptized in danger of death, even if the parents are opposed to it.” See John L. Allen Jr., “Relatives of Kidnapped Boy Ask for Rule Change,” *National Catholic Reporter*, September 1, 2000, p. 12.

12. Séjour, *Fortune-Teller*, prologue, scene 8, p. 16. *La Tireuse de cartes*, 10: “l’œuvre de régénération était accomplie”; “Je sens à cette heure toute la portée de mon acte; Paula, devenue chrétienne, ne pouvait être élevée que par des chrétiens!”

13. Charles Edwards O’Neill, “Theatrical Censorship in France, 1844–1875: The Experience of Victor Séjour,” *Harvard Library Bulletin* 36, no. 4 (October 1978): 419 (and 418 for general information on the history of theatrical censorship in France).

14. Ibid., 420.

15. Ibid., 420–421.

16. Paris, Archives Nationales, Série F21, Numéro 975, Commission d’Examen, 25 November 1859. Cited in O’Neill, “Theatrical Censorship,” 421. Until specified otherwise, all the following quotations above are from the same source and page.

17. O’Neill, “Theatrical Censorship,” 421. All the quotations from the Examining Commission are from the report of November 25, 1859, mentioned in the previous note.

18. An interesting modification of *La Tireuse de cartes* made by Séjour in the course of his writing concerns the more or less explicit final Christian identity of the kidnapped girl, as one can learn from O’Neill’s analysis of the cuts made by censors concerning matters of religion: “In an earlier draft of *La Tireuse de cartes*, Paula affirms ‘I am a Christian.’ The rewritten text is less explicit, but it is implied that Paula remains a Christian. Perhaps the toning down of her closing lines was out of consideration for the Jews in the audience. (However, it is not certain that the censors, although attentive to this line, were responsible to the alteration.)” (O’Neill, “Theatrical Censorship,” 441.) This alteration shows the care the playwright took not to offend (and lose the support of) part of his liberal audience.

19. J.-M. Tiengou, *La Gazette de France*, January 9, 1860, p. 2; cited in Charles Edwards O’Neill, *Séjour*, 70.

20. Jules Janin, “La Semaine dramatique,” *Journal des débats*, December 26, 1859, p. 1: “Or la fantaisie est impuissante à dénouer les terribles noeuds gordiens.”

21. Phillis Wheatley, “On Being Brought from Africa to America,” lines 1–3, 7–8, in her *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* by Phillis Wheatley, *Negro Servant to Mr. John Wheatley, of Boston, in New England* (London, 1773); in *The Poems of Phillis Wheatley*, ed. Julian D. Mason Jr. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 53. The italics in the quotation above are in the original. For a discussion of “Afro-Protestantism” in early African American literature and a definition of Wheatley as an “Afro-Protestant,” see Frances Smith Foster, “A Narrative of the Interesting Origins and (Somewhat) Surprising Developments of African American Print Culture,” *American Literary History* 17, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 715–732, particularly 721.

22. The request for “refinement,” i.e., assimilation, was a constant in the nineteenth-century history of Jewish emancipation, particularly in Germany.

Chapter 12. Contemporary Performances and Reviews in France and Italy

1. See Gerard da Silva, *L'affaire Mortara et l'antisémitisme chrétien* (Paris: Éditions Syllepse, 2008), 76.

2. Émile de la Bédollière, “France,” *Le Siècle*, December 24, 1859, p 1 (“on a eu l’heureuse idée de transporter sur le théâtre l’odieux attentat commis par le saint-siège [sic] envers la famille Mortara”). All the following citations are from the same page. The translations from French, here and in the whole book, are mine, unless differently specified.

3. Émile de la Bédollière, *Histoire de la guerre d'Italie*, ill. Janet-Lang, maps A. H. Du-four (Paris: Gustave Barba, 1859). It was immediately translated into Italian: *La Guerra d'Italia per Emilio de la Bédollière* (Naples: Stamperia di Luigi Gargiulo, 1859). As for the translation mentioned above, see Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Le père Tom: ou, vie des Nègres en Amérique*, trans. Émile de la Bédollière (Paris: Gustave Barba, 1853). The articles on the Mortara case in *Le Siècle*, mostly signed alternatively by Émile de la Bédollière and Louis Jourdan, were published on October 2, 10, 18, 19, 25, 27, 28, and November 7, 22, 24, 1858. See Gérard da Silva, *L'affaire Mortara*, 76–81.

4. Bédollière, “France,” 1 (“bien que l’action se passe au dix-septième siècle, il paraît que le *non possumus* en semblable matière n’était pas connu, l’enfant est rendu à sa mère, tandis qu’au dix neuvième siècle, nous attendons encore que le gouvernement des cardinaux rende au juif de Bologne son fils bien-aimé.”). The play actually took place in the eighteenth century, not in the seventeenth century, as is stated for emphasis by the critic.

5. Ultramontanism (literally, from the medieval Latin “*ultra montes*,” i.e., beyond the mountains) is the doctrine and movement within the Roman Catholic Church supporting the absolute power of the Pope and the superiority of his authority over the authority of local secular or spiritual hierarchies; it developed particularly in France and later in Germany and other European countries, after the Protestant Reformation, until in the nineteenth century it achieved victory over opposing Conciliarism at the First Vatican Council (1870), which decreed the dogmas of papal infallibility and papal supremacy. In opposition to the ideology of *gallicanisme* (gallicanism), advocating the independence of the Church of France from the Church of Rome, and later of *laïcité*, secularism, the term *ultramontanisme* was widely used in mid-nineteenth-century France, for policies advocating the political involvement of the Catholic Church in French political affairs and supporting the temporal power of the Church in its Italian States. After the end of the First Vatican Council and Italian unification (1870), the ultramontanist movement started to decline.

6. Bédollière, “France,” 1. (“L’empereur et toute la salle, en unissant leurs applaudissements [sic] ont montré combien les sentimens [sic] de la nature, si noblement exprimés, conservent de force dans notre société, que calomnient avec tant de opiniâtreté les partisans de l’ultramontanisme.”). In a later report based on news from *Le Siècle*, published in the Jewish French monthly *Archives Israélites*, the *Archives Israélites* editor Isidore Cahen reported that at the opening of Sèjour’s play, “in front of the whole audience the Emperor started the applause, and the Empress looked visibly moved” (“devant la salle entière l’Empereur a donné le signal des applaudissements, et que l’Impératrice

s'est montrée visiblement émue"); see Isidore Cahen, "Chronique du mois," *Archives Israélites*, January 1860, p. 48 (pp. 45–47 on the Mortara case and pp. 47–48 on Séjour's play).

7. Bédollière, "France," 1. ("On disait dans les couloirs qu'il [Séjour] avait un collaborateur, homme de beaucoup d'esprit, et qui, en raison de son importante position officielle, n'avait pas voulu les bravos dont est digne une œuvre, non seulement belle au point de vue de l'art, mais encore excellente au point de vue de l'intention et de l'à-propos.")

8. For a contemporary caricature of Louis Veuillot in a hand-colored engraving by André Gill, see the weekly *La Lune*, April 21, 1867, p. 1, where he is portrayed with big white wings and an aureole on his head, while fighting with his fists and angrily giving someone a punch.

9. Venet, "Revue des Théâtres et de la Littérature," *L'Univers*, December 28, 1859, pp. 1–2, feuilleton ("tenanciers du Siècle que l'on appelle les modernes Athéniens!"; "succès, d'un caractère tout exceptionnel"). The section on *La Tireuse de cartes* is on page 2. Charles Edwards O'Neill in his *Séjour: Parisian Playwright from Louisiana* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1995), 70, attributes this article to Louis Veuillot, "the sharp-penned editor" of the paper, but the piece is actually signed by Venet, usual signature of Isidore Venet, who had been in charge of the drama feuilleton of *L'Univers* since 1856. The play by Eugène Scribe and Émile de Najac was *La fille de trente ans*, which would be published by the same publisher as Victor Séjour's, Michel Lévy, in Paris, 1860.

10. Venet, "Revue des Théâtres et de la Littérature," 2 ("Ce drame a été inspiré par une question dont les journaux ennemis de l'Eglise ont tiré un excellent parti l'an passé, la question dite du jeune Mortara. / L'auteur en évidence est M. Victor Séjour; mais il paraît que l'auteur principal, retenu dans la pénombre par sa modestie, est M. Mocquart, secrétaire de l'Empereur.").

11. M. [Marins] Garcin, "Chronique," *L'Ami de la religion*, n.s., no. 124, December 29, 1859, pp. 867–868 (on *La Tireuse de cartes*). For the history of *L'Ami de la religion*, which was published from 1814 to 1862, see M. Patricia Dougherty, "The Rise and Fall of *L'Ami de la Religion*: History, Purpose, and Readership of a French Catholic Newspaper," *Catholic Historical Review* 77, no. 1 (January, 1991): 21–41. For the paper's articles on the Mortara Case in 1858 (on November 4, November 6 and November 27, 1858), see Gérard da Silva, *L'affaire Mortara*, 50–52.

12. Garcin, "Chronique" (1859), 868: "non seulement belle au point de vue de l'art, mais encore est une bonne action."

13. Ibid.: "Ajoutons que, par la position de l'auteur qui a gardé l'anonyme, ce drame acquiert presque l'importance d'une brochure publiée chez Dentu."

14. All the main pamphlets about the Mortara case that came out in France in 1858–1860 were published by E. Dentu: Jules Assézat, *Affaire Mortara: Le droit du père* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1858; abbé André Vincent Delacouture, *Le Droit canon et le droit naturel dans l'affaire Mortara* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1858); Anonymous, *Edgar Mortara: dédié aux pères et aux mères de toutes les nations et de toutes les religions* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1860).

15. Garcin, "Chronique" (1859), 868. The description of Séjour's play as "pièce des boulevards" is by Garcin.

16. Victor Séjour's introduction to *La Tireuse de cartes*, in fact, opens with a reference to two papers that had attacked him, *L'Ami de la religion* and *La Gazette de France*. In trying to understand why the article in *L'Ami de la religion* was received so negatively by

Séjour, Charles Edward O'Neill gives this interpretation: “*L'Ami de la Religion* showed its readers what use was being made of the play by simply quoting word for word from *Le Siècle*, which chortlingly praised ‘the happy idea of bringing on stage the odious attack committed by the Holy See against the Mortara family.’ The *Ami*’s uncommented upon, matter-of-fact quoting of the Catholic but anticlerical paper was felt by Séjour as quite a sting” (O’Neill, *Séjour*, 69–70).

17. The *Figaro*, founded as a satirical weekly in 1826, because of its growing success became a biweekly, coming out on Wednesdays and Sundays, in 1856, and a daily in 1866. Among the famous texts that would be published in this paper: Émile Zola’s first three articles on the Dreyfus affair in 1897 (before his *J'accuse* published in *L'Aurore*); Jean Moréas’s “Manifesto of Symbolism” (“Manifeste du symbolisme”) in 1886, and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s “Manifesto of Futurism” (first published in the Italian *Gazzetta dell’Emilia* in 1909).

18. G. D. [Georges Davidson], “A Travers les Théâtres: P.S.,” *Le Figaro*, December 25, 1859, p. 8 (the author’s full name appears at the end of his regular column “A Travers les Théâtres,” which is followed by a long P.S., specifically devoted to *La Tireuse de cartes*, signed by the journalist’s initials). The following quotations from this article are from the same page. The English translations of all the articles quoted in this chapter are mine, unless specified as cited from other English sources. The French original, when not inserted above, is given in the notes at the end of each paragraph.

19. Ibid. French original: “dès l’exposition, on comprend que, malgré cette date imposée par certains nécessités, les événements sont d’hier, d’aujourd’hui, et attendent encore un dénouement. Cette pièce est plus qu’un drame, c’est un plaidoyer en faveur des droits imprescriptibles de la famille.” / “Quand la juive retrouve son enfant, elle dit une parole qui a remué le cœur de tous les spectateurs: ‘—Je ne l’ai pas vue grandir!’” / “C'est ici que la pièce, entrant tout à fait dans les entraillés de l’actualité, discute l’immense question qui est encore pendant devant l’Europe passionnée et attentive.” On the same day, December 25, 1859, the drama critic of *Le Théâtre*, George Roux, also started his very appreciative review of *La Tireuse de cartes* with an explicit reference to “an event that everybody still remembers” (“un événement que tout le monde se rappelle encore”) and was happy to announce that this was “a new success for the author of *La Chute de Séjan* and *Richard III*” (“un nouveau succès pour l'auteur de la *Chute de Séjan* et de *Richard III*”). Roux particularly appreciated the warmth and passion typical of Séjour’s plays, and the vitality and brilliance of the dialogues, in a play totally based on the subject of moth-erly love. In outlining the subject of the play, the critic of *Le Théâtre* stressed the fact that the play’s action, set in motion by the secret baptism of a Jewish child accomplished by a “fanatical nursemaid” (“nourrice fanatique”), was set in past times, when “the fanaticized people still rushed against the Jews on the slightest pretext, and, in their savage hatred without cause, relieved on them the fury of another age” (“les populations fanatisées se rusaient encore contre les Juifs au moindre prétexte, et, dans leur haine sauvage et sans cause, assouissaient sur eux les fureurs d’un autre âge”) (p. 3). The assumption was that in modern times anti-Jewish fanaticism was over.

20. For a review of Marie Laurent’s role and performance in *Le Fils de la nuit*, see Théophile Gautier, “Revue dramatique,” *Le Moniteur universel*, July 14, 1856, pp. 1–2. See, in particular, page 2: “Mme Laurént excels in rendering these savage natures, these barbaric types” (“Mme Laurént excelle à rendre ces natures sauvages, ces types barbares”).

Marie Laurent (born Marie-Thérèse-Désirée Alliouz-Luguet, 1825–1904), then a famous actress, took her surname from her first husband's, Pierre-Marie Laurent, a baritone singer, who died young in 1852 and from whom she had two children. In 1859 she had just married the actor Maurice Desrieux, born Maurice Bénite, who had also been in Séjour's *Le Fils de la nuit* (where she played the role of the mischievous mother) three years earlier. About her pseudonym, see Georges d'Heylli, *Dictionnaire des pseudonymes* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1869; new ed. 1887), 241–242.

21. About actress Lia (or Leah) Félix (1830–1908) and her family in relation to Séjour, more will be said in the text later on.

22. Quotations in the paragraph are from G. D. [Georges Davidson], “A Travers les Théâtres: P.S.,” 8: “C'est un grand, très grand succès. Madame Laurent est splendide dans le rôle de la Juive. [...] Mademoiselle Lia Félix, dans le côtés ingénus du rôle, tourne souvent à l'afféterie; mais elle a de beaux élans, elle est d'ailleurs très intelligente, c'est dans le sang.”

23. Elisabeth-Rachel Félix (1821–1858), known as mademoiselle “Rachel,” the “tragic muse” of the Comédie-Française and one of the greatest tragic actresses in the history of drama, died of tuberculosis in France at age thirty-seven, after a long tour of Russia and the United States; she is buried in the Jewish section of Père Lachaise Cemetery. Charlotte Brontë's character Vashti, in *Villette* (1853), was based on Rachel, whom the English writer had seen in a London performance; she is also memorialized by other writers, from Henry James in *The Tragic Muse* (1890), to Matthew Arnold, George Eliot, and Honoré de Balzac. Among the many contemporary studies on this figure, see Jules Janin, *Rachel et la Tragédie* (Paris: Amyot, 1859; Paris: Adolphe Delahays, 1861). Besides a detailed analysis of her career as an actress, this work includes a moving selection of Rachel's letters to her family and the testimony of her generosity (see letter of December 1853 to Prince Odowsky, in which she devotes a large part of her income to the poor, to “soulager les misères de la pauvre espèce humaine” [“alleviate the miseries of the poor human species”], 303 in the 1861 edition). For a contemporary report on Rachel's tour in the United States, see Léon Beauvallet, *Rachel et le nouveau-monde: Promenade aux Etats-Unis et aux Antilles* (Paris: Alexandre Cadot, 1856); trans. *Rachel and the New World: A Trip to the United States and Cuba* (New York: Dix, Edwards, and Co., 1856); the author, who first published his report in *Le Figaro*, was the son of Pierre-François Beauvallet, the leading actor in *Diégarias* by Séjour. For more recent studies on the actress, see Rachel M. Brownstein, *Tragic Muse: Rachel of the Comédie-Française* (New York: Knopf, 1993; repr., Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); and Irina Rabinovich, *Re-Dressing Miriam: 19th Century Artistic Jewish Women* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corporation, 2012), 88–160.

24. Quotations in the paragraph are from G. D. [Georges Davidson], “A Travers les Théâtres: P.S.,” 8. French original: “On a nommé M. Victor Séjour tout seul, on n'en a pas moins applaudi pour deux,—et nous savons M. Séjour trop galant homme pour ne pas rendre à son collaborateur la part de bravos qui lui revient à si juste titre. Tout le monde, dans la salle, disait tout bas le nom du grand personnage que sa haute position attache au rivage de l'anonyme. *Figaro* n'est pas discret; c'est sa plus grande qualité, il dira donc son nom: c'est celui de M. Mocquart.”

25. In all the contemporary theater reviews mentioning him in the French press, the spelling of his name is “Mocquart,” but the name engraved on his imposing chapel in the thirty-first division of Père Lachaise Cemetery, where he was buried in 1864, is “Mocquard”

(see picture in link of “Amis et Passionnés du Père-Lachaise,” http://www.appl-lachaise.net/appl/article.php3?id_article=2052). The multiple slight variations in the spelling of Mocquard’s name are confirmed and further complicated by his most important publication, the collection of stories *Nouvelles causes célèbres; ou Fastes du crime*, 6 books in 3 vols. (Paris: Pourrat Frères, 1842–1843), where his name is spelled neither Mocquart nor Mocquard, but simply “Moquard,” followed by the professional title, “avocat” (lawyer). In the new reprints of these volumes (facsimile ed., Elibron Classics by Adamant Media Corporation, 2002; University of Michigan Library, 2009; Nabu Press, 2011) the author’s name on the cover is Jean François Constant Mocquard.

26. Paul de Saint-Victor, “Théâtres,” *La Presse*, December 25, 1859, pp. 1–2, feuilleton. All the following quotations from this article are from this source; quotations until “emotion” are from page 1, from then onward they are from page 2. About the articles on the Mortara case published by *La Presse* (on October 1, 11, 12, 18, 19, 24, 27, and November 5, 8, 13, 21, 1858), mostly by Adolphe Guérout, see Gérard da Silva, *L’affaire Mortara*, 81–85. Some of these articles were collected in Adolphe Guérout, *Études de politique et de philosophie religieuse* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1863), 202–265 (a very interesting collection).

27. Saint-Victor, “Théâtres,” 1–2: “C’est le plus beau succès que M. Victor Séjour ait remporté au théâtre. [...] / Tout ce concentre dans l’antagonisme de deux mères s’arrachant une fille, de deux religions réclamant une âme. [...] / Le dénouement a la douceur du repos qui suit les violences. [...] Ainsi finit par un cantique ce drame rempli des émotions les plus vraies et les plus sévères.”

28. Ibid., 2: “On voudrait peut-être que la voix du sang parlât plus en elle. Mais songez à la terreur d’une jeune fille élevée dans l’aristocratie courtoise et dévote de l’Italie du dix-septième [sic] siècle et apprenant tout d’un coup qu’elle n’est plus patricienne, qu’elle n’est plus chrétienne et qu’il lui faut quitter le doux monde, où elle a vécu, pur la caste morne et réprobée du Ghetto. Rappelez-vous les effroyables barrières de terreur et de préjugés, qui séparaient alors Israël du monde des vivants, et vous excuserez l’effroi de Paula, suivant sa mère dans cette cità [sic] dolente.—Entre les juifs et les chrétiens il y avait des abîmes de mépris, des montagnes d’orgueil et les clamours de l’anathème, et l’épouvantail des ex-communications, et les bûchers de l’Inquisition et les brasiers de l’enfer . . . —plus que cela encore. *Trucidatus Salvator inter nos*, comme dit la sombre formule qui, dans l’ancienne jurisprudence, défendait aux juifs les serments.—Une petite Italienne à peine sortie du couvent ne saurait faire gaîment ce ‘saut périlleux.’” A few days later, the drama critic of *Journal amusant* Albert Monnier would also underline this point: “with her [the kidnapped daughter] the voice of blood is silent” (“Chez elle la voix du sang est muette”); see *Journal amusant*, January 7, 1860, p. 7.

29. Saint-Victor, “Théâtres,” 2: “A ce moment, le nom de Rachel a circulé spontanément dans la foule. La ressemblance était saisissante; elle a frappé tous les souvenirs. C’était l’accent, l’attitude, le geste, l’inspiration de sa sœur.”

30. Jules Janin, “La Semaine dramatique,” *Journal des débats*, December 26, 1859, p. 1, feuilleton: “presque un événement. Il touche à des passions toutes récentes; il est l’écho brutal d’une déplorable violence; il réveillera bien des douleurs.”

31. See Gérard da Silva, *L’affaire Mortara*, 71–76.

32. Abbé Delacouture, “Au rédacteur,” *Journal des débats*, October 18, 1858, p. 1, letter dated October 15, 1858 (“ce qui n’est susceptible daucun doute ni daucune con-

testation, c'est que les droits de la nature sont inviolables et que la religion ne peut jamais les enfreindre"). The first article on the front page of that paper's issue, by L. [Louis] Al-loury, "France. Paris, 17 Octobre," was also on the Mortara case, and strongly in support of the Mortara family. See also Delacouture's *Le Droit canon et le droit naturel dans l'affaire Mortara*, already mentioned.

33. Ernest Gebauer, "Premières Représentations," *Le Monde dramatique*, December 29, 1859, p. 3: "La présence de LL. MM. L'Empereur et l'impératrice à la première représentation aurait ouvert les yeux des moins clairvoyants et renseigné les moins bien informés. [...] si nous disons que la *Tireuse de cartes* justifie le succès qu'elle a obtenu, c'est que nous le pensons véritablement." The statement concerning the fact that the critic's opinion did not depend on the importance of the rumored collaborator was an indirect answer to a bitterly ironic statement in the article of the previous day of *L'Univers* mentioned above, suggesting that servile reason for the critical success of the play.

34. Ernest Gebauer, "Premières Représentations" (subtitle: "*Tannhäuser*, opéra en 3 actes et 4 tableaux, de M. Richard Wagner.—Première représentation, le 13 mars 1861"), *Le Monde dramatique*, March 21, 1861, pp. 1-2. *Tannhäuser*'s premiere in Paris was a public and critical enormous failure (after three performances Wagner withdrew his opera from the stage), yet his work was admired by Charles Baudelaire and Gustave Doré.

35. Théophile Deschamps and Emile Béchot, "Chronique des théâtres," *Le Monde dramatique*, February 2, 1860, p. 2: "Car il est juste de dire que jamais drame ne fut plus émouvant."

36. "Théâtres et Spectacles divers," *La Presse*, December 30, 1859, p. 3: "Au théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, les recettes de la *Tireuse de cartes*, fait qui n'a pas de précédent à l'époque où nous sommes, atteignent le chiffre le plus élevé qui se puisse faire au théâtre. Mmes Laurent, Lia Félix et Lagier forment un admirable trio qui partage, avec l'auteur, les applaudissements de la foule." Lagier played the Christian mother's role.

37. Georges Davidson, "A Travers les Théâtres," *Le Figaro*, January 15, 1860, p. 6: "Sans la plus petite échelle de corde, sans le moindre vaisseau, sans le plus modeste ballet, sans Fechter, sans Laferrière, la *Tireuse de cartes* a encaissé environ 100,000 francs en vingt représentations."

38. Charles Fechter (1824–1879), probably born in London of a mother of Italian (Piedmontese) origin and a father of German extraction, was a famous French actor who, after triumphing on the Parisian stage (among other parts, he played Armand Duval in *La Dame aux camélias* by Alexandre Dumas fils, performed at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in 1852) and being manager of the Odéon theater in 1857–1858, would then move to the London stage in 1860 (playing Hamlet and Othello, among other roles), finally since 1870 concluding his successful career as an actor, and his life, in the United States. Adolph Laferrière (1806–1877) was also a famous actor, whose memoirs were published by Dentu in 1876.

39. Georges Davidson, "A Travers les Théâtres" January 15, 1860, p. 6: "magnifique de tendresse et de fureur dans son rôle de juive."

40. Ibid.: "Compère Guillery, de M. Victor Séjour, passera avant la pièce de MM. Théodore Barrière et Henry de Kook."

41. Adolphe Philippe Dennery (1811–1899), prolific author of melodramas and stage adaptations of novels, at a certain point adopted the more "distinguished" spelling D'Ennery. See Edward Foreman, *Historical Dictionary of French Theater* (Lanham, MD:

Scarecrow Press, 2010), 97. In my citations from the contemporary papers quoted above, I have found both spellings.

42. Davidson, “A Travers les Théâtres,” January 15, 1860, p. 7: “M. Victor Séjour menace de devenir un rude concurrent pour M. d’Ennery. On le joue à la Porte-Saint-Martin, il va lire à l’Ambigu, et il pourrait bien, un de ces matins, sur les onze heures, être mis en répétition à la Gaîté, car M. Armant vient de lui recevoir un drame.”

43. For the special success of the first night, see *Le Monde illustré*, December 31, 1859, clipping in Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, Rf 48918(9), already cited above.

44. *La Presse*, “Faits divers,” February 7, 1860, p. 2. The play involved in the change was *Beatriz* by Auguste Vacquerie.

45. “Théâtres et Spectacles divers,” *La Presse*, February 8, 1860, p. 3. See also Albert Monnier, “Théâtres,” *Journal amusant*, March 10, 1860, p. 7, who, joking with the figure of the fortune-teller but expressing great admiration for the playwright, foresees “une grande longévité” (a great longevity) for Séjour’s play and for his other plays, too.

46. Georges Davidson, “A Travers les Théâtres,” *Le Figaro*, March 18, 1860, p. 5: “Le directeur du théâtre où devait se jouer la pièce est consterné; il comptait sur des recettes d’autant plus fortes que l’*Univers* de l’endroit avait éreinté à fond de train l’œuvre si intéressante de MM. Victor Séjour et Mocquart.”

47. For more information, see Bibliography (section of Séjour’s works translated into other languages) in this book.

48. Victor Séjour, *Die Kartenschlägerin* (*La Tireuse de cartes*) (Drama in fünf Aufzügen: Nebst einem Vorspiel: *Der Kindesraub* [Drama in five acts, with a prologue: the kidnapping]), authorized ed., trans. and intro. C. Homburg (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1860). The author’s preface is on pp. iii–iv, the translator’s on pp. vi–vii. Quoted passages from the latter in the German original: “das auf dem Mortara’schen Kindesraub beruhende Drama: ‘*Die Kartenschlägerin*’” (“the drama based on the Mortara child’s kidnapping: ‘*Die Kartenschlägerin*’,” vi), “eine allgemeine Kundgebung der Moralität unseres Jahrhunderts” (“a universal expression of the morality of our century,” vi–vii).

49. See O’Neill, *Séjour*, 69, 75.

50. The bibliographical reference is to Roger Aubert, *Le Pontificat de Pie IX (1846–1878)* (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1952), 87; *Il Pontificato di Pio IX*, Italian trans. Salvatore Marsili, in *Storia della Chiesa*, vol. 21, ed. Giacomo Martina (Turin: S.A.I.E., 1964; 4th ed., Turin: San Paolo, 1990); cit. in Timothy Verhoeven, *Transatlantic Anti-Catholicism: France and the United States in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 188n15.

51. David I. Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997; repr., New York: Vintage, 1998), 87. In the afterword of his book, Kertzer raises a central question, drawing his readers’ attention to the gap between the importance of the case at the time and its consideration by later historians: “Why has the Mortara case attracted so little attention from historians? It represents one of the significant episodes in the unification of Italy, and yet it has been largely ignored, even though a huge amount of historical work has focused on the Risorgimento” (*ibid.*, 299). See also Kertzer’s very interesting discussion about the issue (*ibid.*, 299–304).

52. The contemporary perception of the relevance of the Mortara episode for the Second Italian War of Independence, and the feeling of a commonality of interests and hopes that was growing more and more “between Israel and the rest of mankind” (“entre Israël

et le reste du genre humain") because of the indignation shared by so many Christians for the Bologna "crime," is testified to, e.g., by S. Bloch, "Situation," *L'Univers israélite*, no. 1, September 1859, pp. 2–3.

53. See "Napoleon's Reception at Genoa, May 12, 1859," *The Empire*, Sydney, July 11, 1859, p. 3 (quoted above); [Victor Duruy], *Histoire populaire contemporaine de la France*, vol. 3 (Paris: L. Hachette, Bibliothèque de Ch. Lahure, 1865), 370–378, with illustrations; and the watercolor and gouache by Carlo Bossoli, "The War in Italy: Genoa, The Arrival of Emperor Napoleon III, 1859," painted in 1859 and reproduced in several prints.

54. M. [Marins] Garcin, "Chronique," *L'Ami de la religion*, n.s. 142, February 9, 1860, p. 335. M. Garcin, one of the most frequent contributors to the paper, is described a few pages later as "the secretary of the editorial board" (*ibid.*, 869). As for the article of *La Presse*, whose author and date are not mentioned in *L'Ami de la religion*, it was written by J. Mahias, and was published under the headline "Nouvelles d'Italie" in *La Presse*, February 7, 1860, p. 3. All the following quotations will be from *L'Ami de la religion*, since we are interested both in the report from *La Presse* and the comment of *L'Ami de la religion*.

55. Garcin, "Chronique" (1860), 335: "quatre représentations simultanées à Turin: il est annoncé à la fois sur les quatre affiches de Scribe, d'Angennes, de Carignan et de Gerbino." All the Turin theaters mentioned in the report were important and had a high seating capacity: the Scribe (in 29, della Zecca Street, now Verdi Street), dedicated to the French playwright Augustin Eugène Scribe, and just built in 1856–1857, had 1200 seats; the d'Angennes (in Principe Amedeo Street), historically the site of a student revolt within the Italian Risorgimento in 1821, had 1100 seats; the Carignano (at 6, Carignano Square), originally the theater of the royal Savoia-Carignano family, is the most ancient and prestigious prose theater in Turin, built in the mid-eighteenth century; the Gerbino, one of the most important prose theaters at the time, inaugurated in 1838 (originally as Teatro Diurno a Porta di Po; it acquired its Gerbino name in 1845), had 2000 seats. Nowadays, the only theater of these still in use is the Carignano, where the reported performance of *La Tireuse de cartes* actually took place.

56. Ibid.: "Je ne sais à quoi cela tient, mais le public n'a pas du tout saisi les analyses de sentiments que contient cette pièce, et, au quatrième acte, la dispute presque théologique des deux mères a fait fuir un tiers de la salle au milieu d'un brouhaha désapprobateur; et quand la jeune fille les envoie presque promener toutes deux, sans choisir, ç'a été un tapage tel, que j'ai cru que la pièce ne continuerait pas. Les acteurs, qui n'étaient pas mauvais, ont dû, pour achever, tenir bon, et user de tous leurs moyens."

57. Ibid. "Les Italiens ne valent pas décidément la peine que l'on se donne pour eux. Ils auraient dû applaudir de toutes leurs forces, ne fût-ce que par reconnaissance."

58. O'Neill, *Séjour*, 75.

59. Victor Séjour, *L'indovina* ("[nel testo originale], *La Tireuse de cartes*, dramma in 5 atti e prologo"), trans. Luigi Enrico Tettoni (Milan: Libreria di F. Sanvito succ. a Borroni e Scotti [*Florilegio drammatico*, fasc. n. 391–392]), 1860. Luigi Enrico Tettoni (1825–1899), whose Italian version of *La Dame aux camélias* (1852) by Alexandre Dumas fils, only a few months after its French premiere, made him a protagonist in the diffusion of that play in Italy, had already translated into Italian another play by Séjour (*L'Argent du Diable*, in 1855) before translating, with his usual immediate response and rapidity, *La Tireuse de cartes*. His Italian version of this play, *L'indovina*, mentioning also the French original in

its title (a sign of its fame), was published by Francesco Sanvito, the publisher that had succeeded Borroni and Scotti in issuing the drama series *Florilegio drammatico*. The Italian translation, unusually faithful to the original (considering that Tettoni often produced “free versions”), did not include Séjour’s introduction to the play. About L. E. Tettoni, and nineteenth-century Italian theater agencies and performances, see Livia Cavaglièri, *Tra arte e mercato: Agenti e agenzie teatrali nel XIX secolo* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2006), and Simona Brunetti, *Il palcoscenico del secondo Ottocento italiano: “La signora delle camelie”* (Padua: Esedra, 2004).

60. Saint-Victor, “Théâtres,” 1.

61. For the article in the Piedmontese liberal paper *L’opinione* (a historic paper, lasting from 1846 to 1900), and its report on the “brotherly love” between the two religions wished by the two mothers in their final embrace, see *L’opinione*, February 6, 1860, pp. 1–2. In this exhaustive review of *La Tireuse de cartes* and its Italian premiere at the Carignano theater (the same mentioned by the Turin correspondent of *La Presse*), there is no mention of any negative reaction from the Turin audience. On the contrary, the reviewer shows great appreciation not only for the literary value of this play, but also for its political and moral function, as a “cry of an honest conscience that claims the rights of family and of parental authority, an eloquent protest against violence, intolerance and religious fanaticism,” with its manifest and dramatically effective reference to “a recent scandal, which already concerned the whole of Europe, and which is not yet over,” the case of the Mortara child (p. 2; in Italian: “grido di una coscienza onesta che rivendica i diritti della famiglia e della patria potestà, una protesta eloquente contro la violenza, l’intolleranza e il fanatismo religioso”; “un recente scandalo, che occupò già di sé tutta Europa, e che non è ancora cessato”). Although the play is always cited with its French title, the company of actors (Angelo Morolin company) was Italian, which confirms that the acting was in this language. The role of the kidnapped girl was played by Marianna Torta-Morolin, a successful young actress, particularly appreciated by the reviewer. Marianna Torta-Morolin was then nineteen; among her successes, the one played two years later as “Madama Travet” in the comedy by Vittorio Bersezio, *Le miserie ‘d Monsù Travet* (“The troubles of Mr. Travet”), written in Piedmontese dialect and first performed by the Giovanni Toselli company at the Alfieri Theater in Turin, on April 4, 1863.

62. About the *Monitore di Bologna*, supplement to no. 11, January 15, 1860, pp. 1–2, praising the play (in the original Italian, for “il merito di risvegliare ed appoggiare una causa che ha commosso il mondo intero”), see Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*, 252 and 325n10 (Italian edition, *Prigioniero del Papa Re*, 366 and 371). For a report of the Bologna performance in *Corriere dell’Emilia*, April 19 1860, see Kertzer, *Kidnapping*, 252 and 325n11. Father Pier Gaetano Feletti was arrested in Bologna on January 2, 1860, and on April 16, 1860, he was eventually declared innocent because he had simply obeyed the Pope’s orders.

63. See Daniele Scalise, *Il caso Mortara: La vera storia del bambino ebreo rapito dal papa* (Milan: Mondadori, 1997), 150; and Gian Ludovico Masetti Zannini, “Nuovi documenti sul ‘caso Mortara,’ ” *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 13, no. 2 (May–August 1959): 265n15. In this note, Masetti Zannini also mentions another play inspired by the Mortara case, *Una famiglia ebraica* (A Jewish family) by the Italian writer Luigi Camoletti, performed in Naples: for this text, his source is Raffaele De Cesare, *Roma e lo stato del papa: Dal ritorno di Pio IX al XX settembre, 1850/1870*, vol. 1, Rome: Forzani e C.,

1907, 291. Since the existence of this play by Camoletti is not confirmed by any bibliographic research, my speculation is that the reference is to another Italian play inspired by the case, Riccardo Castelvecchio, *La famiglia ebrea* (“Dramma in quattro atti e un prologo” [The Jewish family, a play in four acts and a prologue]), *Florilegio drammatico*, fasc. 409 (Milan: Tip. di F. Sanyito succ. a Borroni e Scotti, 1861).

Chapter 13. An Age of Transatlantic Emancipations

1. Thomas Bender, *A Nation among Nations: America’s Place in World History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 7.

2. C. T. McIntire, *England against Papacy, 1858–61* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 31n58.

3. This was a crucial episode in the war for Italian unity and independence, which resulted in a victory of the Franco-Sardinian Alliance against Austria. It was the appalling vision of the thousands of wounded soldiers on both fronts lying on the battlefield of Solferino that moved a Swiss man, Jean Henri Dunant, to an initiative leading to the establishment of the International Red Cross. Napoleon III, who led the French troops at Solferino, would be celebrated while riding at the head of his soldiers in several large oil paintings (such as the ones by Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier and Adolphe Yvon; the latter had recently painted an allegorical *Genius of America* in 1858), and Séjour celebrated this victory in a visionary scene of *Les Volontaires de 1848* (1862).

4. This expression was used in a diplomatic message by John Daniel, U.S. Minister in Turin, then capital of Piedmont-Sardinia, to the U.S. Secretary of State Lewis Cass (Turin, July 12, 1859); in Howard R. Marraro, ed., *L’Unificazione italiana vista dai diplomatici statunitensi*, vol. 3 (1853–1861) (Rome: Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento Italiano, 1967), 288; cit. in Daniele Fiorentino, “La politica estera degli Stati Uniti e l’unità d’Italia,” in *Gli Stati Uniti e l’Unità d’Italia*, ed. Daniele Fiorentino and Matteo Sanfilippo (Rome: Gangemi, 2004), 60.

5. As later recalled by the *New York Times* at the news of Cavour’s sudden death in 1861 (“Death of Count Cavour,” *New York Times*, June 18, 1861), it was when Cavour had spoken at the Congress of Paris of 1856, in that “great European Aeropagus,” that his “appeals against the outrages of Austrian and Papal despotism; his denunciations of the Bourbon tyranny at Naples, rung through Europe and America from his seal at that high council board, and more clearly than before fixed the indignant regard of mankind upon those results of a post-dated legitimacy.”

6. Émile de la Bédollière, “France” (followed by the place and date: “Paris.—22 Décembre 1859”), *Le Siècle*, December 23, 1859, p. 1.

7. Havas-Bullier, “Télégraphie Privée. / Turin, 22 décembre,” *Le Siècle*, December 23, 1859, p. 1. According to the report, the crowd shouted their hurrahs for the Italian liberators and the new local authorities of central Italy, and cried: “Long live Vittorio Emanuele! Long live Boncompagni! Long live Ricasoli!” (“vive Victor Emmanuel! vive Boncompagni! vive Ricasoli!”). Carlo Boncompagni was the General Governor of the United Provinces of Central Italy. Bettino Ricasoli was the new Prime Minister in the provisional government of Tuscany after the Armistice of Villafranca, July 12, 1859; he became the principal figure in the annexation of Tuscany to the new Kingdom of Italy on March 16, 1861, and succeeded Cavour as Prime Minister of Italy after his death, on June 12, 1861. As for the Ministers receiving Boncompagni in Florence, according to this

report they were Carlo Cadorna, Minister of Education in the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia under Cavour's government, and Cosimo Ridolfi, Minister of Education in the provisional government of Tuscany.

8. The first bulletin published, under the heading "Nouvelles d'Italie," was by the Royal Military Headquarters of the Milan province, ordering Lombard soldiers born from 1834 onward, who had been in the ranks of the Austrian cavalry, to present themselves to the new military headquarters and be ranked in the new royal army by December 27, 1859 ("Nouvelles d'Italie. / Commandement militaire royal de la province de Milan," *Le Siècle*, December 23, 1859, p. 1). The second bulletin, signed by Tuscan Prime Minister Ricasoli and other Ministers, concerned the announced arrival in Florence of the General Governor of the United Provinces of Central Italy ("Nouvelles d'Italie. / Toscane. Florence, 16 décembre," *Le Siècle*, December 23, 1859, p. 1). The third piece of news, from the *Gazzetta del popolo* of Bologna, reported the death sentences of some liberal patriots from Perugia by the military tribunal of the Vatican States (they were sentenced in absentia, since they had found refuge in independent Tuscany).

9. Walter Whitman, "Resurgemus," *New-York Daily Tribune*, June 21, 1850, p. 3 (Whitman did not use his shortened name "Walt" yet). When republished—untitled, like all the rest of the poems—in *Leaves of Grass* of 1855, the poem was slightly revised (see, e.g., its incipit, "Suddenly out of its stale and drowsy lair, the lair of slaves," where "lair" replaces the original "air," emphasising the feeling of disgust for the old European despotic kingdoms). It was then included, with further revisions, in all the following editions. Its 1856 title was "Poem of the Dead Young Men of Europe, The 72nd and 73rd Years of These States." Its final title, "Europe, The 72nd and 73rd Years of These States," was introduced in *Leaves of Grass*, 1881, when it was placed within the group of poems called "By the Roadside," while in 1871 and 1876 it had been among the "Songs of Insurrection." See death-bed edition in Norton Critical Edition of *Leaves of Grass*, ed. Sculley Bradley and Harold W. Blodgett (New York: Norton, 1973), 266–268, and, for first edition, the one edited by Mario Corona, *Foglie d'erba 1855* (with English original) (Venice: Marsilio, 1996), 362–364, 416.

10. Paola Gemme, *Domesticating Foreign Struggles: The Italian Risorgimento and Antebellum American Identity* (Athens: Georgia University Press, 2005), 118–119, citing [Maximilian Schele De Vere], "Glimpses at Europe during 1848: The Lombardo-Veneto Kingdom," *Southern Literary Messenger* 15, no. 4 (April 1849): 194–195. The metaphor of Italy's "awakening" and resurrection appears again, e.g., in Victor Hugo's speech in support of Garibaldi, on June 18, 1860; see his "Rentrée à Jersey—Garibaldi," in *Oeuvres complètes de Victor Hugo: Actes et Paroles II—Pendant l'exile 1852–1870* (1875) (Paris: J. Hetzel and A. Quantin, 1883), 250: "L'Italie, la grande morte, s'est réveillée; voyez-la, elle se lève et sourit au genre humain" ("Italy, the great dead, has awakened; look at her, she is raising and smiling to mankind").

11. See a selection of her letters in M. Fuller Ossoli, *At Home and Abroad; or, Things and Thoughts in America and Europe*, ed. by her brother, Arthur B. Fuller (Boston: Crosby, Nichols, and Co., 1856). The letters quoted above are "Things and Thoughts in Europe: Letter XVIII," originally published as a dispatch in the *New-York Daily Tribune*, January 1, 1848, reprinted in Fuller, *At Home and Abroad*, 250–256 (citation on page 255: "I listen to the same arguments against the emancipation of Italy, that are used against the emancipation of our blacks"); and a letter of July 1849, "Letters from Abroad to Friends at

Home. To William Henry Channing,” in Fuller, *At Home and Abroad*, 437–438 (citation on page 438).

12. Giuseppe Garibaldi, “All’armi tutti!” (To arms, all of you!), speech delivered in Naples, Italy, on November 8, 1860, urging all his soldiers to march with him “al riscatto dei nostri fratelli, ancora schiavi dello straniero” (“to the liberation of our brothers, still slaves of the foreigner”). See in the Emerson Kent archive of famous speeches, at http://www.emersonkent.com/speeches/all_armi_tutti.htm. About Italy’s representation as an enslaved female figure, see Elisabetta Marino, *Mary Shelley e l’Italia: Il viaggio, il Risorgimento, la questione femminile* (Florence: Le Lettere, 2011).

13. Dennis Berthold, *American Risorgimento: Herman Melville and the Cultural Politics of Italy* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2009), 3–4.

14. On Margaret Fuller’s engagement with the Italian Risorgimento and the Roman Republic, see *Margaret Fuller: Transatlantic Crossings in a Revolutionary Age*, ed. Charles Capper and Cristina Giorcelli, foreword by Lester K. Little (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008); and several essays in *Gli Americani e la Repubblica Romana del 1849*, ed. Sara Antonelli, Daniele Fiorentino, and Giuseppe Monsagrati (Rome: Gangemi, 2000); Cristina Giorcelli, “La Repubblica romana di Margaret Fuller: tra visione politica e impegno etico,” 53–88; Sara Antonelli “E’ questo che fa la mia America: il giornalismo di Margaret Fuller,” 131–158; and, with translations, Rosella Mamoli Zorzi, “Le lettere di Margaret Fuller al *New-York Daily Tribune*,” 215–247, and Biancamaria Tedeschini Lalli, “Fuller e Thoreau,” 249–255. See also Claude Cazalé Bérard, “Margaret Fuller, un’altro sguardo sull’Europa delle Rivoluzioni,” in her *Donne tra memoria e scrittura: Fuller, Weil, Sachs, Morante* (Rome: Carocci, 2009), 90–118.

15. Herman Melville, *Mardi: and a Voyage Thither* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1849); repr., ed. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle, historical note Elisabeth S. Foster (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 323 (in vol. 2, chapter 105).

16. Ibid., 332–334 (chapter 108), and 467 (chapter 145).

17. Dennis Berthold, *American Risorgimento*, 86. Melville revised *Mardi* in the summer of 1848, a few months after Pius IX delivered his allocution of April 29, in which he denied his support to the cause of Italian unity and made it clear he had abandoned his initial liberalism. The disenchantment among American liberals at the Pope’s new attitude is well testified to by other contemporary literary documents, such as Henry T. Tuckerman’s second sonnet dedicated to Pius IX, “To the Same: in 1849,” *Literary World*, September 1, 1849, p. 201 (his earliest sonnet, praising the Pope, “Pius IX,” originally published in the *Literary World*, November 27, 1847, p. 405, was republished next to his 1849 poem, and retitled “To Pius IX: in 1848”), and Margaret Fuller’s dispatch, “Things and Thoughts in Europe. Letter XXIV,” *New-York Daily Tribune*, June 15, 1848, pp. 1–5 (in Fuller, *At Home and Abroad*, 310–327). See also Julia Ward Howe’s poem, “Pio Nono,” in her *Passion Flowers* (Boston: Ticknor, Reed and Fields, 1854), 26–27; and the chapters (VIII–XII) devoted to Rome in James Jackson Jarves, *Italian Sights and Papal Principles, Seen through American Spectacles* (1856), 224–359, ending with this strong statement: “Until the spirit is released from external bondage, Rome will continue to be the nightmare on progress.” On H. T. Tuckerman, M. Fuller, J. W. Howe and Italy, see Leonardo Buonomo, *Backward Glances: Exploring Italy, Reinterpreting America (1831–1866)* (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996), 27–46, 76–91. On Rome for American artists

and intellectuals in the nineteenth century, see Cristina Giorcelli, “La Repubblica romana di Margaret Fuller,” 53–56.

18. “Epistle to Daniel Shepherd,” dated July 6, 1859, was first published in Herman Melville, *Representative Selections*, ed. Willard Thorp (New York: American Book Co., 1938). For its composition, see Hershel Parker, *Herman Melville: A Biography (1851–1891)*, vol. 2 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 401, 402; and Hershel Parker, *Melville: The Making of the Poet* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 122–123. For its date of publication, see Robert L. Gale, *A Herman Melville Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1995), 130.

19. The Neapolitan diptych was included in *The Works of Herman Melville*, standard ed., vol. 16 (London: Constable, 1924), 351–377, and 378–403. See also Herman Melville, “At the Hostelry” and “Naples in the Time of Bomba,” ed. Gordon Poole (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1989). “Bomba” was the contemptuous nickname earned in liberal circles by the Bourbon King of the Two Sicilies, Ferdinand II, for the royal bombardment of Messina in 1848. In the two-line epigraph at the beginning of “At the Hostelry,” the Pope is defined as “Borgia Pope,” next to “Bomba King” (“Be Borgia Pope, be Bomba King, / The roses blow, the song-birds sing.”).

20. Hershel Parker, “A Nonpartisan Becoming a Poet during the Risorgimento,” in his *Melville: The Making of the Poet*, 111–123.

21. James Russell Lowell, “*The Marble Faun*, by Nathaniel Hawthorne, A Review,” *Atlantic Monthly* (April 1860): 510: “The book is steeped in Italian atmosphere.”

22. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun; or, The Romance of Monte Beni*, 2 vols. (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1860); repr., intro. and notes Richard H. Brodhead (New York: Penguin, 1990), 325–326. All of the following quotations from *The Marble Faun* are from this Penguin edition.

23. Herman Melville, “Hawthorne and His Mosses,” *The Literary World*, August 17 and 24, 1850; repr. in *The Shock of Recognition: The Development of Literature in the United States Recorded by the Men Who Made It* (1943), ed. Edmund Wilson (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1955), 194. For a discussion about the notion of “indirection” in the writers of the so-called American Renaissance, see Marjorie Garber, *Loaded Words* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 83–93 (chapter 6, “Translating F. O. Matthiessen”).

24. Hawthorne, *Marble Faun*, 22 and 429–430.

25. Ibid., 2, 48. In the Penguin edition the name Rachel is spelled “Rachael,” but the original 1860 edition published in Boston has the usual spelling “Rachel”; therefore, I have kept the author’s spelling also in the quotation above. Rachel is one of the four Biblical matriarchs and an archetypal figure of the Hebrew Bible; in contrast, the Book of Judith is one of the so-called deuterocanonical books, which are not part of the Hebrew Bible and are considered canonical only by the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches.

26. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The English Notebooks, 1853–1856: The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, vol. 21 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1968), 481–482 (passage dated April 13, 1856); quoted in David Greven, “Hawthorne and the Gender of Jewishness: Anti-Semitism, Aesthetics, and Sexual Politics in *The Marble Faun*,” *Journal of American Culture* 35, no. 2 (June 2012): 135–136. The “beautiful Jewess” was Emma Abigail Montefiore Salomons (1833–1859); her “ugly” husband was the Mayor’s brother, Philip Salomons (1796–1867). About Hawthorne’s attitude

toward Judaism, see also Elissa Greenwald, “Hawthorne and Judaism: Otherness and Identity in *The Marble Faun*,” *Studies in the Novel* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 128–138, and Irina Rabinovich, *Re-Dressing Miriam*, 7–10, and 17–87. About his racial aesthetics and the issue of slavery in Hawthorne, see Arthur Riss, “The Art of Discrimination,” *ELH* 71, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 251–287.

27. Augustus M. Kolich, “Miriam and the Conversion of the Jews in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Marble Faun*,” *Studies in the Novel* 33, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 432. I am grateful to David I. Kertzer and Etta Madden for bringing this article to my attention.

28. Ibid., 431.

29. Ibid., 433.

30. Ibid., 432, 433.

31. Buonomo, *Backward Glances*, 54, 55.

32. Kolich, “Miriam and the Conversion of the Jews in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Marble Faun*,” 431. In the quotation above, I have kept the critic’s spelling for “Sacre” Coeur (Hawthorne in the novel writes “Sacré”; see Hawthorne, *Marble Faun*, 466). Anti-Catholic themes, with women being kidnapped from confessionals and escaped nuns’ narratives, were very popular in American literature in the 1830s–1860s, the greatest bestseller being Maria Monk’s *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal* (New York: Howe & Bates, 1836; New York: Arno, 1977), which sold 300,000 copies by 1860. See Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); and Susan M. Griffin, *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 29 (for the figures of copies sold) and all the book for a thorough study of nineteenth-century anti-Catholic fiction.

33. Hawthorne, *Marble Faun*, 463, 464.

34. Ibid., 464, 465. For a discussion about the instability of truth in Hawthorne’s aesthetics, in connection with his representation of an ambiguously Jewish character such as Miriam in *The Marble Faun*, see Anita Durkin, “Miriam’s ‘Fragmentary Narratives’ and the Idea of Truth in *The Marble Faun*,” chapter 3 of her Ph.D. diss., “Negotiating Meaning: the Aestheticization of the Novel in James, Hawthorne, and Wharton,” University of Rochester, Dept. of English, 2011.

35. Hawthorne, *Marble Faun*, 466.

36. Ibid., 416. My italics.

37. Ibid., 455.

38. Ibid., 455–456. In the original American edition of 1860, in this passage there are dashes instead of brackets. I have kept the parenthesis of the Penguin edition of *The Marble Faun*, which is based on the *Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, vol. 4 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1968); see Hawthorne, *Marble Faun* (Penguin), xxxiii. I have normalized the position of a comma, placing it not within but after the parenthesis.

39. For details about the first part of Hawthorne’s Italian sojourn and his first impressions of Rome and Florence, see Sirpa Salenius, “Nathaniel’s Hawthorne’s Impressions of Florence,” in *America and the Mediterranean*, ed. Massimo Bacigalupo and Pierangelo Castagneto (Turin: Otto, 2003), 343–349. For information on his whole Italian sojourn, see Frank Preston Stearns, *The Life and Genius of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1906), chapter 14, “Italy.” Hawthorne lived in Rome from January 20 until

May 24, 1858. He then spent the summer in Florence, from June 3 until the first of October 1858 (first in the city, and then from August, in a Tuscan villa, Villa Montauto on a hill called Bellosguardo, about one mile from Florence). From October 1858 until the end of May 1859, he was back in Rome with his wife and their three children.

40. Hawthorne, *Marble Faun*, 2–3 (my italics).

41. Ibid., 3.

42. Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet, “Everywhere . . . a Cross—and nastiness at the foot of It”: History, Ethics, and Slavery in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Marble Faun*, chapter 2 in her *The Poetics and Politics of the American Gothic: Gender and Slavery in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 55.

43. Ibid.

44. Robert S. Levine, “‘Antebellum Rome’ in *The Marble Faun*,” *American Literary History* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 19–20.

45. John Carlos Rowe, “Nathaniel Hawthorne and Transnationality,” in *Hawthorne and the Real: Bicentennial Essays*, ed. Millicent Bell (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005), 98. This essay is remarkable for its very accurate understanding of the Italian historical situation at the time when Hawthorne composed *The Marble Faun*, “in the midst of the formation of the modern Italian nation” (*ibid.*). As for the issue of transnationality and the debate on the “transnational turn” in American studies, see Winfried Fluck, Donald E. Pease, and John Carlos Rowe, eds., *Re-Framing the Transnational Turn in American Studies*, Dartmouth Series in American Studies, intro. Donald E. Pease (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2011), and the other titles by Donald E. Pease, John Carlos Rowe, and other scholars mentioned in the bibliography. A great contribution to this debate was made by the “Futures of American Studies” Institute at Dartmouth College, directed by Donald E. Pease, providing “a shared space of critical enquiry” with its challenging summer weeks and multi-year focus on “State(s) of American Studies.”

46. “Amerique. . . . Testament de John Brown,” *Le Siècle*, December 23, 1859, pp. 1–2 (reporting from the *Courrier des États-Unis: Organe des populations Franco-Américaines*, “organ of the Franco-American population”).

47. “Address of John Brown to the Virginia Court at Charles Town, Virginia, on November 2, 1859,” available online at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2943t.html>.

48. See, e.g., Henry David Thoreau, “A Plea for Captain John Brown” (speech first delivered in Concord, Mass., October 30, 1859), “Martyrdom of John Brown” (speech delivered at the Concord Town Hall, December 2, 1859), and “The Last Days of John Brown” (1860), all collected in Thoreau, *Collected Essays and Poems* (New York: Library of America, 2001), 396–443; Ralph Waldo Emerson, “John Brown,” speech delivered at Tremont Temple, Boston, November 18, 1859, in *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: Modern Library of America, 1940), 878–882; and John Greenleaf Whittier’s poem “Brown of Ossawatomie,” *New York Independent*, December 22, 1859; repr. in Whittier’s collection *National Lyrics*, ill. George G. White, H. Fenn, and Charles A. Barry (Boston, Ticknor & Fields, 1865), 89–90, where it is illustrated by a woodcut, titled as the poem, engraved by Nathaniel Orr (signed N. Orr. Co.).

49. Following the 1851 coup d'état by Prince Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte (at the time President of the French Second Republic) and the subsequent re-establishment of the

French Empire the next year, Victor Hugo was living abroad from December 1851, first as a political proscrip, interdicted to live in France, and then in voluntary exile—at first shortly in Brussels, then in the Channel island of Jersey and finally in Guernsey—an exile that would last for twenty years, until the defeat of Napoleon III during the Franco-Prussian war in 1870. In 1854, Hugo wrote a poem for Alexandre Dumas, evoking his departure as an exile from the quay of Antwerp in 1852, accompanied in his farewell by Dumas and a crowd of other friends. See Victor Hugo, “A Alexandre D,” in his *Les Contemplations*, vol. 2 (Aujourd’hui: 1843–1855,), Book 5, no. 15 (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1856), 137–138.

50. Victor Hugo, “Un mot sur John Brown,” *La Presse*, December 8, 1859, p. 1 (letter sent from Hauteville-House, December 2, 1859). Also as “Aux États-Unis d’Amérique,” in Victor Hugo’s *Actes et Paroles II—Pendant l’exil 1852–1870* (1875) (Paris: J. Hetzel and A. Quantin, 1883), 235–239. The English translation, “Victor Hugo on John Brown,” published in the London *Daily News* on December 10, 1859, was reprinted from that source in the *Chicago Press and Tribune*, December 27, 1859, p. 4. All the following English quotations from this letter are from the latter source, and all the quotations in the French original are from *La Presse*. Victor Séjour, who greatly admired Victor Hugo, was so impressed by a biography of John Brown prefaced by this letter of Hugo’s, that he even thought of dramatizing Brown’s life in a play, a project announced in *Douglass’ Monthly* in 1861.

51. Legislative restrictions against the Jews of France had already progressively diminished in the course of the eighteenth century. Among the early advocates of Jewish emancipation in France, one should mention Count Honoré de Mirabeau (see his pamphlet “Sir Moses Mendelsohn, sur la Réforme Politique des Juifs,” London, 1787), and abbé Henry Grégoire, both of whom advocated full rights of citizenship for Jews. It was then the French politician Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnere (1757–1792), a nobleman who in 1789 at the French National Constituent Assembly voted for the abolition of aristocratic privileges and advocated the removal of restrictions for Jews and Protestants, who in a famous speech best articulated the idea concerning the emancipation of the Jews that would prevail in the following decades, when he said: “Il faut tout refuser aux Juifs comme nation et tout accorder aux Juifs comme individus. . . . Il faut qu’ils soient individuellement citoyens” (“One must deny all to Jews as a nation and grant all to Jews as individuals. . . . They must be citizens individually”). On September 27, 1791, thanks to the initiative of a member of the Jacobin Club called Duport, just a few days before its dissolution the Assembly voted a proposition stating that, since freedom of worship did not allow any distinction in the political rights of its citizens on account of their creed, the Jews in France also should enjoy the privileges of full citizenship. The proposition, approved by the Assembly, was thus inserted in the new Constitution, and the law stating that the Jews were French citizens was ratified by King Louis XVI on November 16, 1791. The process of Jewish emancipation in France continued with Napoleon, who spread the notion of Jewish emancipation in the lands he conquered across Europe (starting with the Jews of Ancona, Italy, in 1797), and, from 1806, by passing measures in favor of the Jews in the French Empire, such as the addition, in 1807, of Judaism as one of the official religions of the country, beside Catholicism and Protestantism (some restrictions were still kept or re-introduced later, though). A visual document of this phase can be admired in an 1806 French print, subtitled “Napoleon le Grand, rétablit le culte des Israélites, le 30 mai 1806” (“Napoleon the

Great re-establishes the religion of the Israelites, on May 30, 1806"), showing the French Emperor who with his hand raises a woman, symbolizing Judaism, who is miserably sitting on the floor next to a Torah and a seven-branched lamp (a *Menorah*); the color print (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleon_and_the_Jews) celebrates Napoleon's decree of May 30, 1806, establishing the creation of an assembly of Jewish rabbis and leaders from all parts of France who would represent the Jewish community as a consultative body.

52. The British Slavery Abolition Act (whose long title read, "An Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies; for promoting the Industry of the manumitted Slaves; and for compensating the Persons hitherto entitled to the Services of such Slaves") was granted royal assent on August 28, 1833, but, in accordance with the terms of this act, slaves in most of the British Empire and its colonies were actually emancipated one year later, on August 1, 1834; and, because of the so-called apprenticeship system, obliging former slaves to become "apprenticed Labourers" of their former owners for a certain period of time, full emancipation was granted only in 1838.

53. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *An Address on the Anniversary of the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies* (Boston: James Munroe and Co, 1844). On Emerson and his "interest in the connection between racial hybridization and national identity," see Anita Haya Patterson, *From Emerson to King: Democracy, Race, and the Politics of Protest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 126–155 (quotation on p. 150).

54. The last phase of the struggle was led by Daniel O'Connell (1778–1847), member of an Irish Catholic aristocratic family, who, after attending Catholic colleges in Europe and practising law as a barrister, first in London then in Dublin, got involved with politics and became the leader of the Catholic Emancipation movement in Ireland. In 1823, he founded the Catholic Association to campaign for the removal of discrimination against Catholics. He was elected to Parliament in 1828 but as a Catholic was not allowed to take his seat in the House of Commons; in 1829 the British Parliament, to avoid the risk of civil war in Ireland, passed the Roman Catholic Relief Act (An Act for the Relief of His Majesty's Roman Catholic Subjects), which granted Catholic emancipation, put an end to British anti-Catholic legislation, and enabled the first Catholic Irishman to take his seat in the British Parliament.

55. Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), conclusion of chapter 11, "Emancipation 1815–1858."

56. Cf. Michael Goldfarb, *Emancipation: How Liberating Europe's Jews from the Ghetto Led to Revolution and Renaissance* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), 252.

57. The political career of David Salomons, like the one of Lionel de Rothschild told above, shows the huge legal obstacles that Jews were still facing in the United Kingdom, in spite of the economic and social improvement of their condition. Although elected Sheriff of the City of London in 1835, Salomons refused to swear the mandatory oath of office, which included Christian statements of faith, and therefore could not take up his post until 1839, when the Sheriff's Declaration Act was passed. In 1835 he was also elected as an Alderman of the City of London, but once again was disqualified for refusing to swear the required oath (see above for Charles Jameson Grant's satirical cartoon "Immolation of the Jew!" about this event). Re-elected as an Alderman in 1847, this time he could take that post, since the oath had been amended by the Religious Opinions Relief Act. In 1855, the Aldermen even elected him Lord Mayor of London, the first Jew to get that title. Yet the doors of Parliament were still closed to Jews who did not convert to Christianity.

Elected as a member of Parliament in 1851, in spite of his attempt to take his seat in the House of Commons by swearing the oath of office with omission of the Christian sentences, he was removed and fined for having voted “illegally” in three parliamentary divisions. In 1859, he was re-elected; this time he could take his seat as an MP in the House of Commons, thanks to the Jews Relief Act of 1858. He was made a Baronet in 1869, and was a MP from 1858 until his death in 1873. The account by Nathaniel Hawthorne in his *English Notebooks* (April 13, 1856), about his dinner at David Salomons’ Mansion, testifies to the kind of strong anti-Semitic prejudice the American writer shared with contemporary Victorian society.

58. See the *Diarie di Sir Moses e Lady Montefiore*, ed. L. Loewe, 2 vols. (Chicago: Belford-Clarke, 1890), chapters X, XI, XII, and XIV of vol. 2; Abigail Green, *Moses Montefiore: Jewish Liberator, Imperial Hero* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010); and Moses Averbach and Pamela Melnikoff, *Anglo-Jewry and the Mortara Case*, (s.l.: s.n., 19—), unpublished manuscript, available at the National Library of Israel, on the Givat Ram campus of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

59. Concerning the Jewish-American struggle for civil rights and emancipation, see some sections in my book on Jewish-American literature up to the shoah: Elèna Mortara, *Letteratura ebraico-americana dalle origini alla shoà: Profilo storico-letterario e saggi* (Rome: Litos, 2006), 29–41, 141–172.

60. A disquieting analysis of the historical experience of Jewish emancipation in Europe, in the light of the shoah, can be found in Hannah Arendt’s study, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1951); see “Part One: Antisemitism,” 2nd enlarged ed. (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1958), 3–120.

61. “Le Pape et le Congrès,” *Le Siècle*, December 23, 1859, p. 2, publishing sections from VI to X of the whole pamphlet. On the following page of the paper, p. 3, another article by the French Catholic lawyer and politician Frédéric Arnaud (de l’Ariège), “La Papauté temporelle et la nationalité italienne” (Temporal papacy and Italian nationality), dealt with the same subject and supported even more radically the option of not maintaining the Pope’s temporal power, for the sake of “the liberty of peoples.”

62. [Arthur de La Guéronnière], *Le Pape et le Congrès* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1859). Dentu is the publishing house referred to in the passage from *Le Siècle* and *L’Ami de la religion* we mentioned previously, concerning *La Tireuse de cartes*, where it was said that Séjour’s play had almost achieved the importance of a pamphlet published at Dentu. Arthur de La Guéronnière had already published anonymously a pamphlet, *Napoleon III et l’Italie*, that had come out at the beginning of the year.

63. “The European Congress; the Pope and the Congress: A Semi-Official Declaration of the French Emperor,” *New York Times*, January 9, 1860. The capital letters for “Napoleon” are in the original.

64. The full title of the collection, in its Italian original, is *La sovranità temporale dei romani pontefici propugnata nella sua integrità dal suffragio dell’orbe cattolico, regnante Pio IX, l’anno XIV*, 16 vols. (Rome: Civiltà Cattolica, 1860–1864). Volume I includes the Pope’s encyclical of June 18, 1859, and his following allocutions until January 19, 1860, and is then devoted to Italy. On this collection and on the American Catholic reaction recorded there, see Giovanni Pizzorusso, “I cattolici nordamericani e *La sovranità temporale dei romani pontefici (1860–1864)*,” in Daniele Fiorentino and Matteo Sanfilippo, eds., *Gli Stati Uniti e l’Unità d’Italia*, 113–124. On Pius IX and the Roman question, see the

classic study by Jesuit scholar Giacomo Martina, *Pio IX (1851–1866)* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana [E.P.U.G.], 1985), particularly chapter 3, “La questione romana,” 85–154, and the paragraph beginning “Il caso Mortara” in chapter 1, “Pio IX come sovrano temporale,” 31–35. Here, *La Tireuse de cartes* is mentioned with a wrongly-spelled title, *La Tireuse de chartes* (with a confusion between “cartes”, i.e. “cards,” and “chartes,” i.e. “charters”), and surprisingly defined as “an anticlerical satire by a collaborator of his [Napoleon’s], Jean Mocquart” (“una satira anticlericale [sic!] di un suo collaboratore, Jean Mocquart”) (Martina, *Pio IX*, 34, my italics). Giacomo Martina had obviously not read the play.

65. See Mercier de Lacombe, “Le Pape et le Congrès,” *L’Ami de la religion*, December 27, 1859, p. 835: “As for us, we love the cause of the independence and of the liberty of peoples” (“Nous aimons, quant à nous, la cause de l’indépendance et de la liberté des peuples”). On the political evolution of the magazine toward more liberal positions, its crisis due to the competition of *L’Univers*, and its final fall and closing in 1862 because of a financial and political scandal, see M. Patricia Dougherty, “The Rise and Fall of *L’Ami de la Religion*: History, Purpose, and Readership of a French Catholic Newspaper,” *Catholic Historical Review* 77, no. 1 (January 1991): 21–41. *L’Ami de la religion* came out on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

66. Léon Lavedan, “Bulletin Politique / 23 décembre,” *L’Ami de la religion*, December 24, 1859, p. 818: “L’événement du jour est la publication d’une brochure anonyme, *Le Pape et le Congrès*, annoncée avec un certain fracas, et sur l’origine de laquelle circulent divers rumeurs.”

67. See *L’Ami de la religion*, December 24, 1859, pp. 818–822.

68. Ibid., 857–864 (on the controversy concerning *Le Pape et le Congrès*), and M. [Marins] Garcin, “Chronique,” 867–868 (on *La Tireuse de cartes*).

69. Léon Lavedan, “Bulletin Politique / 30 décembre,” *L’Ami de la religion*, December 31, 1859, p. 876.

70. See *L’Ami de la religion*, January 3, 1860, pp. 1–11, esp. pp. 5 (“question romaine”), 10 (“dans ce moment de crise”), and 11 (“lyre révolutionnaire”); see also, e.g., *L’Ami de la religion*, January 12, 1860, p. 81 (“question italienne”).

71. Abbé P. Lamazov, “Bulletin Religieux,” *L’Ami de la religion*, January 3, 1860, p. 11. Nice and Savoy would be given by Piedmont-Sardinia to France in 1860, in exchange for the contended Italian Central States, which would be annexed to Piedmont-Sardinia, after the French recognition of the Plebiscites.

72. In the French translation of a revolutionary speech made by Garibaldi in Milan, reported in the same issue of *L’Ami de la religion* of January 3, 1860 (Léon Lavedan, “Bulletin Politique,” 2), one finds the usual French verbs for the granting of liberty, *délivrer* and *affranchir*: “La paix de Villafranca a laissé une vaste carrière à la bravoure italienne. La France, qui nous a donné son concours pour *délivrer* en partie l’Italie, a voulu nous laisser l’honneur d’*affranchir* ceux de nos frères qui sont opprimés, et de *délivrer* toute notre Italie par la force des armes italiennes” (“The Peace of Villafranca left a vast opportunity for Italian bravery. France, that gave us its cooperation to *liberate* part of Italy, wanted to let us have the honor of *emancipating* those of our brethren who are oppressed, and of liberating all of our Italy by the force of Italian arms”) (my italics.).

73. The Pope’s speech is reported, from the *Moniteur*, in *L’Ami de la religion*, January 12, 1860, p. 83; the New Year’s good wishes were welcomed by the Pope as “doubly

dear to us this day, on account of the succession of exceptional events which have taken place” (“doublement chers aujourd’hui à cause des événements exceptionnels qui se sont succédé”). The Emperor’s letter is on pages 83–84. Most of this issue is about the Roman question (81–90). The two documents, the Pope’s and the Emperor’s, were published in English, from the same *Moniteur* source, in the *New York Times*, February 6, 1860, with an article by the paper’s correspondent Malakoff.

74. See report on Cavour’s circular letter in Léon Lavedan, “Bulletin Politique,” *L’Ami de la religion*, February 7, 1860, p. 301.

75. For the report on the Turin performance of *La Tireuse de cartes*, see *L’Ami de la religion*, February 9, 1860, p. 335, and in chapter 12 of this book. The report appeared in that issue after two other texts, both related to the Roman question—a very long letter of the bishop of Orleans, Félix Dupanloup, author of several counter-pamphlets supporting the Pope’s temporal power, addressed to the editor-in-chief of the liberal *Constitutionnel* (“Lettre de Mgr l’évêque d’Orléans,” *ibid.*, 321–330), with the attached letter of a dead bishop of Lower-Normandy who had written on the pope’s temporal power in the early nineteenth century; and an article on the kind of possible suffrage, universal or restricted, by which the annexation would be voted.

76. Heinrich Heine, “Italien 1828: Reise von München nach Genua. XXIX,” in his *Reisebilder*, vol. 3 (1830); in *Heinrich Heine’s Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 4, ed. Oskar Walzel (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1913), 298 (“Was ist aber diese grosse Aufgabe unserer Zeit? / Es ist die Emanzipation. Nicht bloss die der Irländer, Griechen, Frankfurter Juden, westindischen Schwarzen und dergleichen gedrückten Volkes, sondern es ist die Emanzipation der ganzen Welt, absonderlich Europas”); trans. Charles Godfrey Leland, “Italy (1828): Journey from Munich to Genoa,” *Pictures of Travel* (1855); repr., 4th rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Frederick Leypoldt, 1863), 290. I have cited Leland’s English translation because it conveys the language of the writer’s time (e.g. “Volk” translated as “race,” rather than as “people” or “nation”). On Leland’s and American translations of Heine, see Jeffrey L. Sammons, “Charles Godfrey Leland and the English-Language Heine Edition,” in *Heine-Jahrbuch*, ed. Joseph A. Kruse (Dusseldorf: Metzler, 1998), 140–167; and Jeffrey Grossman, “Pictures of Travel: Heine in America,” in *German Culture in Nineteenth-Century America: Reception, Adaptation and Transformation*, ed. Lynne Talock and Matt Erlin (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005), 183–210.

77. The etymology of the related Latin verb *emancipare* (past participle: *emancipatus*), from which the English verb *emancipate* derives, is the following: from *ex-* “out, away” + *mancipare* “deliver, transfer, or sell” (from *mancipum* “ownership,” which comes from *manus* “hand” + *capere* “take”). Therefore, literally, *emancipare* means “to take away from the hands, or ownership” of an owner. See Douglass Harper, “Emancipate,” *Online Etymology Dictionary*, 2014. <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=emancipate>. The original sense of “emancipation” as the official release of a child from paternal power still survives in U.S. law in the term “emancipated minor.”

78. Douglass Harper, “Emancipation,” *Online Etymology Dictionary*, and “Emancipation” in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 155.

79. See the “first periodical in the United States solely devoted to the abolitionist cause,” founded in 1820 by the Quaker Elihu Embree, which was called *The Emancipator* (the citation is from the back cover of Elihu Embree, *The Emancipator*, intro. Ella P. Buchanan

and John F. Nash (Jonesborough, TN: Embreeville Publications, 1995). In 1821, after its founder's early death, the new editor, Benjamin Lundy, renamed it *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*. In the same years, in England and Germany the term "emancipation" was used in relation to the Catholic and Jewish emancipations. See *An Epistle from a High Priest of the Jews to the Chief Priest of Canterbury, on the Extension of the Catholic Emancipation to the Jews*, 2nd ed. (London: Effingham Wilson, 1821). The publication was announced in *The Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review*, June 9, 1821, p. 368; according to Joseph Jacobs and Lucien Wolf, *Catalogue of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition, Royal Albert Hall, London, 1887* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 35, it is the reprint of an eighteenth-century pamphlet, *The Complaint of the Children of Israel*, 1736, under a new title having the significant addition of the word emancipation in it. And see Wilhelm Traugott Krug, "Über das Verhältnis verschiedener Religionsparteien zum Staate und über die Emanzipation der Juden," *Minerva*, 3, 1828, pp. 161–200 (then collected in Krug's *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 4 [Braunschweig: Friedrich Bieweg, 1834], 459–482). Both *An Epistle from a High Priest of the Jews* and Krug's "Über das Verhältnis" are cit. in Jacob Katz, "The Term 'Jewish Emancipation': Its Origin and Historical Impact," in *Studies in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Intellectual History*, ed. Alexander Altman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 16–17.

80. The so-called Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 was officially named "Catholic Relief Act," and, in its subtitle, "An Act for the Relief of His Majesty's Roman Catholic Subjects." The Emancipation of Negroes in the British West Indies of 1833 was called "An Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies. . ." The Jewish Emancipation Act of 1858 was called "Jews Relief Act," or "An Act to Provide for the Relief of Her Majesty's Subjects Professing the Jewish Religion." The Emancipation of the Waldensians, the most important Italian Protestant minority at the time, and of the Jews in Piedmont-Sardinia was not a separate document, but part of the Statuto ("Statute," or "Constitution") of 1848, which served as the constitution of the future Kingdom of Italy. Even Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation against black slavery was originally simply titled "By the President of the United States. A Proclamation." In the original document of January 1, 1863, signed by Lincoln, the word "Emancipation" is not present in the title, nor can it be found, in fact, in the text of the Proclamation, where the word used is rather "freedom" (even R. W. Emerson's famous article published in *The Atlantic Monthly* of November 1862, usually reprinted as "The Emancipation Proclamation," was actually simply titled "The President's Proclamation"). Yet all these key acts and proclamations were soon known and transmitted to the following generations under the common name of Emancipation. The abolitionist journalist Charles Godfrey Leland, editor during the Civil War of the Bostonian pro-Union *The Continental Monthly*, later claimed in his *Memoirs* that he had "hastened by several months the emancipation of slaves by Abraham Lincoln," thanks to his policy of substituting in his editorials the word "abolition" with the word "emancipation," and the word "Abolitionist" with the word "Emancipationist," since he had discovered that "the real block in the way of Northern union was the disgust which had gathered round the mere *name* of Abolitionist" (Charles Godfrey Leland, *Memoirs* [New York: D. Appleton, 1893; 2nd ed., London: William Heinemann, 1894], 242–243; italics in the original). Leland is the writer whom we already met as first translator of Heine's *Reisebilder*, where he had dealt with that idea and word in the chapter titled "Die Emanzipazion." The transatlantic connection around the issue of emancipation is well

represented by the writings of this cosmopolitan intellectual, who is not sufficiently remembered nowadays.

81. Thomas Bender, *A Nation among Nations*, 122.

*Chapter 14. Rise and Fall of an Expatriate Playwright—
“This Shakespeare of the Boulevard”*

1. Victor Séjour, *Le Paletot brun* (“Comédie en un acte et en prose”) (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1859). It was first performed at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, Paris, December 28, 1859. It was translated into English by Townsend Brewster and produced at the Circle in the Square Theater, New York, on December 6–17, 1972. Another translation, by Pat Hecht, titled *The Brown Overcoat*, was published in *Black Theater, U.S.A.: Forty-Five Plays by Black Americans, 1847–1974*, ed. James Vernon Hatch, consultant Ted Shine (New York: Free Press, 1974); rev. and expanded edition, *Black Theatre USA: Plays by African Americans, The Early Period, 1847–1918*, ed. James Vernon Hatch and Ted Shine (New York: Free Press, 1996), 25–34. A video production of *Le Paletot brun* in French, directed by Natasha Sebeyran, filmed by Eric Ball, played by Pauline Turpin, Lydie Decouvelaère, and Tyler Gardner, and with music by Pawel Blaszcak, was published as an online video in three parts on April 28, 2011; it was produced by students of Centenary College of Louisiana (Shreveport) with the support of the Consulate General of France in New Orleans. Thanks are given by the producers to Eric Ball, Dana Kress (professor of French at Centenary College) and Laurence Sebeyran, as well as to the Marjorie Lyons Playhouse, the theater on the campus of Centenary College.

2. Victor Séjour, *Compère Guillery* (“Drame en cinq actes et neuf tableaux”) (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1860) (first performed at the Théâtre de l’Ambigu-Comique, Paris, March 3, 1860); and Victor Séjour, *Les Aventuriers* (“Drame en cinq actes et un prologue, en prose”) (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1860) (first performed at the Théâtre de la Gaîté, Paris, April 12, 1860). The former play is set in France in the early seventeenth century; the latter dramatizes the tragic attempt of a Farnese to grasp illegitimate power in Piacenza.

3. H. H. Bramtot, “Gaîté. *Les Aventuriers*,” *Le Monde dramatique*, April 18, 1860, p. 3 (“Cet auteur a décidément accaparé le monopole des pièces ténébreuses, et de la Porte-Saint-Martin à la Gaîté, son nom rayonne en lettres triomphantes sur les affiches”); trans. in Charles Edwards O’Neill, *Séjour: Parisian Playwright from Louisiana* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1995), 84. For further contemporary criticism about these two plays in the cloak-and-dagger style, see Georges Roux, *Le Théâtre*, March 11, 1860, p. 2, and Théophile Gautier, *Le Moniteur universel*, March 12, 1860, feuilleton (about *Compère Guillery*), and *Le Moniteur universel*, April 17, 1860, feuilleton (about *Les Aventuriers*).

4. Victor Séjour, *Les Massacres de la Syrie* (“Drame en huit tableaux”) (Paris: J. Barbré, 1860) (first performed at the Théâtre Impérial du Cirque, Paris, December 28, 1860). On the history of these Parisian theaters, see Philippe Chauveau, *Les Théâtres parisiens disparus (1402–1986)* (Paris: L’Amandier, 1999).

5. Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 108. On this conflict and the French intervention, see in particular chapter 4 of this text, “The Damascus ‘Incident,’ ” 78–100, and chapter 5, “International Response,” 101–131. The Syrian crisis had started

in the province of Mount Lebanon, then under Syrian administration, and part of the Ottoman Empire. Its news “had been slow to reach Europe; telegrams from Beirut had to be sent via Smyrna, where the telephone station nearest Beirut was located,” but international knowledge of the massacres of Christians was “widespread by July” (*ibid.*). The decision for French military intervention was followed by a series of political agreements both with the Ottoman Empire and the other main European powers (Russia, Britain, Austria, and Prussia). The French expeditionary troops that landed in Beirut were led by General Beaufort d’Hautpoul.

6. Jean Rousseau, “Théâtres. Cirque-Impérial.—*Les Massacres de Syrie*, drame en cinq actes par MM. Mocquart et Victor Séjour,” *Le Figaro*, January 3, 1861, pp. 4–5, feuilleton (“ce grand spectacle qui mêle la comédie à l’histoire, le drame au ballet, les féeries de l’Opéra aux péripéties du boulevard”); trans. J. John Perret, “Victor Séjour, Black French Playwright from Louisiana,” *French Review*, 57, no. 2 (Dec. 1983): 191–192. In the French paper’s headline, both the title and the number of acts were different from the ones in the final published text. Two more pieces of news on *Les Massacres de Syrie* can be found in the non-feuilleton part of the same issue of *Le Figaro*, on page 2. The first is a humorous note that informs the readers of the camels brought on stage in the play, that had stayed in Marseilles for one month, says the paper, in order to lose their Arabic accent (provided, was the further joke, they did not learn the accent of Marseilles). Another note describes an encounter at the premiere with actress Lia Félix, met by another lady while still mourning and crying for the death of her sister Rachel.

7. Paul de Saint-Victor, for instance, writing in *La Presse* both on December 30, 1860, and in great detail on January 6, 1861, never brings up this rumor, and only concentrates on the superb beauty of the work.

8. Ernest Gebauer, “Prémières Réprésentations. Théâtre Impérial di Cirque,” *Le Monde dramatique*, January 3, 1861, p. 3 (“M. Victor Séjour et son collaborateur inconnu . . . que tout le monde connaît.”).

9. Ibid.: “Nous supposons inutile d’insister davantage sur ce sujet. Nos lecteurs sont gens d’esprit; il [sic] comprendront à demi mot.”

10. Séjour, *Les Massacres de la Syrie*, on the first printed page after the title (n.p.).

11. See Gamma (probably a pen name), “Letter from Paris,” *The Daily Picayune*, New Orleans, February 5, 1865, p. 2. In this long correspondence, which gives a detailed account of Mocquard’s past high functions as “the moon of the imperial sun,” there is a passage that describes Mocquard’s habits after his work at the Imperial Palace and that mentions Séjour: “when he [Mocquard] quitted the Tuilleries, he threw down his secretaryship with his pen, and he walked down the boulevards with your fellow-citizen, M. Victor Séjour, (his habitual co-laborer in dramatic works,) . . . as quietly and unpretendingly as he had walked in the reserved garden of the Tuilleries with the Emperor that morning.” There is another remarkable detail to be noticed here: Séjour is described to the readers of the New Orleans paper *The Daily Picayune* as “your fellow-citizen.” One infers that Séjour’s connection with New Orleans, and the public perception of his origins there, were still quite strong in 1865.

12. See the section on Mocquard in Charles Adrien Gustave Conegliano, *Le Second Empire: La maison de l’empereur* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1897; repr., Boston: Elibron Classics by Adamant Media Corporation, 2002), 118–122 (Adamant Media edition).

13. Séjour, *Les Massacres de la Syrie*, tableau 4, scene 1, p. 70: “Black faces have no marks: lines erased, lifeless eye; twenty feet away, doubt; thirty feet, confusion and darkness; fifty feet, night” (“Les visages noirs n’ont pas d’empreintes: traits effacés, œil éteint; à vingt pas, doute; à trente, confusion et ténèbres; à cinquante, nuit”); and tableau 6, scene 1, p. 90: “My mother, a Moréac, a noble and free woman sold as a slave” (“Ma mère, une Moréac, une femme noble et libre vendue comme une esclave”). For an analysis of these “racial allusion[s],” see J. John Perret, “Victor Séjour, Black French Playwright from Louisiana,” *French Review* 57, no. 2 (December 1983): 192. All the English translations, unless specified otherwise, are mine.

14. The scene in *Les Massacres de la Syrie*, tableau 1, scene 1, is set on the farm of the de Moréac family, a Christian family originally from the French northwest province of Brittany, that has been living in Syria for centuries, and is enjoying a peaceful and industrious life in this region. Martha, the family’s daughter, while welcoming some Christian sisters of charity (she will become one of them) and opening the farm’s doors to them for hospitality (hospitality being a major theme of the play), addresses her father with words of admiration for those “pious and saintly” sisters of charity: “Two of them are from Brittany like us, dear father. We have talked about the country. But their souls are so high and detached from our passions, that they find their homeland again anywhere where suffering requests them” (“Deux d’entre elles sont de Bretagne comme nous, mon père. Nous avons causé du pays. Mais elles ont l’âme si haute et si détachée de nos passions, qu’elles retrouvent leur patrie partout où la souffrance les réclame”). In this vision, the *pays*, the sweet country of one’s roots and origins (the *doux pays de mon enfance*, to use the words of a nostalgic modern French song), is substituted by the notion of a possible broader *patrie*, as described above.

15. For what concerns other characters of rebellious young men having the name of Georges (or George, in English) in the abolitionist literature of the time, see Gustave de Beaumont, *Marie: ou, L’esclavage aux États-Unis; tableau de mœurs américaines*, 2 vols. (Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1835, 4th ed. 1840); Victor Séjour, “Le Mulâtre,” *Revue des colonies* 3, no. 9 (March 1837); Alexandre Dumas *père*, *Georges* (1843; repr., ed. Léon-François Hoffmann (Paris: Gallimard, Folio, 1973); trans. Tina A. Kover, *Georges*, ed. with intro. and notes Werner Sollors, foreword Jamaica Kincaid (New York: Random House/Modern Library, 2007); and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly*, ill. Hammatt Billings, 2 vols. (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1852), for the character of George Harris, Eliza’s husband. *Georges* by Alexandre Dumas *père*, set on the island of Mauritius, is this writer’s only novel that has a mulatto hero and deals with the issue of race. About the theme of revenge in this novel, see Claudie Bernard, “The Mixed-Blood Settles Scores: The Question of Racial Justice in *Georges* by Alexandre Dumas,” in *Best Served Cold: Studies on Revenge*, ed. Sheila C. Bibb and Daniel Escandell Montiel (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2010), 41–48.

16. Séjour, *Les Massacres de la Syrie*, tableau 6, scene 1, p. 90; and tableau 7, scene 5, pp. 112–113. In the former scene Georges, protagonist with Gulnare of the love story in the play, reveals his intention of asking the head of the Syrian community for “justice and revenge” (*justice et vengeance*) for his father’s assassination, “justice and revenge” for the kidnapping of his fiancée, “justice and revenge” for the taking of his mother, a free woman sold as a slave. In the second one, a central scene of confrontation among Muslim leaders,

the Druze leader Ben-Yacoub requests that a group of fugitive Christians hiding in a Muslim home be given “to our justice . . . to our vengeance” (*à notre justice . . . à notre vengeance*), and all that not for anything already done, but upon the simple presumption of a future danger, the assumption that their enemies, “these infidel dogs” (“ces chiens d’infidèles”), those “*giaoours*” (Turkish Islamic word for infidels), “tomorrow will be the assassins of the children of Allah!” (“seraient demain les assassins des enfants d’Allah!”).

17. Gulgare, a Druze foundling who has been welcomed as a daughter in the de Moréac Christian family, is at the center of two contrasted love stories, being in love with Georges de Moréac, who reciprocates her feelings, and vainly lusted after by the Druze leader Ben-Yacoub. When she converts, in the moment of the greatest danger of life for Christians, she cries: “one persecutes the religion of Christ; I want to be among the martyrs, baptize me” (“on persécute la religion du Christ; je veux être parmi les martyrs, baptisez-moi”; Séjour, *Les Massacres de la Syrie*, tableau 5, scene 8, p. 86). Differently from her beloved Georges, who believes in “justice and vengeance,” she, the new convert, after revealing her Christian soul, is also the one who utters words, not of vengeance, but of *forgiveness* toward her Islamic persecutors, becoming a true messenger of Evangelical teaching: “My God! Forgive those that abandon you, for they don’t know what they are doing” (“Mon Dieu! Pardonnez à ceux qui vous abandonnent, ils ne savent pas ce qu’ils font,” ibid., tableau 5, scene 8, p. 87).

18. A painting of 1861 by the Belgian painter Jan-Baptist Huysmans powerfully depicts the Algerian Emir while protecting the Christians of Damascus in 1860. After these events, France bestowed on Abd-El-Kader the Grand Cross of the Légion d’honneur, and he was honored with various distinctions and gifts, among others, by Pope Pius IX, the Czar of Russia, Queen Victoria, and the President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln.

19. See Victor Hugo, “Orientale,” in his *Les Châtiments* (1853); repr., ed. Paul Berret (Paris: Hachette, 1932), 217–219 (with a critical intro., 215–216). In that lyrical-satirical explosion of wrath against the Emperor who with his coup of 1851 had abolished French Republican liberties, the leader of French Romanticism Victor Hugo, then at the beginning of his long political exile, juxtaposed Napoleon III, “[t]he sinister man of the Elysée” (“L’homme louche de l’Elysée,” line 7), with “[h]im, the wild man of the desert” (“Lui, l’homme fauve du désert,” line 8), and imagined an encounter in which an Abd-El-Kader still in jail, “[t]he thoughtful Emir, wild and gentle” (“L’émir pensif, féroce et doux,” line 12), is invited to look at that “Ceasar bandit” (line 32), whom he does not recognize, and is told about his crimes, and like a tiger sniffing at a bloody wolf, despises him. Séjour’s portrait of Abd-El-Kader, and his dramatic role in the play, reflect the evolution in the French public perception of this leader. In 1860, he was no longer only the “thoughtful Emir, wild and gentle” who could judge by his instinct the civilized villain. He had become the “defender of the Christians,” the “apostle of civilization and tolerance,” the “idol of the two worlds” (with a definition inspired by Garibaldi’s, “the hero of the two worlds”), as he is mockingly described in the play by the Druze leaders of the bloody revolt against the Christians (*Les Massacres de la Syrie*, act 6, scene 4, p. 95). The esteem that French public opinion had for him is seen in the warm applause that welcomed his appearance onstage as a character in Séjour’s play, as reported by the contemporary press.

20. Camille Thierry, “Abd-El-Kader,” *La Chronique de la Nouvelle Orléans*, April 16, 1848; cit. by Michel Fabre, “The New Orleans Press and French-Language Literature

by Creoles of Color," in *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 39.

21. Séjour, *Les Massacres de la Syrie*, tableau 7, scene 6, p. 117.

22. Ibid., tableau 4, scene 5, p. 75: "Profanateurs de choses saintes, arrière!"

23. Ibid., tableau 7, scene 1, p. 106 ("Voici un chrétien . . . un Français. . . Il est ici chez lui désormais . . . il est mon hôte, il est mon frère"), and 7, 5, p. 113.

24. Ibid., tableau 7, scene 5, p. 115: "deux spectres qui étouffent les empires: *l'intolérance et le fanatisme!*" (my italics).

25. Ibid., tableau 8, scene 6, p. 136: "Maintenant plus de représailles . . . plus de vengeance! . . . plus de sang! . . . Laissez faire à la justice, son heure est venue."

26. Richard Edwards, *La Syrie, 1840–1862: histoire, politique, administration, populations, religions et mœurs, événements de 1860 d'après des actes officiels et des documents authentiques* (Paris: Amyot, 1862), 197: "une expédition qui n'a qu'un but, celui de faire triompher les droits de la justice et de l'humanité. / Vous n'allez pas, en effet, faire la guerre à une puissance quelconque, mais vous allez aider le Sultan à faire rentrer dans l'obéissance des sujets aveuglés par un fanatisme d'un autre siècle." English trans. above, from Fawaz, *An Occasion for War*, 115 (my italics).

27. Fawaz, *An Occasion for War*, 115, French original: "une grande cause qui le précède, un grand peuple qui le suit."

28. Séjour, *Les Massacres de la Syrie*, tableau 6, scene 8, p. 103: "leur glorieux et puissant souverain qui a tout quitté pour protéger un peuple étranger et ressusciter l'Italie de ses propres mains. . . . il appellera la civilisation contre la barbarie."

29. Théophile Deschamps, "Nouvelles Diverses," *Le Monde dramatique*, January 3, 1861, p. 6: "After the premiere of the new drama at the Cirque, the Emperor asked M. Victor Séjour to come to his box. His Majesty congratulated the author on the success he had just obtained" ("Après la première représentation du nouveau drame du Cirque, l'Empereur a fait appeler M. Victor Séjour dans sa loge. Sa Majesté a félicité l'auteur du succès qu'il venait d'obtenir"). In the same issue and column of "Nouvelles Diverses," Théophile Deschamps wrote three more short notes on *Les Massacres de Syrie* beside this one.

30. For Eugène Audray-Deshorties, *A Propos des Massacres de Syrie*, see in my next paragraph above.

31. Paul de Saint-Victor, "Théâtres," *La Presse*, December 30, 1860, p. 2, feuilleton: "Mêlez ensemble la passion d'un drame, la couleur d'un panorama, le mouvement d'un camp, l'intérêt tout puissant d'une actualité pathétique, et vous aurez une idée de ce grand spectacle, un de plus magnifiques que le boulevard ait jamais donnés" ("Combine the passion of a drama, the color of a panorama, the movement of a battlefield, the all-powerful interest of a pathetic current event, and you will have an idea of this great spectacle, one of the most magnificent the boulevard has ever given").

32. Ibid.: "ces fameux *Les Massacres de la Syrie*."

33. Arthur Clary, *Le Théâtre*, Dec. 30, 1860, p. 2; cited and trans. O'Neill, *Séjour*, 89–90.

34. Théophile Gautier, for instance, although appreciating the play, wondered: "Is it not ambitiously premature to paint events that are still in the making?" (*Le Moniteur universel*, January 7, 1861, feuilleton; cited and trans. O'Neill, *Séjour*, 90).

35. Eugène Audray-Deshorties, *A Propos des Massacres de Syrie: Réflexions sur les jeux scéniques de quelques hauts personnages, par un homme de rien* (Concerning *Les Massacres de Syrie*: reflections on the scenic tricks of some high personages, by a man of little importance) (Paris: n.p., 1861). This text had been presented for publication as an article in the *Figaro* on January 8, 1861. According to the introduction, since it had been rejected by the paper, on January 14, 1861 it had been published independently in book form by its author, the “man of little importance,” whose name, absent on the cover, was explicitly written inside.

36. Ibid., 6: “J’aurais bien osé dire à M. Séjour, ce Shakespeare du boulevard, que son nouveau drame me choque en plus d’un endroit. Dans un pays qui a une presse et une tribune, le théâtre ne me paraît pas un lieu bien choisi pour politiquer. / Est-ce à des comédiens à prononcer sur des planches, au milieu de danseuses court-vêtues et de chameaux ahuris, l’oraison funèbre de la Turquie et le panégyrique d’un grand prince? / Mais comment adresser ces critiques à M. Mocquard, surtout quand j’entends de tous côtés un concert de louanges . . . ?”

37. *Les Volontaires de 1814* (“Drame en cinq actes et quatorze tableaux”) (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1862) (first performed at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, Paris, April 22, 1862); *Les Mystères du Temple* (“Drame en cinq actes et huit tableaux”) (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1862) (first performed at the Théâtre de l’Ambigu-Comique, Paris, August 12, 1862), one of the works that, after the success of *Les Mystères de Paris* by Eugène Sue, 1843, “put low life and the criminal classes on the stage” (see John McCormick, *Popular Theatres and Nineteenth-Century France* [London: Routledge, 1993; 2004], 199); *Les Fils de Charles-Quint* (“Drame en cinq actes et un prologue en deux tableaux”) (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1864) (first performed at the Théâtre de l’Ambigu-Comique, Paris, February 13, 1864); *Le Marquis caporal* (“Drame en cinq actes, en sept tableaux”) (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1865) (first performed at the Théâtre de la Gaîté, Paris, October 13, 1864); (with Théodore Barrière) *Les Enfants de la louve* (“Drame en cinq actes et un prologue”) (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1865) (first performed at the Théâtre de la Gaîté, Paris, October 13, 1865); *La Madone des roses* (“Drame en cinq actes et neuf tableaux, en prose”) (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1869) (first performed at the Théâtre de la Gaîté, Paris, December 5, 1868, and on stage until February 3, 1869); *Henri de Lorraine* (“Drame en cinq actes et huit tableaux”), first performed at the Théâtre de l’Ambigu-Comique, Paris, March 10, 1870 [unpublished]. *La Madone des roses* was translated into Dutch and performed at the Royal Dutch Theater at The Hague in 1870 (see Bibliography).

38. In an almost final scene of *Les Volontaires de 1814* (act 5, scene 13), Napoleon in exile dreams of meeting the Spirit of France (“le Génie de la France”), while stage directions describing what appears on stage open onto a future of glory abroad for the French nation and its new Emperor: “One sees the battle of Solferino, framed in the warm and bright horizons of Italy” (“On aperçoit la bataille de Solférino, encadrée dans les horizons chauds et lumineux de l’Italie”).

39. Also Gustave Flaubert lived there, at 42, Boulevard du Temple, from 1856 to 1869.

40. Charles Baudelaire, “Le Cygne,” from *Les Fleurs du mal*, added in the second expanded edition of 1861 and included in the section “Tableaux parisiens” (Parisian scenes). The poem, in English “The Swann,” was dedicated to Victor Hugo, while the whole collection was dedicated to Théophile Gautier. Both the first and second editions of *Les Fleurs du mal* were published in Paris by Poulet-Malassis et de Broise (Auguste Poulet-Malassis

and Eugène de Broise), while the final third edition, with a long introduction by Gautier, was published by Michel Lévy in 1868; quotation from the 2nd ed., 204; English trans. William Aggeler, *The Flowers of Evil* (Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954).

41. The playwright's beloved father, to whom he had dedicated *Richard III*, and who had supported him from afar in many practical transactions in New Orleans, died soon after arrival in Paris in mid-May 1864. His mother, who had already lived in Paris "possibly all during the years 1847–1856" and then lived in her son's apartment at 97 Boulevard du Prince Eugène (now Boulevard Voltaire), died four years later, in June 1868. Both were buried at Père-Lachaise Cemetery, in the Séjour family grave. See O'Neill, *Séjour*, 116–118 (quotation, 116). About Séjour's letter of November 21, 1865 to a woman friend, concerning his bad health, see *ibid.*, 118.

42. His elder son, named Louis-Victor Séjour (like Victor's father), was born in 1840; his second one, called Denis-Armand-Victor Séjour, was born in 1857; and his third one, named Henry-Léonard-Victor-Antoine Séjour, was born in 1858. It seems that the latter two, although financially supported by their father, never met until by chance in 1872, at one of their father's performances of *Fils de la nuit*, a most apt and symbolic title for the awkward situation. See O'Neill, *Séjour*, 114–116; and Michel Fabre, "New Orleans Expatriates in France: Romance and Reality," in *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color*, ed. Sybil Kein (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 189–190.

43. Jules Janin, *Journal des débats*, March 14, 1870, p. 2, feuilleton.

44. Victor Séjour's letter to Michel Lévy reported in *La Cloche*, March 21, 1870, p. 3; cit. in O'Neill, *Séjour*, 144. The manuscript of this unpublished play "is in the files of the censorship bureau, Archives Nationales, F18, 959. In Act 5 of *Henri de Lorraine* a young black servant appears briefly" (O'Neill, *Séjour*, 142n 24).

45. Victor Séjour, Preface to *Le Comte de Haag*, in *L'Ordre*, March 23, 1872, p. 3; repr. in the New Orleans French-language paper *L'Avant-Coureur*, April 20, 1872, p. 2; cit. and trans. O'Neill, *Séjour*, 146 (apart from "*raison d'être*," all other italics have been added by me, to emphasize the main values Paris stood for, according to Séjour).

46. Michel Fabre, *From Harlem to Paris: Black American Writers in France, 1840–1980* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 34.

47. Apart from the controversial admiration for the spectacular effects of the ship and the water on stage loved by the audience, even Francisque Sarcey in *Le Temps* could not but admit that, despite its being "furiously out-of-date today" ("furieusement démodé aujourd'hui") in its style, it was "not an unimportant play," and that one scene in particular, well-known in the history of contemporary theater, the one with the confrontation of the two mothers, was "superbly constructed, and the last line is an admirable *coup de théâtre*. This scene alone suffices," he admitted, "to lift Séjour above his peers" ("la scène des deux mères. Elle est supérieurement faite, et le mot qui la termine est un admirable coup de théâtre. Elle suffirait à elle seule pour tirer de pair M. Victor Séjour." Francisque Sarcey, *Le Temps*, August 12, 1872, p. 1; trans. O'Neill, *Séjour*, 147–148).

48. See O'Neill, *Séjour*, 148–149, 152.

49. Ibid., 151–154 (citing the following sources: Archives Nationales, F17, 3221, Victor Séjour *fils*, to Ministre de l'Instruction Publique, September 11, 1874; Paris, Minutier Central, LXI, 1031, Inventaire; National Archives, U.S. Consular Dispatches, Paris, vol. 18, no. 54; *Bulletin de la Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques*, no. 13

[September-October 1874], 270–72). The quotation about his American origins is from O'Neill, *Séjour*, 153. About Séjour's funeral, see also the brief note in *Le Temps* (September 24, 1874, p. 3), mentioning the prayers in the chapel at the Maison Dubois, the city hospital, and the speech at the Père-Lachaise Cemetery by Paul Féval. And see *Le Figaro*, September 24, 1874, both on its front page (two notes in the column "Échos de Paris," by "Le Masque de Fer") and on page 3 (in "Informations: La Journée," by Gaston Vassy), with reports on touching episodes that took place during the funeral (the affectionate gesture of a former stagehand at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, and the side-by-side presence of two of his children), plus information on his habit of adding new fragments of scenes (French "*béquets*") and of continuously revising his works even while they were already on stage.

50. "Obituary. Victor Séjour, dramatist," *New York Times*, September 22, 1874, p. 4.

51. "Latest News by Atlantic Cable. / France: Death of Dramatist," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 22, 1874, p. 1. Among the obituaries and announcements on Séjour's death published in American and British newspapers, see also "The Rich Harvest of Death," *New-York Evangelist*, vol. 46, no. 2, January 4, 1875, p. 8; and, in Britain, *The Sunday Times*, November 1, 1874; both cit. in Marlene L. Daut, "'Sons of White Fathers': Mulatto Vengeance and the Haitian Revolution in Victor Sejour's 'The Mulatto,'" *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 65, no. 1 (June 2010): 37n86.

52. See James Wood Davidson, *The Living Writers of the South* (New York: Carleton, 1869), a scholarly work of Séjour's times which collects the biographies of two hundred and forty-one "Southern Writers as they are" ("Introduction," *ibid.*, iii), where one biographical page is devoted to Victor Séjour: Davidson, "Victor Sejour" [sic], *The Living Writers of the South*, 501. Séjour was included in the list of living southern American writers, despite the fact that Davidson confessed not to know whether Séjour was born in New Orleans or in Paris. In this biographical sketch, the list of Séjour's works is not updated, since it stops with *Le Martyre du cœur* of 1858; and the writer is erroneously presented as both a playwright and an actor. But apart from the fanciful deductions drawn from this incorrect piece of information, the final part of this biographical note allows us to gain some insight into what Séjour's friends in New Orleans thought about him and his identity in 1869 (I shall include in the following passage some of the words already quoted in my text, to show their balanced context, and the oppositional conjunction "though" that connects them to the rest of the presentation): "He sojourns—a French actor can hardly be said to reside or live—in Paris rather than in his native city; though his friends in New Orleans consider him an American and a Southern author. He is, I am informed, a quadroon. He writes only in the French language" (*ibid.*, 501).

53. See "Foreign News," *New Orleans Times*, September 22, 1874, and *Abeille de la Nouvelle-Orléans* of the same date; cit. in O'Neill, *Séjour*, 153. Yet, in the years 1853–1872 a few plays by Séjour had been staged in New Orleans, and some Paris performances had been reviewed in Louisiana periodicals such as *Le Courrier de la Louisiane* and *La Renaissance Louisianaise*; see Michel Fabre, "New Orleans Expatriates in France," 191; see also the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* of February 5, 1865; September 22, 1868; and March 7, 1869. About one month after Séjour's death, the writer's New Orleans origins were finally acknowledged in a long piece on the playwright published in *The Daily Picayune*: "Poor Victor Séjour is dead. He, like . . . others who have risen to eminence in

Paris, was a New Orleans boy" (Gamma, "Paris Theatrical Inklings," *The Daily Picayune*, October 18, 1874, p. 7). Gamma, the author of this obituary, is the same correspondent from Paris who had written Mocquard's obituary in *The Daily Picayune* in 1865; there, in mentioning the friendship of the Emperor's chief of staff and personal secretary with Séjour and their cooperation in playwriting, he had introduced Séjour to the New Orleans readers as "your fellow-citizen" (Gamma, "Letter from Paris," p. 2).

Chapter 15. A Writer's Indignant Conscience

1. Charles Edwards O'Neill, *Séjour: Parisian Playwright from Louisiana* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1995), 115–116. The inscription stone was probably placed there when two of Séjour's children died prematurely at one year's distance, in 1886 and 1887, and were also buried in the family grave. In fact the right-hand page of the stone book on Séjour's grave mentions his son Henry-Victor Séjour (1858–1887), saying that he "was a second lieutenant of the 82nd Infantry." A photograph of Séjour's tomb can be seen in the site of *Soul of America: Black Cultural Travel Made Easy* ("African American Gravesites in Paris"), <http://legacy.soulofamerica.com/paris-african-american-gravesites.phtml>. Here one also learns the location of the grave: "His [Séjour's] grave is located in Section 15. Though the inscription is badly worn, the tomb is identifiable by a book sculpted in stone at its foot. / Séjour's gravesite is unique among all those described here because it is perpetual—it will remain intact as long as it is well tended." As a matter of fact, while most graves in that cemetery are only given on lease, Séjour's is a permanent one.

2. Victor Séjour to E. Montrosier, *Messager des Théâtres et des Arts*, August 30, 1866; in Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Dossier on Séjour ; cit. and trans. O'Neill, *Séjour*, 75–76.

3. O'Neill, *Séjour*, 76.

4. Victor Séjour, *André Gérard* ("Drame en cinq actes, en prose") (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1857), 1: "le moins mauvais de mes drames, le plus moral surtout"; "Personne plus que moi ne se préoccupe du but et de la moralité du théâtre."

5. Séjour to E. Montrosier; cit. and trans. O'Neill, *Séjour*, 76.

6. See Victor Séjour, "Au Redacteur" (letter), *Le Temps*, October 24, 1864, pp. 2–3. *Le Marquis caporal*, which opened at the Théâtre de la Gaîté on October 13, 1864, dealt with the clash between the republicans and the royalists at the time of the French Revolution, and with the troubled destiny of a nobleman who had joined the republican army facing the invasion of France. It gave rise to a political controversy when the reviewer of *Le Temps*, Luis Ulbach, attacked the play, saying that it was an "insult to the nation's history," because of the villain's role assigned to a Commissionaire of the Revolution at the time of the Reign of Terror, and he complained about the fact that the censors had not intervened (*Le Temps*, October 17, 1864, pp. 1–2, feuilleton). A few days later, in a letter of response dated October 20, 1864, published in the paper on October 24, pp. 2–3 (which an editorial note defined as the writer's "profession of faith"), Séjour protested at being described as a protégé of the censors, when all of his plays had been, "so to speak, tormented, when they were not mutilated" by censorship ("vous me désignez comme un protégé de la censure, moi dont tous les pièces, pour ainsi dire, ont été tourmentées quand elles n'ont pas été mutilées par elle"), and he especially protested against the charge of having meant to calumniate the French Revolution itself, while, he said, they were the children, the debtors

of that revolution (“Nous sommes les enfants, les obligés de cette révolution”) for the liberties that it proclaimed or demanded. Therefore, he added, it was a matter of dignity to show oneself grateful to that revolution.

7. Lia Félix also played in these other plays by Séjour: *Noces vénitiennes*, André Gérard (in its 1861 revival), *La Tireuse de cartes*, *Volontaires de 1814* and *Marquis caporal*. As we know, she successfully played the role of the Jewish/Christian child Noémi/Paola in the 1859–1860 first production of *La Tireuse de cartes*.

8. See Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, Ms. 14699 (with letters of Dinah and Lia Félix to Michel Lévy, Charleston, December 6 and 10, 1855); cit. in O’Neill, *Séjour*, 36.

9. Matthew Arnold, “Rachel. III” (*New Poems* [London: Macmillan, 1867], 96, in the “Sonnets” section): “Sprung from the blood of Israel’s scatter’d race, / [...] / Trick’d out with a Parisian speech and face, / [...] / In her, like us, there clash’d, contending powers, / Germany, France, Christ, Moses, Athens, Rome. / The strife, the mixture in her soul are ours; / Her genius and her glory are her own” (vv. 29, 32, 39–42, considering the three “Rachel” sonnets in sequence).

10. See, e.g., Albert Monnier, in a theatrical review of *La Czarine* by Eugène Scribe (in the humorous *Le Journal pour rire*, January 27, 1855, p. 5), where he exalts her “immense superiorité” in her role as the czarina, and at the same time announces her planned departure for the United States in this way: “Dans quelques mois, l’éminente tragédienne nous aura quittés pour aller chercher en Amérique de nouveaux fleurons à ajouter à sa couronne et un million à ajouter à sa fortune” (“In a few months, the eminent tragedienne will have left us to go to America and get new jewels to add to her crown and one million to add to her fortune”). This comment soon reveals its anti-Jewish subtext when connected to another more explicit passage by the same journalist, two months later (Albert Monnier, “Théâtres,” *Le Journal pour rire*, March 10, 1855, p. 7), where one reads that Mademoiselle Rachel, who was about to leave Paris, “s’est mise à adorer le *veau de dollars* des Américains, *en vrai fille d’Israël qu’elle est*” (“she has started to adore the *calf of dollars* of the Americans, *as the true daughter of Israel that she is*”). The former italics, about American dollars, are introduced by Monnier; the latter, stressing his anti-Jewish reference to “the true daughter of Israel,” are mine.

11. Georges d’Heylli, *Rachel, d’après sa correspondance* (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1882), 263, reporting from her will, dated January 2, 1858 (“A M. Victor Séjour, homme de lettres, une écritoire et son buvard”). A very interesting episode concerning Séjour’s friendship with Rachel and loyalty to her, even at the expense of personal loss, is reported in Charles de La Varenne’s article, “Victor Séjour,” *Diogène*, March 8, 1857, p. 2. Here one learns that Rachel had agreed to play the main role in a new verse drama by Séjour commissioned for the Théâtre Français after his success with *Les Noces vénitiennes* in 1855. After completing his play, Séjour had gone with his manuscript to the Ministry of State that had commissioned the new play, where he was welcomed by a high official and told that, by a happy (for them) coincidence, his work, where Rachel was due to play the main role, would be used as a weapon against her, to oblige her to stay in France, against her will. Having learned this, Séjour had answered that, because of his friendship and devotion to Rachel, he could no longer deliver his manuscript, thus renouncing to all the retribution and copyrights involved in the important commission. Rachel was still alive in March 1857, when this article came out in *Diogène*. Therefore, since the news of her acceptance of a role in a verse drama of his was never challenged by anybody, the episode

should be trusted as confirmed. The author of this article, Charles de La Varenne (1828–1867), was a historian who, at the time of the Second Italian War of Independence, published books on the “new Italian history” and on King Vittorio Emanuele and Piedmont; he was also the author of a pamphlet on the Pope and his temporal power, *Le Pape et les Romagnes: Le pouvoir temporel dans les États Romains* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1860).

12. *L'Ordre*, April 11, 1872, p. 2; cit. in O'Neill, *Séjour*, 76–77, and 77n32 (“Victor was among the celebrities attending the funeral ceremony conducted by Rabbi Isadore, presiding [grand]rabbi of Paris”).

13. O'Neill, *Séjour*, 154. Three of the Félix siblings had already died: Rebecca (1829–1853), Rachel (1821–1858), and Raphaël (1826–1872). Only Sarah (1819–1877), Lia (1830–1908), and Dinah (1836–1909) were still alive.

14. “Michel Lévy, the Life of a Great French Publisher,” *The New York Times*, May 23, 1875.

15. See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), 2nd enlarged ed. (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1958), 3–120.

16. “Michel Lévy,” *New York Times*, May 23, 1875. As for Gustave Flaubert, see his anti-Semitic remark (quoted in Frederick Brown, *Flaubert: A Biography* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007], 445), in a letter to George Sand after the publication of *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1869). See also Charles Baudelaire, who, in *Mon cœur mis à nu* (phrase no. 82) (1864; phrase no. 105 in Charles Baudelaire, *Journaux Intimes: Fusées, Mon cœur mis à nu*, preface Adolphe Van Bever [Paris: G. Crès, 1920], 99), hints at the possibility of a “Beautiful plot to be organized for the extermination of the Jewish race. / The Jews *Librarians* and witnesses of the *Redemption*” (“Belle conspiration à organiser pour l'extermination de la race juive. / Les juifs *Bibliothécaires* et témoins de la *Rédemption*”): a statement that, because of its fragmentary quality, can be variously interpreted either as a wish or as a warning. About the spread of anti-Semitism in France, particularly at the time of the Third Republic, see Antoine Compagnon, *Connaissez-vous Brunetière? Enquête sur un antidreyfusard et ses amis* (Paris: Seuil, 1997); and Alessandro Piperno, in his *Proust antiebreo* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2000).

17. The manuscript of *The Fortune-Teller; or, The Abduction of the Jew's Daughter*, drama in two acts by William Travers, is kept at the British Library in London, in the Lord Chamberlain's collection, with British Library (BL) reference no. Add MS 52995 M. “Buried Treasures”: The Lord Chamberlain's Collection, 1852–1863 is a project at Royal Holloway, University of London and the British Library, funded by the British Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), which has resulted in the publication of a catalogue of all plays submitted for license to the Lord Chamberlain's office from 1852 to 1863: *Catalogue of the Lord Chamberlain's Plays, 1852–1863*, ed. Laurie Garrison, Caroline Radcliffe, Kate Mattacks, and Kathryn Johnson, available online at the Royal Holloway, University of London website, <https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/dramaandtheatre/research/researchprojects/lordchamberlainplays/thelordchamberlainplays,1852–1863.aspx>. As stated in this project's website at Royal Holloway, the period 1852–1863 was “particularly strong in French dramas and comedies as well as their translations and adaptations.” About this project of digitization, see Caroline Radcliffe and Kate Mattacks, “From Analogues to Digital: New Resources in Nineteenth-Century Theatre,” 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, no. 8, 2009, <http://www.19.bbk.ac.uk/index.php/19/article/view/499/359>.

18. The playbill of *The Abduction of the Jew's Child! or, The Fortune Teller!* is available in the East London Theatre Archive (ELTA), a database of East London theater ephemera (playbills, programs, cuttings, etc.) provided by the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) Theatre Collections, East London theaters and University of East London (UEL) archives; the playbill is at <http://www.elta-project.org/browse.html?recordId=2230>. In the playbill, announcing the play's new premiere at the Pavilion Theatre in London for Saturday, April 13, 1861, the acknowledged author was still William Travers. There would be more performances of this play from Monday, April 15, through Thursday, April 18, 1861, eventually to be followed on Friday, April 19, by Shakespeare's tragedy *Othello* (an example of the variety of plays coexisting in such mid-Victorian playhouses in the East End of London). At the time of its foundation on Whitechapel Road in 1827, the Pavilion Theatre was called Eastern Opera House, a name that is still reported in the theater playbill of April 1861. A few decades later, around the turn of the nineteenth century, the Pavilion Theatre became one of the major homes of Yiddish theater in London.

19. In the 1861 playbill for *The Abduction of the Jew's Child! or, The Fortune Teller!*, the play is defined as “A truly *domestic Drama*” (my italics). As remarked by Heidi J. Holder in her essay on the treatment of Jewish subjects in London’s East End theaters, “in the years following the emancipation of England’s Jews in 1858, the East End theaters would show a real determination to recast the Jewish type as English, to domesticate the figure” of the Jew, even when placing the Jewish community “at a certain distance, temporarily or geographically” (Holder, “Nation and Neighbourhood, Jews and Englishmen: Location and Theatrical Ideology in Victorian London,” in *The Performing Century: Nineteenth-Century Theatre’s History*, ed. Tracy C. Davis and Peter Holland [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010], 109). Part of Holder’s essay deals with British theatrical responses to the Mortara kidnapping (112–114), showing how in the dramatization of the Mortara episode “we can see London’s East End theatres pushing the stage representation of Jews in a new direction” (112). In particular, regarding the East End version by Travers of Séjour’s play, “the conclusion provides,” in Holder’s words, “that most miraculous of effects, at least on the British stage: A Jewish family that survives the ending. (They also pointedly drop their exotic disguises.) Other East End plays on Jewish themes feature similar reversals: young gentiles uncover hidden Jewish identities, and even convert and become Jews” (114). On the general subject of London’s theaters of the East End, see also Heidi Holder, “The East-End Theatre,” in Kerry Powell, *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 257–276 (with passages on William Travers, pp. 224–225, 263, 269).

20. See the play’s American edition: Joseph Stirling Coyne, *The Woman in Red*, “A Drama in Three Acts and a Prologue” (New York: Robert M. De Witt, [1868?]) (available at Amherst College Library); the quotation above is from this edition: act 3 (no scene divisions in this act), p. 37. This American edition provides detailed information about the two productions of *The Woman in Red* in London, in 1864 and 1868 (first at the Royal Victoria Theatre, where it opened on March 28, 1864; and then at the Royal St. James’s Theatre, where it opened on April 13, 1868). Information concerns the cast of characters, scenery, costume, properties, synopsis of incidents, explanation of the stage directions (pp. 2–6); final synopsis (p. 38); and text of the play (pp. 7–37). This free adaptation of Séjour’s play was also published by Thomas Hailes Lacy in London and again by Samuel French in New York, in 1868 (Lacy and French were partners in publishing across the

Atlantic), and later in Chicago by Dramatic Publishing Company in the 1880s (microform available at Cambridge University Library); see details in the Bibliography. As mentioned above, Joseph Stirling Coyne also published a fictional version of the same story, *The Woman in Red: A Romance* (London: Ward and Lock, 1864). In both versions of *The Woman in Red*, the “Romance” and the “Drama,” the story takes place in the seventeenth century, in three different settings: the prologue is set in a village in the French Alps in 1670, and the rest of the action in Italy, first in Genoa and then in Venice, in 1686. On Coyne, see Michael D. Sollars, “Joseph Stirling Coyne,” in *The Dictionary of Literary Biography: Nineteenth-Century British Dramatists*, ed. Angela Courtney (Detroit: Gale, 2008). The quotation from Holder above is from her “Nation and Neighbourhood, Jews and Englishmen,” 113.

21. Olive Logan, “Mocquard,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, December 1867, p. 114.

22. Victor Séjour, *Gamea; or, The Jewish Mother*, English adaptation of *La Tireuse de cartes* by Matilda Heron, first performed in New York, at Niblo’s Gardens, on September 29, 1863 (the punctuation in the title varies slightly according to the sources). The main archival resource on this event is *Music in Gotham: The New York Scene, 1862–1875*, a digital database website covering the performance and reception of musical events in New York City in that decade, “a golden age for music in the city.” The digital information provided about *Gamea; or, The Jewish Mother* is at <http://www.musicingotham.org/work/21732>. It includes a partial list of performers; the name of the composer of incidental music, the name of the musical conductor, the titles of some of the songs; and the text’s author (Séjour). The translator is not mentioned here, but it is cited in all contemporary sources. The website also provides detailed information about the newspapers in which the performances were announced, advertised, or reviewed. For a first announcement, see *New York Post*, August 31, 1863, p. 2. For a first advertisement, see *New York Times*, September 22, 1863, p. 7. For reviews, see *New York Post*, September 30, 1863, p. 2; *New York Times*, October 5, 1863, p. 2; *New York Clipper*, October 10, 1863, p. 203; *New York Herald*, October 10, 1863, p. 1; *New York Post*, October 24, 1863, p. 2; *New York Post*, October 26, 1863, p. 2; *New York Clipper*, October 31, 1863, p. 229. In the announcement in the *New York Herald*, September 21, 1863, p. 4, one reads that the play was “translated from the French of Mocquard by Matilda Heron” (see more about this later in the chapter). Despite these contemporary rumors and interpretations, Séjour’s name is still registered as the text’s author in all the files of the *Music in Gotham* archive presenting the play’s New York adaptation and performance. For a list of other theatrical adaptations by Matilda Heron, see Amelia Howe Kritzer, ed., *Plays by Early American Women, 1775–1850* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 399; about her successful Camille, see Merle L. Perkins, “Matilda Heron’s Camille,” *Comparative Literature* 7, no. 4 (Autumn 1955): 338–343; about her reputation among critics and at Pfaff’s, Greenwich Village’s bohemian hangout in pre–Civil War New York, see Tice L. Miller, *Bohemians and Critics: American Theatre Criticism in the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1981), 10, 61–62, 80, 91, 151. As for Heron’s husband, the German-born American composer and conductor Robert Stoepel, he had studied and worked in Paris before immigrating to America in 1850. Stoepel composed incidental music for all the plays written by Dion Boucicault during his stay in New York, 1854–1860. His symphonic composition *Hiawatha: An Indian Symphony* (1859) was inspired

by Longfellow's epic poem *The Song of Hiawatha*; during the musical productions of *Hiawatha*, Matilda Heron provided readings of the poem.

23. Felicita Vestvali (1829–1880), also known as Felicita von Vestvali, was the stage name of Anna Marie Staegemann, who was born in Stettin (Poland), trained as a singer, and “enjoyed an international *travesti* opera career” (Tony Howard) before becoming a tragic actress particularly famous for her interpretation of *Hamlet*. As an opera singer, thanks to her deep contralto voice, she often sang in “pants roles”: she was Romeo in Bellini’s *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, Maffeo Orsini in Donizetti’s *Lucrezia Borgia*, and Orfeo in the first New York performance of Gluck’s *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Her American career flourished from 1855 to 1865, “when a season in San Francisco collapsed in acrimony” (see more about this episode later in the chapter). About Felicita von Vestvali and her theatrical career, see Tony Howard, *Women as Hamlet: Performance and Interpretation in Theatre, Film and Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 56–59, 63–64nn83–94, from which much of the previous information is cited; quotations are from p. 56. Robert Stoepel’s incidental music for *Gamea; or, The Jewish Mother* included several songs sung by Vestvali and a chorus: “The Mystic Chant,” “The Mother’s Prayer,” “The Cradle Song,” “Rondo: Silvia Is Mine Again,” “Gondolier’s Barcarole” (chorus), and “Lullaby,” added in the third act (data mainly from *Music in Gotham* for the New York performances of September 29, 1863, and October 6, 1863). In a review on the play published in the *New York Herald* on October 10, 1863, special appreciation is expressed for Stoepel’s music: “Mr. Stoepel’s music is capital—the barcarole especially” (p. 1). In the weekly *New York Clipper* of October 10, 1863, the reviewer criticizes Vestvali’s “broken English” (this was apparently her debut in an English drama), but her singing elicits the reviewer’s admiration: “Her singing was excellent, at this she was perfectly at home” (p. 203).

24. The other eight performances at Niblo’s Garden in New York took place on October 3, 6, 10, 13, 17, 20, 23, and 24, 1863. On the performance at Pike’s Opera House in Cincinnati, Ohio, see *The American Israelite*, January 22, 2014, recollecting *The Israelite* of 150 years earlier. For the 1864 performance at Boston Theatre, see the four-page playbill and program, *Boston Theatre: Vestvali in English Drama* (Boston: F. A. Searle, 1864), the electronic text of which is available in the digital collection *American Broadsides and Ephemera, Series 1 (1749–1900)*, no. 23312. The document provides the titles of the different parts of the play in this adaptation: “Prologue: The Baptism. / Act First: The Fortune-Teller. / Act Second: The Scar on the Hand. / Act Third: The Lost One Found. / Act Fourth: The Two Mothers” (*Boston Theatre: Vestvali*, [2]). The next two pages of the Boston brochure offer a detailed description of the “Plot of the Drama.” As one learns from this synopsis, in the happy ending of the play *Gamea* the Jewish mother eventually consents to her daughter’s marriage to her gentile lover: “She sends for *Octavio*, and gives him her daughter. In the distance, the chorus announces the close of evening. Faith had divided, but love re-unites *Silvia* [the daughter’s name here] and *Octavio*” (*Boston Theatre: Vestvali*, [4]).

25. On the performances of *Gamea; or, The Jewish Mother* in San Francisco, see later in the chapter. Regarding Williamsburg in 1868, see the 1867–1868 New York season in *Annals of the New York Stage: 1865–1870*, vol. 8, ed. George C. D. Odell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), 404.

26. See playbill *Boston Theatre: Vestvali*, [4].

27. Logan, "Mocquard," 115.

28. Ibid., 114.

29. See Victor Séjour's letter of protest to E. Montrosier, *Messager des Théâtres et des Arts*, August 30, 1866, quoted earlier in this chapter.

30. David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011), 569–570.

More details in Kenneth A. Bernard, *Lincoln and the Music of the Civil War* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1966), 198–199.

31. Donald, *Lincoln*, 569.

32. "Amusements: Maguire's Opera House," *Daily Alta California* 17, no. 5474, March 2, 1865, p. 4 (advertisement).

33. Mark Twain (pen name of Samuel L. Clemens), "A Rich Epigram," first published in *Territorial Enterprise*, Virginia City, Nevada, between December 8 and 10, 1865 (date uncertain; the original printing is not extant); republished in *American Flag*, San Francisco, December 20, 1865, p. 1, where it is introduced with these words: "'Mark Twain' has constructed the following extremely funny thing, at the expense of the enlightened and war-like 'Napoleon of the stage.'" All information is from *The Works of Mark Twain: Early Tales & Sketches*, vol. 2, 1864–1865 (Berkeley: Iowa Center for Textual Studies, University of California Press, 1981), 385–387, 712 (Mark Twain's text is on p. 387; intro., pp. 385–386; textual commentary, p. 712). Among the contemporary articles on the episode cited here for reference, see "The Star Chamber—Vestvali the Magnificent—The Threatened Smash among the Dramatic Planets," *San Francisco Golden Era* 12, November 5, 1865, p. 4. See also Howard, *Women as Hamlet*, where the Vestvali-Maguire episode is reported in detail for the momentous consequence it had on Vestvali's career: "She sued the manager for breach of contract and for threatening: 'You damned fiend of a woman (repeated three times with violence and gesticulations), take care, you have come to the right man. I'll prove that you have bones in your flesh, and before you leave the country I'll break every bone in your body.' 'In order to recuperate,' wrote her friend the actress Rosa von Braunschweig, Vestvali 'studied the part of Hamlet.' . . . Now her career changed direction. She played Hamlet in America and Britain, appearing at the Lyceum in London as Romeo in 1867" (p. 56).

34. Mark Twain's story was first published with a slightly different title, "Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog," in New York's literary weekly *The Saturday Press*, November 18, 1865, pp. 248–249; then revised and reprinted as "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" in San Francisco's literary weekly *The Californian*, December 16, 1865.

35. Silver bifacial medal by Oscar Roty, the celebrated medalist of the Art Nouveau period, well known as the designer of the famous "Semeuse" ("Seeder") image, engraved on French coins since 1898 and on French stamps since 1903. The medal of Mme Marie Laurent by Roty is now kept at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, which has a rich collection of photographs of Marie Laurent, by Paul Nadar, André-Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri, and Étienne Carjat; in one of them, by Paul Nadar, one can see her on stage with Sarah Bernhardt in *Théodora* (1884) by Victorien Sardou. On the occasion of the benefit night in her honor at the Opera House in Paris of 1901, mentioned above, an Australian paper published a long article on this "strong actress," Marie Laurent: "A French Actress," *West Gippsland Gazette*, Warragul, Vict. (Australia), August 13, 1901, p. 4. Here too, *La Tireuse de cartes* is mentioned although its official author, Victor Séjour, is overlooked: "One of her great parts was in a now forgotten drama, *La Tireuse de cartes*, by Mocquard, secretary

of Napoleon III. The subject was borrowed from the Mortara affair, a subject that excited Europe scarcely less than the case of Dreyfus.” The article goes on with details about the “Little Mortara” affair.

36. Francisque Sarcey, “Chronique Théâtrale,” *Le Temps*, January 10, 1876, p. 1, feuilleton. As for “Mme Raphaël Félix” in the role of the contested daughter, since Raphaël Félix (1826–1872), the only brother of the Félix sisters, was a young man (in a letter of Flaubert to George Sand, December 7 1869, he is mentioned as a charming boy; see *Correspondance entre George Sand et Gustave Flaubert* [Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1904], letter no. 136, p. 187), and since he was no longer alive in 1876 (he had been the director of the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin in 1868–1871), one wonders whether that was a reference to Raphaël Félix’s wife, Henriette Bloch, who was also a stage actress. No explanation is given by Sarcey.

37. Émile Zola, “L’oncle Francisque,” *Messager de l’Europe* (Russian title, *Viestnik Evropy*), February 1877 (the article was first published in Russian); repr. in *Un siècle de critique dramatique: De Francisque Sarcey à Bertrand Poirot-Delpech*, ed. Chantal Meyer-Plantureux, intro. Thomas Ferenczi (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 2003), 29: “S’il [Sarcey] applaudit, la fortune de l’œuvre est faite: s’il bâille, tout est perdu.” (“If he applauds, the work’s fortune is made; if he yawns, all is lost”).

38. Francisque Sarcey, “Chronique Théâtrale,” *Le Temps*, January 10, 1876, p. 1: “on crut voir dans cette aventure portée à la scène un indice des secrètes dispositions de l’empereur envers le pape et l’Italie. [...] Nous l’avons revu hier, dépouillée de ce prestige de l’actualité. [...] Il s’y trouve au quatrième acte une des plus belles scènes que je connaisse au théâtre.” The freezing cold of the season is also mentioned by Pierre Véron in his “Chronique Parisienne,” *Journal amusant*, January 15, 1876, p. 3, where the former Théâtre Lyrique, now called Théâtre-Historique, in which Séjour’s revival was taking place, is humorously defined as “la patrie des courants d’air” (the home of drafts). After mentioning the Théâtre-Historique, in a surprising comment this reporter observes that he cannot find any relationship between this play by Séjour and History (“la *Tireuse de cartes* dont je cherche vainement la parenté avec l’Histoire”). The history of the Mortara affair and of the historical events related to it that were behind the play seems to be completely lost and forgotten by the author of the piece. Meanwhile, the growing anti-Semitism of the age is revealed by the drawing of a stereotyped Jewish gold dealer, published on the cover of the magazine issue.

39. Victor Séjour and Maurice Drack, *Cromwell* (“Drame en cinq actes et six tableaux, dont un prologue en 2 tableaux”), first performed at the Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris, April 24, 1875. One year earlier in the United States it had already been announced that “Victor Séjour is writing an ‘Oliver Cromwell’” (“Brief Notes,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1874, p. 10).

40. Charles Edwards O’Neill, “Theatrical Censorship in France, 1844–1875: The Experience of Victor Séjour,” *Harvard Library Bulletin* 36, no. 4 (October 1978), 424.

41. Ibid., 425. The censorship bureau files containing the two manuscript versions of Séjour’s *Cromwell* are in Paris, Archives Nationales, F19, 979; cit. in O’Neill, *Séjour*, 151n45. Because of its author’s premature death, this play by Séjour remained unpublished. According to Bernard L. Peterson Jr., another play by Séjour, which was ready for the stage at the time of his death was *Le Vampire*, a “fantastic drama” in five acts (1874), “contracted for production at the Gaîté, Paris 1874, but [...] cancelled because of the

author's death"; about this, see Bernard L. Peterson Jr., *Early Black American Playwrights and Dramatic Writers: A Biographical Directory and Catalog of Plays, Films and Broadcasting Scripts* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990), 175. Also Thomas Benner Jr. mentions this play in his article on "Victor Séjour," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 50: *Afro-American Writers before the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Trudier Harris (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1986), 241. Both biographers probably relied on a precise statement in the 1943 essay by T. A. Daley, "Victor Séjour," *Phylon* 4, no. 1 (1943): 12, where one reads that the *Vampire* had been accepted by the Théâtre de la Gaîté just before Séjour's death. Yet no copy of this work has been found. See M. Lynn Weiss, in her "Introduction" to Victor Séjour, *The Jew of Seville*, xxx–xxxii, citing her correspondence with O'Neill on the matter.

42. Jules Prével, "Courrier des théâtres," *Le Figaro*, April 26, 1875, p. 3: "en ajoutant à son rôle de *Cromwell* des mots supprimés par le bon sens de la censure, mais qui, rétablis par le comédien, devaient lui rapporter une salve d'applaudissements communards."

43. "La Soirée théâtrale: *Cromwell*," signed by "Un monsieur de l'orchestre," *Le Figaro*, April 25, 1875, p. 3.

44. "Chronique," *Le Temps*, April 27, 1875, p. 2: "Les sifflets et les applaudissements se croisaient de toutes parts."

45. See, e.g., Auguste Vitu, "Premières représentations," *Le Figaro*, April 26, 1875, p. 3.

46. See "Chronique," *Le Temps*, April 27, 1875, p. 2 (with M. Drack's letter); "Faits divers," *Journal des débats*, April 27, 1875, p. 2; "Courrier des théâtres," *La Presse*, April 27, 1875, p. 3; Jules Prével, "Courrier des théâtres," *Le Figaro*, April 30, 1875 (with Taillade's letter); Francisque Sarcey, "Chronique Théâtrale," *Le Temps*, May 3, 1875, pp. 1–2, feuilleton.

47. Clément Caraguel, "La Semaine dramatique," *Journal des débats*, May 10, 1875, p. 1, feuilleton ("l'existence même du drame historique"). See also his obituary of Victor Séjour in *Journal des débats*, September 28, 1874, pp. 1–2, feuilleton (mentioning *Cromwell*).

48. Caraguel, "La Semaine dramatique," 1: "ce ne sont pas les auteurs qui parlent, mais seulement leur personnages, et ceux-ci ne font qu'exprimer les passions, les idées, les préjugés de leur temps. [...] que devient le drame historique tel que l'ont conçu les maîtres du genre, Shakespeare, Schiller, Manzoni, Victor Hugo?" The final judgment on the play by Clément Caraguel was very positive: "In a word," he concluded, "*Cromwell* is one of the best dramas performed on the stages of the boulevard in the last two or three years" ("En somme, *Cromwell* est un des meilleurs drames qui aient été représentés depuis deux ou trois ans sur les scènes du boulevard," p. 2).

49. Francisque Sarcey, "Chronique Théâtrale," *Le Temps*, May 10, 1875, p. 1, feuilleton.

50. Francisque Sarcey, "Chronique Théâtrale," *Le Temps*, May 17, 1875, pp. 1–2, feuilleton.

51. Émile Zola, "Le Naturalisme au théâtre," in *Le Roman expérimental* (1880), by E. Zola, 109–156 (trans. Belle M. Sherman, "Naturalism on the Stage," in Émile Zola, *The Experimental Novel and Other Essays* [New York: Cassell, 1893], 109–157); and Émile Zola, *Le Naturalisme au théâtre: les théories et les exemples* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1881). Despite their similar titles (only differentiated by a subtitle), the texts of 1880 and 1881 are different.

52. Realism had been hegemonic in France since the mid-nineteenth century. A manifesto of the new artistic trend was a collection of essays by Champfleury (pen-name of Jules-François-Felix Husson), *Le Réalisme* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1857). One year earlier, Jules Assézat and Edmond Duranty had founded a short-lived periodical by the same title. See Jules Assézat and Edmond Duranty, *Réalisme (1856–1857)* (Paris: L'Arche du livre, 1970); and Lilian R. Furst, *All Is True: The Claims and Strategies of Realist Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995). Naturalism, theorized by Émile Zola, was a later development of Realism.

53. Émile Zola, “Le Naturalisme au théâtre”, in *Le Roman expérimental*, 142–143 (“une œuvre dramatique, débarrassée des déclamations, tirée des grands mots et des grands sentiments”), trans. as “Naturalism on the Stage,” in *The Experimental Novel and Other Essays* (1893), 143.

54. As already mentioned, in 1877 Émile Zola wrote a whole article, “L'oncle Francisque,” on Francisque Sarcey, where he paid ironic homage to this critic’s influence on the conformist taste of Parisian theatergoers; that irony is not surprising in the context of the critical controversy described above. On the other hand, in 1872 Sarcey had criticized Séjour’s style in the revival of *Le Fils de la nuit* for its being “furiously out-of-date”; therefore his later use of this writer’s work in support of a school of poetic truth in drama seems a bit contradictory. For another example of the contemporary heated debate on Realism in the Parisian press, see Jean Aicard, “Les Idéalistes—Les Réalistes,” *La Renaissance Littéraire et Artistique* 1, no. 2, (May 4, 1872): 11–12.

55. About the artists involved in this drawing-engraving and the short-lived weekly journal *Diogène*, see Étienne Carjat’s preface to Alexandre Pothey, *Le capitaine Régnier: Types civils et militaires*, ill. De Kauffmann (Paris: C. Carpon and E. Flammarion, 1898), v–xviii. See also Elizabeth Fallaize, *Etienne Carjat and “Le Boulevard” (1861–1863)* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1987).

56. Drawing of Victor Séjour, *Le Monde illustré*, no. 912, October 3, 1874, p. 212. The caption, “Victor Séjour, playwright,” is followed by a subtitle announcing his death on September 20. Then, in brackets, it is stated that the image is based on a photograph from the writer’s family and refers to an article in the theater section of the previous issue. In the French original: “VICTOR SÉJOUR, auteur dramatique, décédé à Paris le 20 septembre.—(D’ap. la photographie communiquée par la famille.) (Voir l’article Théâtres du dernier numéro.).”

57. Caption in Italian: “Vittorio Séjour, autore drammatico, m. a Parigi il 20 settembre.” The engraving was published with this caption in *L’Illustrazione universale: Rivista italiana* (Milan-Rome: Treves), November 15, 1874, p. 4; and then again on the front page of the Italian weekly *L’Illustrazione popolare* (Milan: Treves), December 27, 1874. Like Michel Lévy in France, the publisher Emilio Treves was a Jew, whose publishing house played an important role in Italian culture, not only with its popular periodicals, but also with its books by major Italian writers such as Giovanni Verga, Edmondo De Amicis, Gabriele D’Annunzio, Grazia Deledda, Luigi Pirandello (until the anti-Jewish Italian “Racial Laws” issued by Benito Mussolini’s fascist government in 1938 obliged the publishing house to close in 1939).

58. Item “André Gérard, drame de Victor Sejour [sic]: documents iconographiques,” <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8402791x>, p. 14 (where “Ark” means “Archival Resource Key”). About its source, see the following note.

59. This cartoon, “Moment le plus grave de la vie d’un graveur,” drawn by Antonio Greppi (an Italian caricaturist from Mantua) and engraved by Ecosse, is from the satirical journal *Triboulet et Diogène*, no. 19, Paris, May 9, 1857, p. 5. In the previous pages of the magazine there is a review of Séjour’s *André Gérard* by Altève Morand, “Théâtres,” *Triboulet et Diogène*, no. 19, May 9, 1857, pp. 2–4 (pp. 2–3 are on *André Gérard*, performed at the Théâtre de l’Odéon, and pp. 3–4 on a play by Ferdinand Dugué, *Shakespeare*, performed at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin).

60. See François Rabelais, *Gargantua et Pantagruel*, Book III, and Victor Hugo, *Le Roi s’amuse*, the play banned by French censorship in 1832, which inspired Giuseppe Verdi’s 1851 opera *Rigoletto* (that character’s name being a combination of “Triboulet” with the French verb *rigoler*, meaning to laugh). The twice-weekly satirical magazine *Triboulet*, edited by Altève Morand, lasted from March 7 to April 27, 1857, and then merged with *Diogène*, becoming the once again short-lived satirical magazine *Triboulet et Diogène* (May 2–May 18, 1857). On the “vibrant development” of the often satirical small press during the French Second Empire, see Jean-Didier Wagneur, “Le journalisme au microscope: Digressions bibliographiques,” *Études françaises* 44, no. 3 (2008): 23–44. On *Le Roi s’amuse*, Ligier and Verdi’s *Rigoletto*, see Albert W. Halsall, *Victor Hugo and the Romantic Drama* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 104–121.

61. The caption is followed by a subtitle, referring to the play performed at the Odéon.

62. William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, act 1, scene 1, lines 39–42, 45–46: “What are these, / so wither’d and so wild in their attire, / That look not like th’inhabitants o’ the earth, / And yet are on’t? [...] / [...] you should be women, / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so”; and act 4, scene 1, lines 15, 18, and 48 (in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. W. J. Craig, [London: Oxford University Press, 1943], 847, 860).

63. Randall Jarrell, *The Bat-Poet*, ill. Maurice Sendak (London: Macmillan, 1964; New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 1–2.

64. T. S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” *The Egoist*, September–December 1919; repr. in his *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1920); also in T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, ed. John Hayward (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1953, 1963), 23.

65. This drawing of Victor Séjour by Nadar (Gaspard-Félix Tournachon), printed on the cover of Charles Edwards O’Neill’s biography *Séjour* without any information about its author and source, is kept at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, in the collection of Nadar’s caricatures and humorous drawings.

66. Nadar’s caricature of Victor Séjour, with caption cited and translated above, was republished as the “Frontispiece” of *Phylon* 4 (First Quarter 1943): 2, before the article on Séjour by T. A. Daley. The caption under the figure in *Phylon* explains that the image was “pasted in the cover of *La Chronique littéraire*, June 1862, with an article on Séjour by L. Félix Savard. It is not certain whether the caricature was clipped from *La Chronique* or from some other journal” (I checked that issue of *La Chronique littéraire*, the illustration does not come from there). The face in the cartoon resembles the one in the previous drawing of Séjour by Nadar, only the grimace is more somber. Nadar’s famous signature “N” is visible on the bottom right here too. The article by Hans Lamm mentioned above is on pages 49–53.

67. Nadar, cartoon of Mme Laurent as the fortune-teller in *La Tireuse de cartes, Journal amusant*, April 28, 1860, p. 3 (detail). Caption: “Madame Laurent, *Tireuse de cartes*

à la Porte-Saint-Martin, où l'art de s'assurer une réussite” (“Mrs. Laurent, *Tireuse de Cartes*, or the art of ensuring success”). The author’s name is in the headline of the page: “Revue du premier trimestre de 1860,—par Nadar (suite)” (see translation above). There are fifteen more sketches by Nadar, arranged in sequences of unrelated cartoons, on that page, and two previous pages with other tiers of sketches by the same artist.

68. The author of this drawing is unknown. The caption reads: “ODÉON: *Les Grands vassaux*,” followed by a witty statement, “Ce qu’il y avait dans *Les Grands vassaux*, c’était le feuilleton de Paul de Saint-Victor” (“What one had in *Les Grands vassaux* was the feuilleton by Paul de Saint-Victor”). This is probably making fun of the mysterious atmosphere of the political plot in the play, by “revealing” that the mystery consisted in the author’s friendship with the drama critic of *La Presse*.

69. Transactions of slave purchases and sales by his father Louis Séjour were registered on various occasions in 1827, 1828, in the late 1830s, and even, acting for his son Victor, in 1847, 1850, 1851, and 1852. In several cases the Séjourns’ purchases of black women included the slaves’ children, which might indicate a feeling against family break-ups; and in a few cases the purchase was followed by the slave’s emancipation; “profit-taking speculation was not involved in these purchases and sales,” as documented by a few examples. See O’Neill, *Séjour*, 111–114. Concerning the general “French colonial tendency” of Louisiana Creoles to create mixed-race families” and the allowance there for “those of mixed descent to claim property rights and even reverse the terms of the slave system by owning their own slaves,” see Marlene L. Daut, “Sons of White Fathers”: Mulatto Vengeance and the Haitian Revolution in Victor Sejour’s ‘The Mulatto,’ ” *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 65, no. 1 (June 2010): 17–18. On the “peculiarities of slave relations in French Louisiana,” and the peculiar situation of the “light-skinned Negro elite” of *gens de couleur libres* in antebellum New Orleans, see Michel Fabre, *From Harlem to Paris: Black American Writers in France, 1840–1980* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 10–11.

70. Werner Sollors, *Neither Black nor White yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 164, 474n6, citing Douglass’ *Monthly* 3, no. 12 (May 1861): 461.

71. The inventory is in the Minutier central des notaires de Paris, LXI, 1031; cit. in O’Neill, *Séjour*, 133.

72. Victor Séjour and Jules Brésil, *Le Martyre du cœur* (“Drame en cinq actes, en prose”) (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1858), 1.

73. Ibid., act 4, scene 3, p. 21 (“Il rit! . . . Ah! mauricaud! . . . si j’étais seulement en Amérique, je le ferais rouer de coups en sortant!”). This is not the only passage where the play’s villains, Forbin and Lerdac, refer to Placide in offensive terms on account of his race. Cf. several asides: e.g., *Le Martyre du cœur*, act 1, scene 7, p. 4, when Lerdac, after kindly addressing the Jamaican man as a good man (“mon bon Placide”), in his private monologue then refers to him as a “nègre rusé,” a “cunning nigger”; and act 2, scene 10, p. 11, when Forbin decides to take Placide’s money, but not to keep the promise he has made to him: “FORBIN, seul: . . . Je manquerai de parole au nègre. . . . Je veux bien lui faire l’honneur de prendre son argent . . . mais ma dignité. . . . Puis, ce serait d’une immoralité révoltante, que les nègres se missent maintenant à acheter des blancs.” (“I will break my word to the nigger . . . I certainly want to do him the honor of taking his money . . . but my dignity. . . . Then, it would be of a revolting immorality, should the ne-

groes now start buying white men.”) Placide, an undoubtedly positive character, who is even given the last cue and moral comment in the play, is characterized by his anglicized way of speaking French, full of “yes,” “very well,” and all sorts of mispronunciations and misspellings, a humorous touch, which stresses his origin from an English-speaking colony across the Atlantic ocean, and sets the problem of prejudice in a precise contextual setting.

74. The royal prohibition on the departure of those would-be emigrants was due to the fact that too many English people had been leaving the country for America, with financial losses for England. See comment in Clément Caraguel, “*La Semaine dramatique*,” *Journal des débats*, May 10, 1875, p. 1.

75. See Fabre, *From Harlem to Paris*, about William Wells Brown and his vision of a “light-complexioned mulatto,” Alexandre Dumas, surrounded by public attention and respect (19–20), and about Frederick Douglass in 1859 and 1886 (27, 31–34).

76. William Wells Brown, *St. Domingo: Its Revolutions and Its Patriots; A Lecture Delivered before the Metropolitan Athenaeum, London, May 16, and at St. Thomas' Church, Philadelphia, December 20, 1854* (Boston: Bela Marsh, 1855), 5. In this important lecture, Brown analyzes in detail the social and psychological condition of mixed-race people in St. Domingo: “Owing to the amalgamation of whites with blacks, there arose a class known as mulattoes and quadroons. This class, though allied to the whites by the tenderest ties of nature, were their most bitter enemies. . . . They were haughty and disdainful to the blacks, whom they scorned, and jealous and turbulent to the whites, whom they hated and feared. / Many of the mulattoes having received their education in Paris, where prejudice against color was unknown, experienced great dissatisfaction on their return to St. Domingo. White enough to make them hopeful and aspiring, many of them possessed wealth enough to make them influential. Aware by their education of the principles of freedom that were being advocated in Europe and the United States, they were also on the watch to seize opportunities to better their social and political condition” (5–6).

77. Fabre, *From Harlem to Paris*, 1. In the introduction of his book, after mentioning the French-speaking group of free people of color who were educated in France, Michel Fabre singles out Séjour: “One of them, Victor Séjour, enjoyed a successful career as a playwright in Paris and was as well assimilated into French society as his fellow black, Alexandre Dumas.”

78. Séjour, *Les Massacres de la Syrie*, tableau 1, scene 19 (“protection aux faibles, dévouement aux droits”).

79. Ibid., tableau 1, scene 16 (“La première loi, c'est l'humanité”).

80. See Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection; or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: John Murray, 1859); ed. Philip Appleman (New York: Norton, 1975). Also see John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (London: J. W. Parker and Son), 1859.

81. Adrian Desmond and James Moore, *The Sacred Cause: Race, Slavery, and the Quest for Human Origins* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

82. Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, ed. Philip Appleman, 122.

83. Harriet Beecher Stowe, “XLV. Concluding Remarks,” *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly*, 2 vols. (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1852), 2:321–322. See also Stowe's

explicit connection between the cause of slavery in America and the contemporary European struggles against oppressive powers, introduced in chapter 23, “Henrique,” in the discussion on slavery between Augustine St. Clare and his twin brother Alfred. When, after evoking the threat of a slave rebellion in America like that in St. Domingo, Augustine warns his brother that they are sitting on a boiler that may explode, and Alfred answers that he is “not afraid to sit on the escape-valve, as long as the boilers are strong, and the machinery works well,” this is Augustine St. Clare’s worried answer: “The nobles in Louis XVI.’s time thought just so; and Austria and Pius IX. think so now; and, some pleasant morning, you may all be caught up to meet each other in the air, *when the boilers burst*” (2:75). The political references are to the French Revolution in the past, and, in the contemporary scene, to the repressed revolutions of 1848 in Europe, and, consequently, to the ongoing fights for liberty and independence in the Austrian Empire (in Hungary and Lombardy-Venetia in northern Italy in particular) and in the Papal States under Pope Pius IX, whose explosive situations are significantly compared to that of the slave states in the United States in the 1850s.

84. See, e.g., Otto Stern (pseud. of Louise Otto), “Zur Frauenemancipation,” *Unser Planet: Blätter für Unterhaltung, Literatur, Kunst, und Theater* 28 (February 1843): 107, which reports that that “emancipation” was “the catchword of our day”; cit. and trans. Bonnie S. Anderson, “*Frauenemancipation* and Beyond: The Use of the Concept of Emancipation by Early European Feminists,” in *Women’s Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation*, ed. Kathryn Kish Sklar and James Brewer Stewart (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 84.

85. For a detailed description of the Roman ghetto in the 1850s, see Abraham Berliner, *Geschichte der Juden in Rom*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: J. Kauffmann, 1893). A series of picturesque watercolors by the Roman painter Ettore Roesler Franz document the poor condition of that area in the years immediately following the Italian liberation of Rome in 1870.

86. Séjour, preface to *The Fortune-Teller*, 4. French original, *La Tireuse de cartes*, iii.

87. A reference to Séjour’s “race” can be found in the article about him by Charles de La Varenne, “Victor Séjour,” *Diogène*, March 8, 1857, p. 1, where he is immediately described as being “of Creole race” (“Victor Séjour est de race créole”) and given the following genealogy: on his father’s side, a French family of Saint-Domingue, which had escaped to the United States after the Haitian Revolution; and a mother from Louisiana, “a noble daughter of the country” (“une fille noble du pays”).

88. See Camille Thierry, “La Chanson de l’exilé” (The song of the exile), in *Les vagabondes, poésies américaines* (Paris: Lemerre / Bordeaux: De La Porte, 1874), 41–42: “Courage! Il est une autre rive / Où le bonheur a son réveil . . . / L’étranger va m’ouvrir sa porte: / Son seuil, je serai le franchir”; cit. and trans. Michel Fabre, in his *From Harlem to Paris*, 13: “Take heart! There is another shore / Where happiness can soar . . . / A foreign land will open its door to me / And I shall know how to cross its threshold.”

Chapter 16. Family Recollections: A Personal Note

1. Leon Botstein, “Beginnings: Memories of Beginnings Past,” *Jerusalem Post*, September 22, 2006, p. 37.

2. Harold Bloom, *The Anatomy of Influence: Literature as a Way of Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 333.

3. From the Mortara family tree put together by my father's first cousin Amedeo Mortara and kept in the family archive, one learns that the full name of Edgardo's father was Salomone David Sabadino (known as Momolo), and that he was born in 1816.

4. Marianna Mortara was born Padovani and was originally from Modena. At the time of Edgardo's kidnapping, Momolo and Marianna had had nine children, one of them no longer alive: Riccardo (b. in 1844), the twins Ernesta and Erminia (b. in 1846), Augusto (b. in 1848), Arnaldo (b. in 1850), Edgardo (b. in 1851), Ercole (b. in 1853), Aristide (b. in 1856, he had died in 1857), and Imelde (b. in 1858, just a few months before the abduction). In 1859 they would have another child, in memory of the dead one called Aristide. The names and dates are from the family tree, in the Mortara family archive. Riccardo, as a Bersagliere officer, was one of the Italian soldiers under the command of General Raffaele Cadorna who, on September 20, 1870, entered Rome through the breach of the Aurelian Walls at Porta Pia, thus participating in the important, also symbolically, military action that put an end to the temporal power of the Pope over the city of Rome and essentially completed the unification of Italy, with the conquest of its new capital.

5. David I. Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997; repr., New York: Vintage, 1998), 124 (Vintage); Italian edition, *Prigioniero del Papa Re*, trans. Giorgio Moro and Brunello Lotti (Milan: Rizzoli, 1996), 184. About England, where the Board of Deputies of British Jews already existed, with Sir Moses Montefiore as its leader, and important initiatives in favor of the Mortaras and of the Italian Jews were immediately attempted in 1858–1859, see Kertzer, *Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*, chapter 16, “Sir Moses Goes to Rome,” 162–172 (Vintage) (Italian ed., 240–255).

6. I shall mention some of the articles and interviews giving voice to that protest, which appeared in the United States, in Italy, in Israel, and in the international Catholic press: John L. Allen Jr., “Pope of Infallibility Set for Beatification,” *National Catholic Reporter*, September 1, 2000, pp. 12–13 (interview to Elèna Mortara); John L. Allen Jr., “Relatives of Kidnapped Boy Ask for Rule Change,” *National Catholic Reporter*, September 1, 2000, p. 12 (about the current Catholic Code of Canon Law and Canon 868, 2, concerning forced baptism of non-Catholic children); David Gabrielli, “Rapito con la benedizione di Pio IX,” *Confronti* 27, no. 3 (March 2000): 29–32 (interview with Elèna Mortara, and a note on the present Code of Canon Law: “Scheda: Come Roma giustifica il battesimo, malgrado il no dei genitori, ai bambini morenti”), repr. in *La leggenda del santo rapitore: Pio IX e il caso Mortara ‘agli onori dell’altare’*, supplement no. 34 of ADISTA no. 5595, Rome, May 8, 2000, pp. 10–13 (the entire issue is devoted to Pius IX and the Mortara case); translated into German, “Der Fall Papst Pius IX: Absurde Seligsprechung,” *Kirche Intern* (Wien) 5 (2000): 42–43, and *Kirche Intern* 6 (2000); Ronen Bergman, “One Kid, One Kidnapping,” *Ha’aretz: Pessah Supplement*, April 19, 2000, pp. 28–31 (interview with David I. Kertzer and Elèna Mortara); R. Jeffrey Smith, “The Father, the Son and the Holy See,” *Washington Post*, June 23, 2000, p. 1 (interview with Elèna Mortara); “The Back Page: Should the Pope Beatify His Controversial 19th-Century Predecessor, Pius IX?” *Jerusalem Report*, July 31, 2000, p. 56 (debate between Elèna Mortara and Monsignor Angelo Mencucci); Carlo Bancalari, “La vera storia del bambino ‘rapito’ da papa Mastai Ferretti,” and “Wojtila chiede scusa agli ebrei ma fa beato il papa del ghetto,” *Il Secolo XIX*, August 31, 2000, p. 25 (interview with Amedeo Mortara); David Van Biema, “Not So Saint,” *Time* magazine, September 4, 2000, pp. 60–64 (European edition, pp. 50–54). The protest of the Mortara family started with a letter by Elèna Mortara, “Forum: Beati

e soprusi,” in the Italian weekly *L'Espresso*, January 20, 2000, p. 19; it was followed by another letter signed by eleven members of the Mortara family, Amedeo Mortara et al. (Carla, Carlo Andrea, Elèna, Eugenio, Franca, Giorgio, Giuliana, Lidia, Paola, and Raffaella Mortara), “Conversioni forzate: Il caso Mortara,” *Corriere della sera*, July 23, 2000, p. 13. More interviews were granted to other media (radio, television), both in Europe and in the United States (including an interview with Bob Simon for *Sixty Minutes*, CBS, on “Saint-hood,” October 12, 2003). In 2005, Elèna Mortara was interviewed once more: Antonio Carioti, “Il nostro avo bambino rapito e plagiato da Pio IX,” *Corriere della sera*, June 17, 2005, p. 35. A historical docu-drama, *Secret Files of the Inquisition*, directed by David Rabinovitch and distributed by Fleetwood Films, was produced in 2006; in the fourth episode of the series, which deals with the Inquisition in mid-nineteenth-century Europe, Carlo Andrea Mortara was interviewed on the family case.

7. Bernard Malamud, *The Fixer* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966; repr., Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1967), 281 (Penguin).

8. See Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference* (London: Continuum, 2002; rev. ed. 2003).

Appendix

1. *New York Times*, December 4, 1858, p. 4.

2. *Jewish Messenger*, New York, December c. 24, 1858 (Tebeth 17, 5619), p. 1.

3. *Israelite*, January 28, 1859, p. 236.

4. Victor Séjour, preface to *La Tireuse de cartes*, (“Drame en cinq actes et un prologue, en prose”) (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1860), 1–2.

5. Norman R. Shapiro's translation of Victor Séjour, *The Fortune-Teller*, trans. Norman R. Shapiro, intro. M. Lynn Weiss (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 3–4. English translation, courtesy University of Illinois Press.

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Les Noces vénitientes (“Drame en cinq actes, en prose”). Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1855 (first performed in Paris, at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, on March 8, 1855).

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- André Gérard* (“Drame en cinq actes, en prose”). Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1857 (first performed in Paris at the Théâtre de l’Odéon, Paris, April 30, 1857).
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—. "Victor Séjour." Caricature, charcoal drawing heightened with gouache on brown paper, ca. 1850s. Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

"Odéon: *Les Grands vassaux*." Victor Séjour portrayed as a painter, while sketching a figure for his play *Les Grands vassaux*, performed at the Théâtre de l'Odéon, Paris, February 16, 1859. Cartoonist: unknown. Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

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