

## Passing in the City

the liminal spaces of amy levy's late work

*Alex Goody*

And you, you passed and smiled that day,  
Between the showers.

*Amy Levy, "Between the Showers"*

She wished to find out about this hazardous business  
of "passing," this breaking away from all that was familiar and  
friendly to take one's chances in another environment, not  
entirely strange, perhaps, but certainly not entirely friendly.

*Nella Larsen, Passing*

Such a notion of "passing" is not becoming "invisible" but  
becoming differently visible—being seen as a member of a  
group with which one wants or needs to identify.

*Sander L. Gilman, Making the Body Beautiful*

THE idea of "passing" still carries a particular resonance for those individuals traversing the difficult ground between polarities of self-identification. In Nella Larsen's 1929 novel of that name, *passing* delineates an ambivalent state, an endless journey between the oppositions of race, of sexuality, and of culture. This experience and the liminal subjectivities it produces are particularly the effect of the transient environment of the modern city. This chapter suggests that the idea of "passing" (and the multiple resonances of the word) can also be used to explore the profoundly ambivalent emotions and subjectivities of Amy Levy's late poetry—poetry that Cynthia Scheinberg describes as exploring, "among other things, a particular affinity for the urban

life of Jewish London, an unorthodox spirituality that refuses clear identification with either Christian or Jewish traditions, and her most direct intimations of lesbian sexuality.”<sup>1</sup> Reading these poems cross-culturally, even anachronistically, alongside the dynamics of “passing” serves to expose both the potentials and the limits of what could be termed the “nomadic” consciousness of Levy’s writing: “the desire for an identity made of transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes, without and against an essential unity.”<sup>2</sup> The following discussion examines how the ambiguous sexuality and racial awareness of *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse* (1889), when traced across an urban context, highlight the modernity of Levy’s late poetry, an aspect that has been identified by recent critics including Linda Hunt Beckman and Ana Parejo Vaidillo.<sup>3</sup> Alongside this orientation toward the modernist experimentation of the next century, the ambiguous urbanism of Levy’s poems produces but also endangers radically interstitial, mobile subject positions.

Larsen’s *Passing* focuses on two central protagonists: both light-skinned, mixed-race American women. Irene Redfield has stayed true to her “race” by marrying a man darker than her and committing herself to the bourgeois life of cultural uplift in 1920s Harlem. An old school acquaintance, Clare Hendry, has chosen to pass as white, deceiving and marrying a white man who turns out to be an extreme racist (who calls her “nig” as a joke, unconscious of its resonances). The narrative follows Clare’s attempts to get in touch with her racial origins by acts of cultural tourism in Harlem, while Irene feels unable to stop Clare’s entering her life. Clearly, the transgressive spaces of the city/Harlem are fundamental to the identities that Clare and Irene perform. These two opposite poles of the “passing” divide become increasingly entangled until Clare falls from a window after Irene surmises that Clare is having an affair with Irene’s husband.<sup>4</sup>

One way of reading Larsen’s novel is as a reworking of the tragic mulatto narrative, with the beautiful Clare unable to exist in a world that would categorize her. Cheryl Wall argues that “for Larsen, the tragic mulatto was the most accessible convention for the portrayal of middle class black women in fiction.”<sup>5</sup> The mulatto can thus come to function “as a narrative device of mediation.”<sup>6</sup> However, many African American women writers, such as Alice Walker and Ntozake Shange, have recognized the eroticism and complex sexuality of the book.<sup>7</sup> Not only are Irene and Clare both passing in different ways—crossing social, cultural, and economic boundaries—but also there is a dynamic of desire between the two women. They can be read as a split subjectivity recognizing

ing a self in the other but unable to be whole, or be together. This dynamic, traversed by the forces of race, class, and gender, is the murderous force that finally kills one and nearly destroys the other.

Larsen's novel shares with a contemporary modernist text, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928), an articulation of ambivalent identity that signifies a sexuality outside the confines of rigid heterosexuality. This, in turn, suggests a shared modernist concern with fluctuating or nonfixed subjectivities, a concern that was amplified by the performative possibilities that the modern urban space created. However, the racial dimension of the unfixed identity and sexuality of *Passing* suggests alternative comparisons, which elaborate the anxieties about racial ambivalence that the mobile peoples and races of modernity precipitated.

In a 1997 *Jewish Quarterly* article, Amanda Sebestyen highlights the affinity between the "double-consciousness" that "Black artists in the West have suffered" and the "sharp dividedness . . . associated with the heritage of the European Jew," going on to consider "Black and Jewish Border Crossers" whose "strategies were various and enabled them sometimes to cross over socially to the dominant group, [though] their loyalties could not easily be erased and the process was never without pain."<sup>8</sup> Drawing connections between James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912) and the autobiographically "passing" (non-Jewish, nonhomosexual) "I" of Marcel Proust, Sebestyen also points out that "[a]t the turn of the century the 'mulatto' was viewed as refined, over-civilized, artistic, hysterical; all qualities associated with modernity in general and also with an assimilated Jewish avant-garde."<sup>9</sup> She goes on to articulate the similarities between Irene's tensions in *Passing* and the anxieties of the emancipated European Jews when faced with their "primitive" ghetto counterparts.

In a different vein, Sander Gilman's documentation of the discourses around, and origins of, modern aesthetic (cosmetic) surgery reveals its reliance on "the discourse of 'passing,' which comes out of the racialization of nineteenth-century culture."<sup>10</sup> Just as mixed-race African Americans could attempt to "[blend] into the dominant group whose silently taking no notice of one was the key sign of one's acceptance," so too did Jews at the turn of the twentieth century seek rhinoplastic procedures to enable their "vanishing into the visual norm and 'passing' as non-Jewish in appearance."<sup>11</sup> Considering such corollaries does not amount to asserting an essential ambivalence about racial affiliation in turn-of-the-century acculturated Anglo-Jews or mixed-race

Americans; instead, what may be shared in this nexus of associations is a sense of uncertainty that is conjured up by the idea of “passing.” In turn, the uncertain space or zone of passing is one of complex identifications and desires: it is both enabling and dangerous—a zone, moreover, where racial ambivalence may also stand as or for an ambiguous set of sexual identifications.

Amy Levy’s complex relationship to her sexuality and racial affiliation has formed the impetus of much criticism on her work. This is linked to, and in some cases complicates, the connections that can be drawn between Levy and the figure of the New Woman who preoccupied the fiction and journalism of the 1890s. Levy is often regarded as a “New Woman” poet, with works such as “A Ballad of Religion and Marriage” (undated)<sup>12</sup> and “Xantippe” (1881) articulating a position that is recognizably feminist (from a twenty-first-century as well as late-nineteenth-century perspective). In her novel *The Romance of a Shop* (1888), the protagonists Gertrude Lorimer and her sister Lucy, who find a living as professional photographers, display recognizable New Woman traits. Levy’s politics, in association with her network of colleagues (Olive Schreiner, Eleanor Marx, Vernon Lee) and her status as a Cambridge-educated professional writer, serve to connect her with the cultural and behavioral changes that produced the independent women who populated the late-nineteenth-century imaginary: thus, she is endowed with New Woman status in Linda Hughes’s 2001 anthology of *New Women Poets*.<sup>13</sup> Admittedly, the concept of the New Woman proper was not identified as such (and even then was much debated) until after the coining of the term in 1893, four years after Levy’s death in 1889.<sup>14</sup> However, I use the term in this chapter as does Linda Hunt Beckman in her biography of Levy when “discussing Levy and attitudes towards women’s nature and role in the late 1870s and 1880s,” basing her usage on the fact that “the ideological and behavioural changes that led to its coinage [the “New Woman”] are already apparent in those periods.”<sup>15</sup>

Identifying Levy with the nascent liberated femininity that came to be termed “the New Woman” serves to highlight the importance of the urban in her work: the “Muse” that the epigraph to *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse* invokes (*LPT*, 7). As Deborah Parsons reiterates, the New Woman “was a specifically urban character, the result of the circumstances and qualities of a growing metropolitan society.”<sup>16</sup> What Parsons also makes explicit about Levy is the potential link between “the Jew” as a crucial figure in late-nineteenth-century representations of the city and the increased visibility and presence of “respectable” women (in other words, those who were not prostitutes) in the

street. This link is further considered by both Beckman, who argues that Levy's "urban identity . . . stemmed from her conviction that there was a strong historical connection between Jews and city life," and Vadillo, who claims that "the motive of the wanderer allowed Levy to . . . look for a new set of conventions with which to rearticulate the relations between women, Jewishness and the city."<sup>17</sup> As an independent late-nineteenth-century woman and a Jew, Levy has a double affinity with the urban space as the "paven ground" for her subjectivity (*LPT*, 7), an enunciative space that counteracts what some may identify as Levy's triple marginality (as woman, Jewish, and lesbian).

Levy was a member of an assimilated Anglo-Jewish family at a time when Jewishness was becoming an important question in the politics and cultural debates of Victorian England. The emergent "racial science" of ethnology foregrounded the categorization of "Jewishness" rather than the role of Jews in English culture. Robert Knox's popular *The Races of Men* (1850, reprinted in 1862), for example, describes the Jew as having a racial essence comparing him, as an inferior racial type, to the "African." With the increased migration of eastern European Jews to Britain from the 1870s onwards, the growing visibility of these peoples served to reinforce ideas of Jewishness as racial otherness. The Jewish "other" was most in evidence in the poor, crowded urban centers that had long been the arrival point for immigrants, most prominently the East End of London. Todd Endelman describes this racialized stereotype: "When outsiders visited the East End . . . they tended to see its filth, congestion, and bewilderingly foreign character, and often little else. The inhabitants of immigrant districts seemed to be dark, alien, ill-mannered creatures. Their speech, gestures, dress, comportment, shop signs, and wall posters (in Yiddish) revealed their foreign origins. Even the smells encountered there were un-English."<sup>18</sup> The East End European Jew, a racialized other and a stereotype of urban Jewishness, became closely associated with other fears about "outcast London" and (serious and sensationalized) accounts of the moral and physical degeneration of the East End. However, in a *Jewish Chronicle* article published in November 1886, Levy considers and celebrates the urban nature of "the Jew," the "descendant of many city-bred ancestors," while simultaneously reiterating the stereotype of the nervous and highly strung Jew.<sup>19</sup> Levy's prose writing demonstrates a tension between her identifications as urban woman and urban Anglo-Jew. Most obviously in "Middle-Class Jewish Women of To-Day," published two months earlier in the *Jewish Chronicle* in September 1886, Levy articulates a critique of the repressive patriarchal regimes of Anglo-Jewish culture:

Conservative in politics; conservative in religion; the Jew is no less conservative as regards his social life; and while in most cases outwardly conforming to the usages of Western civilisation, he is, in fact, more Oriental at heart than a casual observer might infer. . . .

In a society constructed on such a primitive basis, the position of single women, so rapidly improving in the general world, is a particularly unfortunate one. Jewish men have grown to look upon the women of their tribe as solely designed for marrying or giving in marriage. . . . If a Jewess has social interests beyond the crude and transitory ones of flirtation, she must seek them, perforce, beyond the tribal limits.<sup>20</sup>

In articulating a feminist critique of Anglo-Jewish society here, Levy uses stereotypes of the primitive, “oriental” Jew. She also draws on a stereotypical association of “the Jew” with the city in her piece “Jewish Humour,” but this time to identify with it: “[I]ts distinctly urban quality is one of the chief features of Jewish humour. The close and humorous observation of manners (we use the word in its widest sense); the irresistible, swift transition to the absurd, in the midst of everything that is most solemn; the absolute refusal to take life quite seriously, do we not recognize these qualities as common, more or less, to all bred and born in great cities?”<sup>21</sup>

It is in this article that Levy most explicitly defines a Jewish racial heritage —“the family feeling of the Jewish race.” Here she also writes, “[I]f we leave off saying *Shibboleth*, let us, at least, employ its equivalent in the purest University English.”<sup>22</sup> Though she is from an assimilated family with few active Jewish connections, the implication here is that Levy identifies, and identifies with, a Jewishness —“we,” “us” —that is located inside an apparently assimilated Englishness, a Jewishness that can be articulated from *within* the dominant culture. This is not an oppositional politics but a subversive intervention, a tactic that Scheinberg views as crucial to Levy’s negotiation of her Jewish heritage in the modern world.<sup>23</sup> Scheinberg posits that Levy’s “urban lyrics that offer an alternative to the assumptions of pastoral inspiration” function like her interpretation of scripture in poems such as “Magdalen” —as a “challenge to the conventions of Christian poetry.”<sup>24</sup> The difficulties posed by the ambiguity of Levy’s textual position are clearly illustrated by the responses to her novel *Reuben Sachs* (1888), both at the time of publication and subsequently, which have accused Levy of perpetuating stereotypes and manifesting “Jewish self-hatred.”<sup>25</sup> However, *Reuben Sachs* and the short stories “Leopold Leuniger: A Study” (1880) and “Cohen of Trinity” (1889) may well, as Beckman argues, reveal a self-

conscious understanding of the phenomenon of Jewish antisemitism and offer the possibility of moving beyond it (of unfixing "tribal limits").<sup>26</sup>

In some of her last work—the poems "Lohengrin" and "Captivity," which appear in the "Moods and Thoughts" section of *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse*—Levy returns to her racial heritage in a complex set of identifications and longings. These poems, as Scheinberg analyzes, mourn the loss of Jewish roots ("Lohengrin") while acknowledging the impossibility of either a return to Jewishness or a complete rejection of assimilation ("Captivity"). Interestingly, Scheinberg argues that "Captivity" "seems to offer Levy's most Jewish version of being caught between two worlds, a version whose title and references to a lost land position her more directly in line with a tradition of Jewish Diasporic poetry." This poetry mourns the loss of the land of Israel—a "place that is always symbolic of a spiritual state in Jewish literature, rather than mere geographic location."<sup>27</sup> I would highlight how this in-betweenness, which Scheinberg sees as a crucial factor throughout Levy's work in relation to her cultural and sexual as well as religious or racial identity, is a key factor in the nomadic trajectory that she attempts to trace in her writing. Levy does not come to a final resting place either safely within or beyond a racial heritage; her in-betweenness must necessarily persist, for as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari describe it, "[t]he life of the nomad is the intermezzo."<sup>28</sup>

The nascent New Woman and the Jew do offer contradictory identities for Levy as a writer, particularly around the issue of a "feminist" politics, but what they clearly share is their urbanism and their resistance to simple assimilation into the cultural hegemony of fin-de-siècle England. The resulting stereotypes that emerge of both "figures" in the popular culture of the 1880s and 1890s reveal a preexisting anxious need to define their difference from, and thereby their place in, English culture. Levy uses this anxiety to open up a space for articulating an alternative identity that is located in/on the liberating ambiguity of the "changeable" city. Thus, Levy's late work both enables and undermines the Jew and the liberated woman as she inscribes (herself) across the city space. The Jew and the new, urban woman provide some of the multiple launching points for Levy's poems that attempt a radical movement across intelligible subject positions. These works actively seek the in-between, between poles of fixity—which does not mean that they simply pass from one to (an)other: "*Between* things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other away, a stream without beginning or end



that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.”<sup>29</sup> In some senses, the city functions for Levy as just such a nonlocalizable movement-space that sweeps away the self and the other.

In the first section of *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse*, Levy clearly is celebrating the city and the ability to move through and be immersed in it (a peripatetic rather than a panoramic perspective). The “call” of the city is expressed in “A Village Garden”:

Fain would I bide, but ever in the distance  
A ceaseless voice is sounding clear and low;—  
The city calls me with her old persistence,  
The city calls me—I arise and go.  
Of gentler souls this fragrant peace is guerdon;  
For me, the roar and hurry of the town,  
Wherein more lightly seems to press the burden  
Of individual life that weighs me down.

(*LPT*, 31)

As Beckman states, “the city became central to [Levy’s] poetic development” with a poem such as “The Village Garden” expressing a “subordination of self to the power of the metropolis.”<sup>30</sup> This poem also clearly evinces what Vadillo terms Levy’s “urban aestheticism,” in which she “equated London with modernity and urban mobility with revolution.”<sup>31</sup> The insistent call of the city in “The Village Garden,” expressed through the sibilance of the first stanza, offers an escape from the “burden” of individuality, a manifestation of the opportunities for anonymity that the city of modernity offered. But it additionally suggests that “individual” identity (as a fixed and stable concept) is an encumbrance that disperses in the speed and intensity of the urban space. Moreover, the archaism “guerdon” depicts an old-fashioned, pastoral poetic that is superseded by the multiplicity and “roar and hurry” of the modern. In a similar vein, Levy’s “A London Plane-Tree,” the opening poem in the collection, rewrites pastoral motifs, associating the speaking-subject, the writer in her garret, with the feminized “plane-tree in the square” (*LPT*, 17). This piece of nature is immersed in and interpenetrated by the “voice” and atmosphere of the city:

Among her branches, in and out,  
The city breezes play;  
The dun fog wraps her round about;  
Above the smoke curls grey.

(*LPT*, 17)



The uncertain referent of the pronouns here—the “her” in this stanza could easily refer to any of the subjects of the poem—further interconnects speaker, tree, and city, breaking down the singularity of each and opening all the subjects up to each other.

Another poem, “London Poets: In Memoriam,” explicitly refers to an urban poetic, calling on the poets who “trod the streets and squares where now I tread” (*LPT*, 29). It likewise evokes the city atmosphere—“smoke,” “winds,” “breezes”—the breath of the city, which becomes the poets’ exhaled voices and, ultimately, the passing breath of the speaker. The speaker recognizes the temporary nature of the urban self, that her existence will indeed become imperceptible. She is empowered to speak by the fact that her sorrows will become part of the palimpsest of the city, a fleeting moment that will leave only a trace with the passing of time.

Levy’s interest in James Thomson suggests that his “London” haunts “London Poets,”<sup>32</sup> but perhaps more crucially, as Beckman argues, the symbolist city of Baudelaire stands as a key precursor for the urban poetic that Levy is articulating.<sup>33</sup> The transitory nature of the urban experience (and the urban “self”) foregrounded in “London Poets” echo some of the key experiences of Baudelaire’s Paris poems—the ephemerality and transience of the cityscape—and other poems from *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse* describe the chance encounter that is also crucial to the modern city constructed by Baudelaire. Thus, poems from *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse* in which the beloved is glimpsed, encountered, and subsumed by the city—“Between the Showers,” “London in July,” and “In the Mile End Road,” for example—can be read, as Beckman suggests, as Levy’s own form of the symbolist aesthetic, employing “both the city and the figure of a missing woman for whom she searches as symbols of the effect life is having on her.”<sup>34</sup> Both the complex relation between the psyche and external space, and the importance of the urban in the French symbolist tradition resonate with Levy’s work as Beckman considers. But I would emphasize how, in drawing on this tradition, Levy is rewriting Baudelaire’s “À une passante” to perform deliberately masculine *flânerie*: as Deborah Nord claims, Levy expresses the experience of the city, so crucial to her late work, through male personae.<sup>35</sup> However, Levy’s poetic persona does not own the objectifying gaze of the male *flâneur*, and thus her performance is also a deconstruction; s/he does not possess the woman or the street she wanders. As Parsons highlights, Levy complicates the “power relationship of observing male, observed female in the city” so that “[r]ather than being at home in the city, an omniscient male observer who can map his landscape, the man [*sic*] [in

"London in July"] wanders lost in its streets."<sup>36</sup> Levy is interested, in poems such as "Ballade of an Omnibus," in celebrating the joys of the city while undermining the traditional gendering of the urban observer and challenging the authority of the *flâneur*. Her urban poems do not offer an identification with masculinity but, I argue, instead utilize this perspective as a way of "passing" in the street. She is, as Vadillo describes, seeking the "construction of a mobile lyric self" and placing herself in a "tradition of urban writers immersed in the production of a nomadic space."<sup>37</sup> Her poems construct view points (and points at which s/he is viewed) that enable her to use the transient city without being fixed and/or recognized as a transgressive woman, becoming "differently visible"<sup>38</sup> to examine and describe desires and identities that exceed the limits of race and gender.

In "Between the Showers," the "changeful" city scene is an ever-changing place/space that allows for the transitory, transgressive encounter:

Hither and thither, swift and gay,  
The people chased the changeful hours  
And you, you passed and smiled that day,  
Between the showers.

(LPT, 26)

The urban space thus functions as a signifier of transgression, both the transgressive acts of the speaker (co-opting the privilege of the male poetic voice, replacing the pastoral poetic idyll with an accelerated urban scene) and the breaking down of boundaries and certainties. The parallelism in these lines ("Hither and thither," "swift and gay") and elsewhere structurally represents how the poem articulates, or attempts to delineate, a state "between" points of fixity; the text is passing between different states as it discovers both the city and the beloved who "passed" by. Just as, in passing from urban woman to urban Jew to *flâneur*, Levy's poetic voice is enabled though its own liminality, so too does "*la passante*" herself come into being in-between ("between the showers"), in a space that is also the enunciative space of the poem.

In emphasizing the movement between that characterizes this "passing," my reading of Levy's urban poetry shares much common ground with the central thesis of Vadillo's account of the urban poetry of four late-Victorian women poets: Amy Levy, Alice Meynell, Graham R. Thomson (Rosamund Marriott Watson), and Michael Field. For Vadillo, mobility and transience are central to these poets' work; moreover, in different ways, forms of urban mass

transport (omnibuses, trams, suburban railways, and underground railways) act as metaphor, metonym, and (literal) vehicle for their poetics of the urban. Mass transport offers a way to “transgress the incarcerating ideology of the public/private spheres” and “liberate women to be spectators of modern life.”<sup>39</sup> In Levy’s work, Vadillo identifies the trope of the “passenger” as having a crucial function in Levy’s “poetics of transportation and movement”: for Vadillo, “the passenger is a nomad in the modern metropolis” who moves across the boundaries of social space and embodies the flux and movement of the urban space in an essential uprootedness that Levy welcomes “because it was through mobility that the bourgeoisie’s Christian patriarchal notions could be challenged.”<sup>40</sup> Indeed, there may be poems, such as the “Ballade of an Omnibus,” that express the female jouissance of the urban woman poet,<sup>41</sup> but clearly the space of passing in the city, the in-between urban space, is not simply positive and enabling in the way Vadillo analyzes it. In her late poetry, Levy signals the grave dangers that beset an “aesthetics of flux and movement . . . at one with the ephemerality of urban life.”<sup>42</sup>

Several poems in the first sequence of *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse* evoke a different sense of the transitory and unstable that is played out across the city. In “Straw in the Street,” the speaker passes by and through the uncertain zone between life and death:

Straw in the street where I pass to-day  
Dulls the sound of the wheels and feet.  
'Tis for a failing life they lay  
Straw in the street.  
.....  
The hurrying people go their way,  
Pause and jostle and pass and greet  
For life, for death, are they treading, say  
Straw in the street?

(LPT, 25)

The city street, a place of fleeting encounters and transition and motion, is also, this poem suggests, the liminal space beyond life: the loss of stable identity that the city offers may also be the complete loss of self. Thus, the dangers of transgression are suggested by the other resonances of “passing”—that ironic double sense of “passing” and “dying” that Henry Louis Gates Jr. points

to<sup>43</sup>—and foreshadow one of the key dynamics of the second, sexually charged, section of *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse*.

Just as Levy's simple designation by critics as an independent New Woman elides the problematics of her racial affiliation, so too does such an identification subsume the complexities of Levy's sexuality. In "A Ballad of Religion and Marriage," for example, she imagines a nonheterosexual future where "[f]olk shall be neither pairs nor odd." As Beckman points out, the word *odd* here, a slang term for lesbian, clearly implies nonnormative sexual possibilities<sup>44</sup> and thus complicates an easy assumption that Levy articulates nascent New Woman feminist politics in this poem and elsewhere. Indeed, as her biography suggests (she had a number of unfulfilled romantic attachments), Levy did not easily adopt a position outside her "tribal limits." Her relationship to the liberated urban woman may have been more one of impossible identifications mobilized by a desire *for*, rather than a simple desire to be, this ideal of liberated femininity.

Certain productive ideas emerge if the desires and drives toward the liberated urban woman in Levy's work are explored through a psychoanalytic framework; they can be understood as being both narcissistic and fetishistic, that is, desires both internalized in a fraught way and externalized as a compensatory fantasy. The link between narcissism and lesbianism is clearly made in "On Narcissism" (1914) by Sigmund Freud, for whom such a homosexual libidinal cathexis is a perversion.<sup>45</sup> Leaving such normative classifications aside, there is a recognizably narcissistic, that is, self-identificatory, desire for the beloved that runs through the whole of *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse* and serves to establish this beloved other as a lost self. This is not to pathologize either Levy or her work but to point to (lesbian) textual relations that disturb the boundaries of the subject, opening her up and multiplying her. Moreover, if we accept Jacques Lacan's extension of the idea of narcissism, in which he aligns it with the imaginary order and makes it a central component of the psyche, the narcissistic textual relations of Levy's work may even gesture toward an imaginary realm outside of symbolic force.<sup>46</sup> Her texts could thus be seen as aspiring to an escape from the symbolic through their narcissistic refusal of stable signification and singular identity.

The unsettling textual relations that can be discerned in Levy's poems surface in the work of later modernist women writers: for example, in the relationship between Hermione and Fayne Rabb in H.D.'s *HERmione*. This text presents a much more explicit exploration of narcissistic desire, lesbianism, and

fetishistic disavowal, directly influenced by H.D.'s work with and experience of Freud.<sup>47</sup> As a projection of an ideal ego, the narcissistically desired other-as-self is also a fantasy that is believed in at the same time as its impossibility is recognized: its function is thus fetishistic. So for Levy, the urban woman as fetish—an impossible fantasy—allays the anxieties of the wound, loss, or splitting suffered by the speaking subject. Indeed, if “language . . . is based on fetishist denial (‘I know that, but just the same,’ ‘the sign is not the thing, but just the same,’ etc.) and defines us in our essence as speaking beings,” as Julia Kristeva claims,<sup>48</sup> then perhaps the fetishized liberated urban woman is that which enables the actual articulation of *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse*. However, the urban woman as an internal image or self-reflection also figures the narcissistic pull away from exterior objects and symbolic power, and thus away from language and intelligibility. This suggests that as Levy's text comes into being, enabled by a fetishistic fantasy of wholeness and liberation, it confronts the impossibility of this fantasy and so turns back toward hesitancy and inarticulacy.

The ideal of the independent, modern woman is clearly evoked in the dedication poem of *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse* (“To Clementina Black”) in the poem “To Vernon Lee” (both Black and Lee epitomized liberated, educated femininity), and in other poems’ reminiscences of Cambridge; additionally, as Vadillo points out, “the book's fourth section [is] dedicated to the figure of New Woman.”<sup>49</sup> In the light of these references, one may with little difficulty envisage this new type of woman as the “you” addressed by the love and erotic poems in the volume, particularly those from the second section, “Love, Dreams and Death.” The liberated urban woman may serve to authorize *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse*, but the poem “Impotens” in “Love, Dreams and Death” nevertheless expresses the difficulty of this act of writing in the face of the obstinacy of the symbolic, which is imagined as “The pitiless order of things, / Whose laws we may change not nor break” (*LPT*, 36). Against the wound inflicted by this “pitiless order,” some of the poems from this section (“The Dream” and “Borderland”) do create an imaginary space wherein a merging with a fetishized female other is possible. In “The Dream,” the beloved is “[c]alm and silent,” communicating a union with the speaker through touch and glance and persisting after the dream “like faint perfume” that “cling[s]” to the speaker (*LPT*, 38). The speaker in “Borderland” is aroused by an “unseen presence hovering” who “sheds perfume” and brings the speaker to a climax that can be marked only through charged dashes:

My heart in some dream-rapture saith,  
It is *she*. Half in a swoon  
I spread my arms in slow delight. —

(LPT, 42)

However, others of these fantasmic poems express the loss of such joyous nocturnal merging (“In the Night,” “At Dawn”), often explicitly as the death of the beloved. The poem “Contradictions,” though, is where the hesitancy and inarticulacy that are attendant on the loss of wholeness (figured as the loss of the fetishized other-as-self) are most clearly, and contradictorily, articulated: “That you are dead must be inferred, / And yet my thought rejects the word” (LPT, 51). The following section, “Moods and Thoughts,” moves on from the erotic, fantasmic poems of “Love, Dreams and Death,” but the (narcissistic, fetishistic) other-as-self is evoked again in the opening poem of the section. This time, in “The Old House,” “she” is unambiguously a fractured part of the self, the ideal ego projected as a younger self who, in her return, exposes the wound and loss in the speaking subject. There is no shared glance of merging; instead, there is a turning away from recognition and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of unity and reconciliation. The disavowed loss at the core of the subject returns:

She turned,—I saw her face,—O God, it wore  
The face I used to wear when I was young!  
.....  
O turn away, let her not see, not know!  
How should she bear it, how should understand?

(LPT, 57)

As productive as it might be, such a psychoanalytic analysis is, of course, at odds with the Deleuzian framework through which this chapter deploys the figuration of the nomad and nomadic consciousness to explore Levy’s work. But the incompatibility of the two discourses is precisely what highlights the deep rifts in what Levy is attempting in her late work. The in-between, “passing,” the nomadic intermezzo are what these poems attempt to write, refusing to fall back onto a site of fixity. Thus, the “paven ground” of the city is crucial as a transitory zone or “state of perpetual flux”<sup>50</sup> in many of the *London Plane-Tree* poems (“London in July,” “Straw in the Street,” “Between the Showers,” “London Poets”) in which the speaker traverses rather than locates herself. This

resistance to fixity is also a resistance to an intelligible sexual, racial, or gender identity. Thus, although the use of an "urban muse" may signify a Jewish affiliation, as do the poems "Lohengrin" and "Captivity," all of these features are tied to in-betweenness rather than firm identification.

In a slightly different way, the speaker of many of the love and erotic poems passes as a heterosexual man—using androcentric poetic conventions—but attempts to articulate desires that fundamentally disturb the normative gendering and sexuality of such conventions. Simultaneously, though, this in-betweenness is always endangered by a signifying regime that requires intelligibility. At the level of linguistic text and of interpretative act, the necessity of signification sorts out the self and the other, identifies and categorizes, and draws desire back to the solidity of boundaries, borders, and perversions. Levy's poems cannot ultimately mean without a "you" and an "I"; there must be a place of the self; the "Last Words" must be spoken (*LPT*, 44). The pressure of this signifying realm on the voice and subject of her texts forces a splitting and enforces a silence, a silence that is so often figured as (or by) death in *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse*. That the dangers and ambivalences of the poems' desires, along with the dangers of negating one's racial affiliation, feature as much as the urban landscape in Levy's late work suggests that the city is not simply a space of liberation, "a stream without beginning or end." "Passing" as a (non-Jewish) urban woman, or desiring the passing woman, produces an instability or uncertainty that, while unfixing identity, also threatens its destruction, a threat that is carried by the death that haunts the second section of Levy's last collection.

The uncertain, the transitory, and the in-between are obvious facets of the second sequence of *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse*: "Love, Dreams and Death." Focusing particularly on this sequence, Emma Francis explores the "emotions of profound ambivalence" in these poems, which she reads as "accounts of separation and encounter, desire and frustration, many of which use death as a lexicon through which the speakers seek to understand their experience."<sup>51</sup> Poems such as "The Dream," "Borderland," "On the Threshold," and "In the Night" do indeed participate in an evocation of ambivalence and liminality while describing imagined erotic encounters with a dead or absent beloved. This is manifest as the scene or setting—dawn, twilight, the threshold—the past time remembered or the fleeting visitation, or, in a poem such as "Contradictions," the actual blurring of self and other, crossing the boundary between life and death. Death is a liminal state in these poems, a "passing on"



from which the beloved returns to haunt the speaker (we could recall “Straw in the Street” with its conflation of “for life, for death”). Francis suggests that the dynamics of these poems be read as a manifestation of Terry Castle’s “apparitional Lesbian,”<sup>52</sup> and they certainly do seem to call up a repressed or denied subjectivity while articulating the “ghostly” uncertainty of same-sex desires. However, I would further argue that the haunting of (and in) the liminal spaces of these poems is racial as well as sexual, while the presence of death as one aspect of the in-betweenness that Levy evokes hints at the danger of ambivalence and liminality. It suggests that the “passing moments” in Levy’s late work are represented with a consciousness of the dangers of the in-between space in which the resistance to oppositional dualisms actually endangers the becoming-subject. The dangers are that this transformative positioning can collapse into a split subjectivity at odds with its-self. This is simultaneously the danger of articulating or representing a multiple lesbian identity and desire and the danger of racial passing.

Conceiving of a narcissistic identification with an uncertain other, a desire for (and desire to destroy) the “passing” self/other helps to shed light on some of the dynamics of Levy’s late poetry. As in Larsen’s modernist novel *Passing*, the unsettling ambivalence of same-sex desire is also racial ambivalence; on the one hand, these enable a line of flight out of the impossible fixities of molar subjectivity, but on the other, they signal a loss of the stable ground on which the speaking-subject can be constructed. Ultimately, the impossibility of the full enunciation of this ambivalent desire and the potential collapse of subjectivity that it presages are paralleled by race loyalty and a destructive urge to negate ambivalent affiliations. In Larsen’s novel, this ends in the violent but ambiguous death of the light-skinned Clare Hendry.

The dilemma of Levy’s work, in which she “passes” as an urban woman poet while also attempting to give voice to a Jewish (urban) experience, is also foregrounded through the very act of writing. Levy’s comments on the position of Jewish women intellectuals imply an alienation from a racial community that the act of writing creates but also attempts to pass across: Levy writes of “an ever increasing minority of eager women beating themselves in vain against the solid masonry of our ancient fortifications, long grown obsolete and of no use save as obstructions; sometimes succeeding in scaling the wall and departing, never to return, to the world beyond.”<sup>53</sup> And the tensions of negotiating between racial milieus through the act of writing are intersected by the fraught desires of a lesbian subjectivity. Existing in the in-between, in a space both

inside and outside the “fortifications” of race, is, it seems, impossible. This space can only be passed through and not inhabited; it is not a “localizable relation” and cannot finally negate the tensions between race, sex, and gender that endanger the textual, writing, passing self.

The liminality that is evoked in the first two sections of *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse* can be read as marked by an ambivalence and a sense of danger—the danger that ambivalence (the inability to accept fixed identity, and the attempt to inhabit a space between poles of fixity) actually incurs an eradication of the self who can no longer inhabit a space of enunciation. Thus, the loved one who is recalled in the “Love, Dreams and Death” poems and is glimpsed in passing in the “London Plane-Tree” section is both an actual object of (lesbian) desire and a part of a (racially/culturally) split and therefore precarious subjectivity. The murderous potential of Levy’s refusal to “be” either a (middle-class) Jewish woman or a (queer) urban woman poet, but instead to pass between these identities, is encapsulated in the poem “In the Mile End Road.”

“In the Mile End Road,” the fourteenth poem in the “Love, Dreams and Death” section of *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse*, evokes a dead woman who haunts the crowded urban scene of the East End. In doing so, the poem resonates with the reverberations of the Whitechapel murders of autumn 1888 and their attendant racialization: Jack the Ripper was thought in many quarters to be Jewish.<sup>54</sup> That the media representation and public response to the Ripper murders were bound up with antisemitism and Jewish stereotypes highlights the anxieties around the Jewish urban presence in London, particularly with the rise of eastern European Jewish immigration in the last decades of the century.<sup>55</sup> In this context, “In the Mile End Road” cannot be read neutrally. The ghostly presence that haunts the other poems of “Love, Dreams and Death” is manifest here, not in a liminal space between waking and sleeping but in the multiracial city streets of the East End: “How like her! But ’tis she herself / comes up the crowded street” (*LPT*, 50). The poem delays the revelation of the beloved’s death until the final line, turning a poem of *la passante* into a disturbing, even uncanny, moment of misrecognition and loss: “I forgot / My only love was dead” (*LPT*, 50). Clearly, tensions similar to those of many of the other “Love, Dreams and Death” poems could be discerned here, or one could again postulate fetishistic and narcissistic drives at work—a lost part of the self is projected outward in a fetishistic disavowal (“For one strange moment I forgot”) of the disruption of narcissistic self-containment (“My only

love was dead”) (*LPT*, 50). Beckman’s suggestion that “London *signifies* [Levy’s] speaker’s state of mind, which is increasingly fragmented and distressed” in poems such as this, is relevant here, for what results, according to Beckman, is that “the self splits and becomes a beloved other”: the poem offers what we might read as “an encounter with a part of the self that is dead.”<sup>56</sup> Though the poem clearly, as Beckman points out, uses the ballad form to indicate the ballad convention of losing a lover, it moves beyond this to explore a “crisis of self-estrangement.” Where Beckman posits an encounter with “Levy’s Jewish self” in this poem, “the part of her identity that she was afraid of losing,”<sup>57</sup> I identify subterranean murderous energies, a deliberate sacrificing of the lost part of self that may offer multiple, ambiguous subjectivities but also threatens the possibility of clear identifications. At some level in this poem, the evil Jewish murderer stalks the streets and dispenses with the unsettling presence of the urban woman.

“In the Mile End Road” thus manifests most clearly the implications of the type of mobile subject positions that Levy explores in *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse*. If, in some sense, there is a nomadic consciousness at work here, writing of or through the intermezzo, or in-between, refusing to rest on a sexual, gender, religious, racial, or cultural point of fixity, it is accompanied by a violence and destructive power that obliterates itself. What this illustrates is that the protomodernism that some critics have identified (quite rightly) in Levy’s urban aesthetics, located either in a symbolist examination of the poet’s split subjectivity (Beckman) or in the precinematic character of the poetry of the passenger (Vadillo), can never simply be a heralding of the modernist turn in literature. Levy’s late work also enunciates the losses that modernism heralds: the destructive ambivalence of modernity and the annihilating vista of a fundamentally inconceivable future.

“In the Mile End Road” presents a dead woman, the woman who passes or has passed on, as the desired subject that the poem addresses and also as a fractured part of an uncertain identity: the new, urban woman that the textual voice ambivalently wants, wants to be, and can never fully attain. The location of the poem implies that speaker is the racial other, the urban Jew, the desiring subject, another fragment of identity and the one who speaks but who for a passing moment goes beyond her/his/its self. Both of them are urban figures, necessarily modern, transient, and self-made, who identify with and through the unregulated space of the city. They are unfixed products of modernity and peculiarly modernist subjects. But instead of an embrace of fulfillment and

self-recognition, they are ultimately locked in a space of negation. The tensions between them cannot be maintained, and the between space, the liminal, liberating urban zone, becomes the city of dreadful night.

"In the Mile End Road" is circumscribed by stereotypes that are very difficult to resist; their existence is hinted at by an earlier poem in *A London Plane-Tree*, "Ballade of a Special Edition." The "apocryphal" stories of the Special Edition (*LPT*, 24), the sensational journalism that produced and reinforced negative stereotypes of Jewish otherness and would feed images of monstrous New Womanhood in the 1890s, haunt the edges of Levy's poem about Mile End, itself an easy trope for the horrors of degenerate London. Levy's rejection of sensationalism ("Fiend, get thee gone! no more repeat" [*LPT*, 24]) does not negate her own implication in reductive Semitic representations—the "Oriental" Jew of her essay "Middle-Class Jewish Women of To-Day" and the "evil-looking Hebrews" she describes to her sister Katie in a letter from Dresden (dated 4 December 1881).<sup>58</sup> Nor does it negate Levy's need to textually contain the threat of independent potential New Women by marriage (Gertrude and Lucy Lorimer in *The Romance of the Shop*) or death (their sister Phyllis), or even perhaps to cope with her rejection by the sexually active Vernon Lee. Reading across "In the Mile End Road," one can see the speaker returning as the evil Jew—primitive, vicious, and greedy for Western culture or the Western woman—while the desired liberated urban woman is reduced to dangerous (perverse) sexuality, her liberation the cause of her own destruction. The multiple, non-essentialist, modern subjectivity that Levy strives to write cannot persist in this poem and collapses in on itself in a murderous act.

Poems such as "In the Mile End Road" reveal the double-edged nature of Levy's writing/passing, of her celebration of the space between. The articulation of transgressive racial and sexual identities—of being neither one nor an other—leads to a splitting of subjectivity into disparate fragments. The text is enunciated in the action of traversing and thereby delineating the liminal space between the posed fragments of identity, but the becoming-subject cannot keep circulating, keep passing between; at some point, the self is sacrificed, destroyed as the Other. The idealized "smooth" space that Deleuze and Guattari describe in *A Thousand Plateaus* and elsewhere, which does not have separation, capture, territorialization, or designation, is perhaps what Levy's *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse* is seeking, but what the poems show is that this ideal is a figuration that cannot be maintained. The between space can be textually evoked but not actually located; as Levy describes, it is "some other where":

Somewhere, I think, some other where, not here,  
In other ages, on another sphere,  
I danced with you, and you with me, my dear.

("Wallflower," *LPT*, 85)

## Notes

The chapter epigraphs are from Amy Levy, "Between the Showers," in *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1889), 26 (hereafter cited in the text as *LPT*); Nella Larsen, *Passing* [1929], in *Quicksand and Passing* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1989), 157; Sander L. Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful: A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), xxi.

1. Cynthia Scheinberg, *Women's Poetry and Religion in Victorian England: Jewish Identity and Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 194–95.

2. Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 22. Braidotti is working with a materialist feminist application of a Deleuzian schema of "radical nomadic epistemology" (5) to locate and explore contemporary feminist practice and politics. Her use of the "figuration" of "nomadic subjects" has a specific historical context—the late twentieth century—but my aim here is to show both the pertinence and the limits of such figurations in discussions of work such as Amy Levy's late poetry.

3. See Linda Hunt Beckman, "Amy Levy: Urban Poetry, Poetic Innovation, and the Fin-de-Siècle Woman Poet," in *The Fin-de-Siècle Poem: English Literary Culture and the 1890s*, ed. Joseph Bristow, 207–30 (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005); Ana Parejo Vadillo, "Amy Levy in Bloomsbury," in Vadillo, *Women Poets and Urban Aestheticism: Passengers of Modernity* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 38–77.

4. The text is not explicit on this point, and the ambiguity extends into the actual sequence of actions resulting in Claire's death and Irene's response to it.

5. Cheryl A. Wall, *Women of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 89.

6. Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 89.

7. For a reading of *Passing* that points to "the more dangerous story . . . of Irene's awakening sexual desire for Clare," see Deborah McDowell, introduction to Nella Larsen, *Quicksand and Passing* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986), xxvi.

8. Amanda Sebestyen, "Passing Figures: Black and Jewish Border Crossers," *Jewish Quarterly* (Summer 1997): 31–34, quotations on 31 and 32.

9. *Ibid.*, 34.

10. Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful*, 24.

11. *Ibid.*, 136.

12. Ana Parejo Vadillo offers a very persuasive argument that places the composition of "A Ballad of Religion and Marriage" in 1889: see Vadillo, *Women Poets*, 211n21.

13. Linda K Hughes, *New Woman Poets: An Anthology* (London: The Eighteen Nineties Society, 2001).

14. Michelle Elizabeth Tusan's article "Inventing the New Woman: Print Culture and Identity Politics during the Fin-de-Siècle" (*Victorian Periodicals Review* 31, no. 2 [Summer 1998]: 169–82) offers an important account of the naming of the New Woman and provides the foundation for current debates about this figure in the late nineteenth century. The New Woman remains a contested term in Victorian studies—Lyn Pykett, for example, writes that "*The New Woman did not exist. . . . 'New Woman,' both in fiction and [in] fact, was (and remains) a shifting and contested term.*" Pykett, foreword to *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms*, ed. Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2001), xi. The chronology and geography of the New Woman has also been rewritten with the contributions to the volume *New Woman Hybridities: Femininity, Feminism and International Consumer Culture, 1880–1930*, ed. Ann Heilmann and Margaret Beetham (London: Routledge, 2004), spanning a fifty-year period and exploring the phenomenon in Canada, Hungary, Japan, and Ireland as well as Britain and America.

15. Linda Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy: Her Life and Letters* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 284n13.

16. Deborah L. Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 82.

17. Beckman, "Amy Levy," 211; Vadillo, *Women Poets*, 67.

18. Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 146.

19. Amy Levy, "Jewish Children," *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 November 1886, 8. Reprinted in *The Complete Novels and Selected Writings of Amy Levy*, ed. Melvyn New (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 530.

20. Amy Levy, "Middle-Class Jewish Women of To-Day," *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 September 1886, 7. Reprinted in *Complete Novels*, ed. New, 235, 236.

21. Amy Levy, "Jewish Humour," *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 August 1886, 9–10. Reprinted in *Complete Novels*, ed. New, 521.

22. *Ibid.*, 524.

23. See Cynthia Scheinberg, "Canonizing the Jew: Amy Levy's Challenge to Victorian Poetic Identity," *Victorian Studies* 39, no. 2 (Winter 1996): 173–200, and her *Women's Poetry and Religion in Victorian England*.

24. Scheinberg, "Canonizing the Jew," 190.

25. See the criticism of *Reuben Sachs* as "venomous" in the *Jewish Standard* editorial of 8 March 1889, 6 (possibly written by Israel Zangwill, who caricatures Levy's novel, along with Julia Frankau's *Dr Phillips: A Maida Vale Idyll*, in the same issue). See also Todd Endelman's cursory assessment that "Amy Levy was so depressed and self-hating, which in her case was linked to both her Jewishness and her sexuality, that she killed herself soon after her novel *Reuben Sachs* . . . appeared." Endelman, *Jews of Britain*, 170. "Jewish self-hatred" is Sander Gilman's term for Jewish antisemitism; see Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

26. "Leopold Leuniger: A Study" was not published in Levy's lifetime; "Cohen of Trinity" was first published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* 266 (1889): 417–23. Both stories are

included in *Complete Novels*, ed. New. For discussion, see Linda Hunt Beckman, "Leaving 'The Tribal Duckpond': Amy Levy, Jewish Self-Hatred and Jewish Identity," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27, no. 1 (1999): 185–201.

27. Scheinberg, *Women's Poetry*, 232.

28. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Athlone Press, 1988), 380.

29. *Ibid.*, 25.

30. Beckman, *Amy Levy*, 208, 219.

31. Vadillo, *Women Poets*, 4, 39.

32. See, for example, Levy's essay "James Thomson: A Minor Poet," *Cambridge Review*, 21 and 28 February 1883, 240–41 and 257–58. Reprinted in *The Complete Novels*, ed. New. See also Amy Levy, "To a Dead Poet," in *A Minor Poet and Other Verse* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1884).

33. See Beckman, "Amy Levy," especially 210.

34. *Ibid.*, 212.

35. Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation and the City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

36. Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis*, 98, 97.

37. Vadillo, *Women Poets*, 41, 55.

38. Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful*, xxi.

39. Vadillo, *Women Poets*, 40.

40. *Ibid.*, 68, 73, 76.

41. *Ibid.*, 73.

42. *Ibid.*, 77.

43. Henry Louis Gates Jr., *Figures in Black: Words, Signs and the "Racial" Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 202.

44. Beckman, *Amy Levy*, 141. Beckman dates this unpublished poem to early 1888.

45. Sigmund Freud, "On Narcissism: An Introduction" (1914), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, vol. 14 (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1975).

46. See, for example, Jacques Lacan, *Seminar*, book 1, *Freud's Papers on Technique* (1953–54), trans. John Forrester (New York: Norton, 1988).

47. See H.D., *HERmione*, ed. Perdita Schaffner (New York: New Directions, 1981). Clare L. Taylor offers a highly theoretical and informed reading of such aspects of H.D.'s text in "'I Am Her': The Cross-Gendered Woman as Fetish Object in H.D.'s *HER*," in her study *Women, Writing and Fetishism, 1890–1950: Female Cross-Gendering* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

48. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 37.

49. Vadillo, *Women Poets*, 60.

50. *Ibid.*, 74.

51. Emma Francis, "Amy Levy: Contradictions?—Feminism and Semitic Discourse," in *Women's Poetry, Late Romantic to Late Victorian: Gender and Genre, 1830–1900*, ed. Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blain (London, Macmillan, 1999), 183–204, quotation on 141.



52. Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

53. Levy, "Middle-Class Jewish Women," 527.

54. See Sander L. Gilman, "The Jewish Murderer: Jack the Ripper, Race and Gender," in Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 104–27. I explore this cultural and racial context for Levy's "In the Mile End Road" further in my "'Murder in Mile End': Amy Levy, Jewishness and the City," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 34, no. 2 (2006): 461–79.

55. For a thorough account of the reporting and media representation of the Ripper murders, see L. Perry Curtis Jr., *Jack the Ripper and the London Press* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

56. Beckman, "Amy Levy," 219, 221.

57. *Ibid.*, 222, 223.

58. Beckman, *Amy Levy*, 238.